



St. Xenia Parish News

170 North Lowell Street, Methuen, MA 01844

March-April 2005

Approach to Holy Week

By Rev. George Mastrantonis

HOLY WEEK IN THE EASTERN Orthodox Church institutes the sanctity of the whole calendar year of the Church. Its center of commemorations and inspiration is Easter wherein the glorified Resurrection of Jesus Christ is celebrated. Every Sunday is dedicated in the Eastern Orthodox Church to the Resurrection of the Lord. One hundred days also are dedicated to Easter, 50 before it for preparation, and another 50 after it for commemorating the glorification of the Lord. Easter is considered the "Feast of Feasts."

The 50 days before Easter, known as a part of the period of *Triodion* ("three" + "odes") are the period for strengthening faith in the Lord. The means are well-known to people of spiritual experience. They are *repentance*, which means to change from indifference to full devotion; *prayer*, which is considered the soul of faith, and through which faith emerges from theory into life, and *self-control*, which governs our relationships with our fellowman. These means are practical indicators of our vivid faith in God. With this preparation we are invited to enter the sanctuary of Holy Week, not as spectators, but as participants in the commemoration and enactment of the divine Acts that changed the world. A Christian must always be well-trained and well-armed to fight against those who try to corrupt his spirit and take away his freedom. The Christian must keep his own spiritual kingdom intact and his freedom of religion and uprightness vivid in order to be a part of the Kingdom of God, where the compassions of the Lord and His Resurrection will be experienced. There is no other place where the Kingdom of God can be expanded except the heart of man; and there is no other gate whereby we can enter the Kingdom but that of "repentance." This was the proclamation of the new era of Jesus Christ, who said, "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*" (Matthew 3:2).

The 50 days which follow Easter are signified by the *Pentecostarion* (Gr. *Pentikonta*, 50). They are dedicated to the spiritual enjoyment of the participants in the deep belief that Almighty God is our Companion in our everyday life and thoughts. It starts with the celebration of the Lord's Resurrection. During this period, the Church of Christ, which is

His Mystical Body, was instituted and strengthened. His disciples and Apostles were the witnesses of the appearances of the Risen Lord; they were the recipients of the Holy Spirit, Who changed completely their attitude of fear, Who made the Apostles into piercing heralds and ambassadors of the New Message of salvation in the name of Christ, the Savior. This was an experience, teaching and inspiration they handed down as the treasure of the Christian Faith. Christians are called to commemorate the same divine Events and to enact them in their hearts and minds, based on the realization that "*Christ is Risen.*"

The entire Christian confession is contained in the words "Christ is Risen." St. Paul, referring to this fact, clearly and emphatically says: "*If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain*" (1 Corinthians 15:14). This is the reason why, from the beginning, the Church of Christ set forth as the center of its worship and faith the Resurrection of its Lord. From the earliest days after Pentecost the Apostles designated "the first of the Sabbath" of each week for the remembrance, of the Resurrection of our Lord. This day was called the "Lord's Day" in the Revelation of John, who said: "*I was the Spirit on the Lord's day*" (1:10). It was this tradition which the writers and hymnologists of the Orthodox Church had in mind when they wrote hymns and odes for eight consecutive Sundays (Lord's days) having for their subject the Resurrection of Christ as the basic belief of redemption and of worship. The fifth article of the Ecumenical Creed of Faith, the Nicene Creed, refers to this belief, as well.

The Resurrection of Christ, in relation to the Crucifixion, constitutes the essence of the Christian Easter, which is the center of the celebrations of worship of God in the Orthodox Church. Herein will be presented the events and services of the Passion Week recorded in the New Testament as they exist in the Eastern Orthodox Church today. The Passion Week, from the triumphant entrance of our Lord into Jerusalem until His Resurrection, contains a series of events in the life of Christ the Savior linking prophecy with its fulfillment.

St. Xenia of Petersburg Orthodox Church is a parish of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, under the omophorion of Metropolitan LAURUS, First Hierarch, and Bishop GABRIEL of Manhattan. The parish newsletter is published bimonthly under the direction of the Rev. Michael Crowley. In order to ensure timely delivery to our far-flung parish, please submit all notices by the 15th of the month prior to publication to Margaret Lark at (603) 332-9613, e-mail: skovranok@verizon.net, or to Father Michael at tcrowley@maine.rr.com. Thank you.

Rector:

Rev. Michael Crowley
 16 Channel Road
 South Portland, ME 04106
 (978) 204-0428 (cell phone with voice mail)

Confessions on Saturday during Vigil, on Sunday during the Hours, and by appointment

Parish Council

President: Rev. Michael Crowley (207) 767-1889
 Starosta: Rdr. Constantine Desrosiers (603) 775-0320
 Secretary: Natalie Pishenin (978) 658-5564
 Treasurer: Tony Sarantakis (978) 263-2016
 Sisterhood: Matushka Nancy Crowley (207) 767-1889
 Cemetery: Lily Dombrowski (978) 851-2972
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 Roberto Gonzalez (978) 692-1229
 Michael Johnson (978) 691-0045
 Anna Johnson (978) 691-0045
 John Kekis (978) 456-9865
 John Rush (603) 898-4315
 Choir Director: Michael Lang (603) 465-9754

Trapeza Schedule

If you cannot be at church on your assigned Sunday, please call and switch with someone. If you have any questions, contact Karen Schidlovsky at (603) 868-6410. Trapeza can be whatever you would like to prepare on your day. Some parishioners prefer to make a big lunch, but this isn't necessary. As long as there is enough food for about 40 people, anything is appreciated. Doughnuts, fruit and pastries are as acceptable as soup and sandwiches. Thank you in advance for your contribution.

Please note that March 13 n.s. is Cheesefare Sunday, and the Sundays for the rest of March, and all of April, take place in a fast period, during which we consume no meat or dairy products. Please plan accordingly.

March

6 Masha Harris and Kosta and Judy Engalichev
 13 Anna Johnson and Kasardas Family
 20* Carolyn Sarantakis and Pamela Reed
 27* Tanya Sciaudone and Mireille Lang

April

3* Nicholas Kronaur and Vera Sarantakis
 10* Karen Schidlovsky and Nancy Harris
 17* Matushka Nancy Crowley and Anna Kekis
 24 Palm Sunday / Pot Luck
 (fish allowed)

If you are interested to become part of the Trapeza roster, please contact Karen Schidlovsky at (603) 868-6410.

Sisterhood News:

At our meeting in December, the sisterhood voted to donate \$400 towards the bell tower and \$400 towards the fresco of the Holy Trinity—also called “The Hospitality of Abraham”—which is planned for the wall of the nave above the iconostasis. So far, \$2,200 has been collected towards our goal of \$7,000. Donations are still being accepted, and are very welcome. We have also sent \$750 to International Orthodox Christian Charities towards the tsunami relief.

Sisterhood dues are \$5 per year, and membership is open to all women of the parish. Our next meetings will take place on March 27 and **April 17** (please note the change in our regular schedule, since April 24 is Palm Sunday).

Thank You...

... to Arhontoula Lainas for the beautiful hand-crocheted white analoy covers.

... to all who have donated towards the fresco of the Holy Trinity. See Sisterhood News for an update on the status of the fund. All donations are greatly appreciated!

... to all who donated towards the tsunami relief fund.

Congratulations... from our whole parish:

...to Katia and Matt Fredette on the birth of their daughter, Kristen Sofia, on January 31.

Please remember in your prayers... Bishop Alexander, Protopriest Vlaery Lukianov, Nicholas, Paul, Nina, David, Basil, Vassilisa, Seraphim, Lily, Genevieve, Anne, Andrew and Mary Klinoff and their family.

Please remember to inform the Myrrh-bearers Sisterhood if someone is in the hospital or shut in at home.

Financial Update: As of February 28, 2005 the balance on the church mortgage stands at \$72,092.64. If you have any questions, please see Reader Constantine Desrosiers.

Sunday School: Since February 6, Robert Stauffer has been conducting classes in The Order of Services for the middle- and high-school members of our parish. A thorough understanding of the order of Orthodox services greatly enhances the ability to participate in them with a

proper spirit, and all are encouraged to attend these classes. Once Robert completes his section, Daniel McLellan will begin a series on important issues central to our Faith in this modern world.

Choir: Choir practice is regularly held on Sunday afternoon from 1:00-1:45 p.m. Please make every effort to attend as we rehearse for the beautiful seasons of Great Lent and Pascha.

Bible Study: Meets the second Wednesday of every month. This year we are focusing on the book of Genesis. Particular emphasis is being given to contemporary issues involving theories of evolution. Come and join us!

Principles of Orthodoxy Study Group: We are beginning this new study group on March 12th. It will meet each Saturday at 4:00 P.M. This will be a comprehensive study of the foundational principles of the Orthodox Faith, beginning with general catechetical issues, and progressing to deeper scriptural and theological topics. Anyone who is interested should contact Fr. Michael or John Sarantakis since there will be assigned reading to be done before the classes to prepare for an active discussion and study.

Blessing of the Mosaic: On February 6/January 24, the mosaic of St. Xenia of St. Petersburg was blessed and dedicated (see picture on the following page). Please note that this mosaic depicts St. Xenia standing in front of *our* parish church, her home in the New World.!

Fresco Fund: As you can see by the graphic on the following page we are making some progress in raising the funds for Fr. Yakov to begin work on our Hospitality of Abraham fresco directly above the iconostasis. Please consider making a contribution to this fund toward the continued beautification of St. Xenia's Church.

Upcoming Events

Project Mexico: A group of our young people are going to the Project Mexico orphanage in Mexico over Spring vacation in April. If you have any interest in your children participating, please contact Bob DiMatteo directly as soon as possible.

The Russian Corner

From the Journal of Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich
(1880-1956)

...a treasury of Serbian Orthodox spirituality from one of the most prolific writers in the history of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

...This example is only a grain from the representation of the many instances that I have heard and witnessed:

It occurred in Manchuria, on the border of Russian Siberia and China where Bishop Iona lived and died. There lived one Russian family, the father who worked on the railroad, and his wife and son. Because the father worked for the communist regime the family was not interested in religion or church. One day their son got sick and was bed-ridden for a long time. The parents did everything to make him well, but nothing helped. They expected his death soon.

It happened on October 7, 1925, when the reigning Bishop Iona died. The whole city was in an uproar, and after taking care of her son, the mother went out to investigate. When she came back and went to look in on her son, he ran out of his room crying joyfully, "I am well now!" The mother could not believe her eyes. She cried with joy and then asked her son how did he become well? Her son told her that as she went out, he fell asleep and in his dream an elderly man in priestly robes appeared to him and asked why he was in bed. "I told him that my legs are worthless and I cannot walk." He then told me, "Here take my legs, for I don't need them anymore." The mother was listening very carefully at the description of the deceased person.

The next morning she took her son to the church for Bishop Iona's memorial service. When her son saw the face of the deceased, he cried out, "Mother, this is the man who appeared in my dream, and gave me his legs!"

St. Nikolai is commemorated on March 18

John 11:4

This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.



Blessing the new mosaic of St. Xenia during the Molieben on February 6/January 24 (Feast of St. Xenia)



Fasting

There is both a physical and a spiritual fast. In the physical fast the body abstains from food and drink. In the spiritual fast, the faster abstains from evil intentions, words and deeds. One who truly fasts abstains from anger, rage, malice, and vengeance. One who truly fasts abstains from idle and foul talk, empty rhetoric, slander, condemnation, flattery, lying and all manner of spiteful talk. In a word, a real faster is one who withdraws from all evil.

As much as you subtract from the body, so much will you add to the strength of the soul.

Holy Hierarch Basil the Great

Do you fast? Then feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, visit the sick, do not forget the imprisoned, have pity on the tortured, comfort those who grieve and who weep, be merciful, humble, kind, calm, patient, sympathetic, forgiving, reverent, truthful and pious, so that God might accept your fasting and might plentifully grant you the fruits of repentance.

Fasting of the body is food for the soul.

Holy Hierarch John Chrysostom

Whosoever rejects the fasts, deprives himself and others of weapons against his own much-suffering flesh and against the devil, who have power over us especially as the result of our intemperance.

Holy Righteous John of Kronstadt

The greatest of the virtues is prayer, while their foundation is fasting.

Holy Hierarch Ignaty Brianchaninov

If thou, O man, dost not forgive everyone who has sinned against thee, then do not trouble thyself with fasting. If thou dost not forgive the debt of thy brother, with whom thou art angry for some reason, then thou dost fast in vain. God will not accept thee. Fasting will not help thee, until thou wilt become accomplished in love and in the hope of faith. Whoever fasts and becomes angry, and harbors enmity in his heart, such a one hates God and salvation is far from him.

Venerable Ephraim the Syrian

A excellent faster is he who restrains himself from every impurity, who imposes abstinence on his tongue and restrains it from idle talk, foul language, slander, condemnation, flattery and all manner of evil-speaking, who abstains from anger, rage, malice and vengeance and withdraws from every evil.

Saint Tichon of Zadonsk

Seest thou what fasting does: it heals illnesses, drives out demons, removes wicked thoughts, makes the heart pure. If someone has even been seized by an impure spirit, let him know that this kind, according to the word of the Lord, "*goeth not out but by prayer and fasting*" (Matthew 17:21).

Saint Athanasius the Great

Give the body as much food as it needs, and thou shalt receive no harm, even if thou shouldst eat three times a day. If a man eats but once a day, but undiscerningly, what benefit is there to him from that. The warfare of fornication follows excess in eating - and after this the enemy weighs down the body with sleep in order to defile it.

Saints Barsanuphius and John

The point is not only that we should come to church each day, that we should continually listen to one and the same thing, and that we should fast for the whole Forty Days. No! If we, from continually coming here and listening to the teaching, do not acquire anything and do not derive any good for our soul from the time of the fast all this does not procure for us any benefit, but rather serves for our greater condemnation, when despite such concern for us by the Church we remain just the same as before.

Do not say to me that I fasted for so many days, that I did not eat this or that, that I did not drink wine, that I endured want; but show me if thou from an angry man hast become gentle, if thou from a cruel man hast become benevolent. If thou art filled with anger, why oppress thy flesh? If hatred and avarice are within thee, of what benefit is it that thou drinkest water? Do not show forth a useless fast: for fasting alone does not ascend to heaven.

Saint John Chrysostom

To: St. Kenia's Church,

I'm writing to you in regards to the vandalism that was done to your church in September of 2002. I was unfortunately one of the individuals whom was involved in that whole ordeal. I would like to offer you my most sincere and genuine apologies for what I did. I was extremely intoxicated and heavily under the influence of drugs at the time of when the incident occurred. Although that does not excuse my actions in any way shape or form, I'm hoping that the knowledge of that information can serve you as some sort of an explanation as to why I did what I did. What I did was very wrong and totally unacceptable by all means. I'm very sorry for what I did, and I'm hoping that some day you will be able to put it behind you and find it in yourself to forgive me.

Sincerely,

Todd Labrecque

April 2005

St. Xenia Orthodox Church

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|---|--|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | 1 7:30 PM Small Compline with Akathist to the Theotokos (19 Mar) MM Chrysanthus & Daria | 2 4:00 PM Principles of Orthodoxy Study Group 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil (20 Mar) MM of St Sabbas' Monastery Wine & oil allowed |
| 3 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM Holy Cross Sunday Divine Liturgy Tone 3 Wine & oil allowed | 4 (22 Mar) HM Basil of Ancyra | 5 (23 Mar) MM Nicon & comp | 6 6:30 PM Vigil of the Annunciation (24 Mar) St Zechariah | 7 9:00 AM Annunciation Divine Liturgy (25 Mar) NHM Tikhon Fish, wine & oil allowed | 8 7:30 PM Small Compline with Akathist to the Theotokos (26 Mar) Archangel Gabriel Wine & oil allowed | 9 4:00 PM Principles of Orthodoxy Study Group 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil (27 Mar) St Matrona Wine & oil allowed |
| Great Lent -- Strict Fast | | | | | Great Lent -- S.. | |
| 10 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM St John of the Ladder Divine Liturgy Tone 4 Wine & oil allowed | 11 (29 Mar) HM Mark of Arethusa | 12 (30 Mar) St John Climacus | 13 7:00 PM Great Canon of St Andrew of Crete (31 Mar) St Hypatius; St Innocent of Alaska | 14 (1 Apr) St Mary of Egypt | 15 7:00 PM Saturday of the Akathist (2 Apr) St Titus Wine allowed | 16 4:00 PM Principles of Orthodoxy Study Group 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil (2 Apr) St Nicetas Wine & oil allowed |
| Great Lent -- Strict Fast | | | | | | |
| 17 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM St Mary of Egypt Divine Liturgy Tone 5 Wine & oil allowed | 18 (5 Apr) M Theodulus & comp | 19 (6 Apr) St Euty chius | 20 (7 Apr) St George of Mitylene | 21 (8 Apr) Ap Herodion | 22 (9 Apr) M Eupsy chius | 23 4:00 PM Principles of Orthodoxy Study Group 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil Caviar, wine & oil allowed |
| Great Lent -- Strict Fast | | | | | | |
| 24 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM Palm Sunday Divine Liturgy Fish, wine & oil allowed | 25 7:00 PM Bridegroom Matins | 26 7:00 PM Bridegroom Matins | 27 6:30 PM Vigil of Holy Thursday | 28 10:00 AM Holy Thursday Divine Liturgy 6:30 PM Matins with 12 Gospels of Holy Friday | 29 9:00 AM Royal Hours 4:00 PM Taking Down from the Cross 6:30 PM Lamentations of Holy Saturday | 30 9:30 AM Holy Saturday Vespers Divine Liturgy 10:00 PM Reading of the Acts of the Apostles 11:30 PM Midnight Office |
| Great & Holy Week | | | | | | |

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DIRECTIONS TO ST. XENIA CHURCH:

From I-93 North or South take Exit 46, Routes 110 and 113 Dracut and Lawrence. If you were travelling North on I-93, take the exit and go around the rotary and under the highway. Follow the signs and bear right off the rotary for Route 110/113 Dracut. **If you were travelling South on I-93,** bear right at the bottom of the exit ramp towards Route 110/113 Dracut.

Where Routes 110 and 113 split, bear right onto Route 113 towards Dracut. You will pass several cemeteries on your left, including the Polish National Catholic Cemetery. The very next gate on the left is the entrance to St. Xenia's. Please note that the church is on the left just before the Hickory Hill Golf course, so if you pass the golf course, you will have missed the church. Parking is available on church grounds.