



# St. Xenia Parish News

170 North Lowell Street, Methuen, MA 01844

December 2002-January 2003

## The Purpose of the Incarnation of the Son of God

by Bishop Alexander (Mileant)

The parable of the lost sheep speaks graphically and vividly of the purpose of the coming of the Son of God into the world. The good shepherd leaves the ninety-nine sheep, by which is meant the angelic world, and sets out for the mountains in order to seek out his lost sheep—the human race perishing in sins. The shepherd's great love for the perishing sheep is evident not only in the fact that he solicitously seeks it, but especially in the fact that after finding it, he takes it upon his shoulders and carries it back. In other words, God, by His power, returns to man the innocence, holiness and blessedness lost by him; having united Himself with our human nature, the Son of God, according to the word of the Prophet, *hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows* (Isaiah, Ch. 53).

Christ became man not only to teach us the true way and to show us a good example. He became man in order to unite us with Himself, to join our feeble, diseased human nature to His divinity. The Nativity of Christ testifies to the fact that we attain the ultimate aim of our life not only by faith and by striving for good, but chiefly by the regenerating power of the incarnate Son of God, with Whom we are united.

Delving deeply into the mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God, we see that it is closely bound up with the mystery of Holy Communion and with the Church, which, according to apostolic teaching, is the mystical Body of Christ. In the Holy Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, a man is joined to the divine-human nature of Christ; he unites with Him and in this union is wholly transfigured. At the same time, in Holy Communion, a Christian unites also with other members of the Church—and thus the mystical Body of Christ grows.

Heterodox Christians who do not believe in Holy Communion understand union with Christ in an allegorical, metaphorical sense, or in the sense of only a spiritual communion with Him. But for spiritual

communion, the incarnation of the Son of God is superfluous. After all, even before the Nativity of Christ, the prophets and the righteous were counted worthy of grace-filled communion with God.

One must understand that man is ill not only spiritually, but also physically: all of human nature has been harmed by sin. It is essential, therefore, to heal the whole man, not only his spiritual part. To remove any doubt in the necessity for total communion with Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ, in His discourse on the Bread of Life, speaks thus: *Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day... He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him* (John 6:53-54, 56). Later, Christ uses the metaphor of the grapevine to explain to His disciples that it is precisely in close union with Him that man receives the strength essential for spiritual development and perfection: *As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing* (John 15:4-5).

Some holy Fathers have justly likened Holy Communion to the mystical tree of life, from which our primogenitors ate in Eden, and which afterwards St. John the Theologian saw in paradise (Gen. 2:9, Rev. 2:7, 22:2). In Holy Communion, a Christian is joined to the immortal life of the God-Man.

Thus, the purpose of the incarnation of the Son of God lies in the spiritual and physical regeneration of man. Spiritual renewal is accomplished throughout the course of a Christian's whole life. But the renewal of his physical nature is completed on the day of the general resurrection of the dead, when the righteous *shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father* (Matt. 13:43).

St. Xenia of St. Petersburg Orthodox Church is a parish of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, under the omophorion of Metropolitan LAURUS, First Hierarchy, and Bishop GABRIEL of Manhattan. The parish newsletter is published semi-monthly 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 15<sup>th</sup> of the month of publication to Margaret Lark at (603) 332-9613, e-mail: [skovranok@ttlc.net](mailto:skovranok@ttlc.net), or to Father Michael at [tcrowley@maine.rr.com](mailto:tcrowley@maine.rr.com). Thank you.

**Rector:**

Rev. Michael Crowley  
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 (978) 204-0428 (cell phone with voice mail)

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

**Parish Council**

- Starosta: Rdr. Constantine Desrosiers (603) 775-0320
- Secretary: Natalie Pishenin (978)-658-5564
- Treasurer: Tony Sarandakis (978)-263-2016
- Sisterhood: Matushka Nancy Crowley (207)-767-1889
- Property: David Lavoie (603)-880-7978
- Youth: Amy McLellan (978)-499-6822
- Outreach: Rdr. Brian Donley (603)-882-5570
- Cemetery: Rdr. Andrew Bargoot (617)-471-0538
- Michael Johnson (978)-691-0045
- John Rush (603)-898-4315
  
- Sunday School: Michael Lang (603)-
- Youth Choir: Patricia Crowley (207)-767-1889

**Trapeza Schedule:**

**\* =Strict Fast(no meats, fish or dairy)**

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. Donuts, fruit and pastries are as acceptable as soup and sandwiches. Thank you in advance for your contribution.

December

- 15\* Janet Donley and Amy McLellan
- 22 \* Anna Johnson and Masha Harris
- 29 \* Diane and Carolyn Sarantakis and Pamela Reed

January

- 5 \* Xenia Rush and Kyriaki Lavoie
- 12 Tanya Sciaudone and Mireille Lang
- 19 Karen Schidlovsky and Nancy Harris
- 26 Helena Doohovskoy and Marianne DiMatteo, Anna Kekis

## A Note from the Pastor

My dear brethren in Christ,

It is with great joy that we launch this first issue of our resurrected newsletter. Our thanks to all who have worked so tirelessly on this valuable service to our Church Community.

We find ourselves at this juncture a parish one in heart, but somewhat separated by distances. The ideal is for a parish church to be the center of a village community, a place where the faithful can go at any time, to pray and to share the Life of Christ with their brothers and sisters. Our modern day is, of course, far from this ideal, so a newsletter such as this hopes to be, if not a gathering place for persons, at least a place where we can keep informed about each other and activities both in our local church and in the greater Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. Margaret Lark, with my help and oversight, has requested the various people in positions of leadership to contribute to the newsletter. For example, the Sisterhood can keep us up to date with their plans for our community, and let us know when and where we can help. The treasurer can keep us advised concerning the financial matters of the parish, and so on. It is also our intention of making sure that everyone knows if someone is infirm or housebound so that we can pray for and perhaps visit them to share the Love of our Lord.

We will publish articles of spiritual interest as well, as has been done in the past. Oftentimes I come across an issue of one kind or another that I would like to speak to. I nearly always keep the sermon on Sunday on the topic of the Gospel of the day or the life of a saint. The newsletter is an opportunity to speak to the gathered brethren regarding such issues, even though they may be at home.

As we approach this Holy Season of the Nativity of Christ, let us rejoice together in the multitude of blessings that He has bestowed upon us, and give thanks to God for each other. We are truly blessed, and are given abundant opportunities to do God's Will.

Please let us know if you would like to contribute to the newsletter in any way.

In Christ,

Fr. Michael

## Welcome to Our Sisterhood!

On Sunday, November 3, our parish reorganized the Sisterhood of St. Xenia's, which will in future be known as the Myrrhbearers. Matushka Nancy gladly accepted the lead as Senior Sister, with Anna Johnson voted in as her Assistant and Deputy. Carolyn Sarantakis is Secretary, and the Treasurer is Xenia Rush.

Matushka Nancy told us she hopes to have an icon of the Holy Myrrhbearers placed in the church. We are all overjoyed that she has accepted the role of our Senior Sister.

On November 10, we held a meeting to discuss future plans. Among these are:

- the Yolka, set for the Sunday after Nativity, January 12 (see notice elsewhere for details);
- decorating the Church and Hall for the Nativity (see Kyriaki Lavoie if you would like to help);
- maintenance of the supplies in the parish hall;
- a Giving Tree for Lazarus House (see Janet Donley for details);
- gathering food for the Neighbors in Need Food Pantry, as well as other local charities;
- our charity outreach to Russia;
- sprucing up of the inside and outside of the church; and
- various fundraisers for the welfare of our parish.

Sisterhood dues (\$5 per year) will be collected at our first meeting of 2003, which will be held on **January 26**. Mark your calendars!

### Thank You...Спасибо...Ευχαριστο...

...to John Kekis, Shasha Duhovskoy, and Tony Sarantakis, for their hard work in making the new walkway a reality...

...to all those who helped make the cleaning day of November 2 a success. Much was accomplished; more needs to be done. A GREAT BIG THANKS to all who brought equipment and tools for the day!

## **Please remember in your prayers...**

Nicholas, Vasily, Judith, Seraphim, Kyriaki, John, and James.

Please remember to inform the Myrrhbearers Sisterhood if someone is in the hospital or shut in at home. We would like to keep our parish shut-ins in the stream of our parish events. Thank you!

## **Help Needed**

Masha Harris's brother, Nicholas, is homebound. He lives in Madbury, NH, and could use some help. For further information, connect with Masha.

## **Choir News**

We have moved our regular rehearsal time from Wednesday evenings to Sunday afternoons following Trapeza. Rehearsals last for about an hour. One major reason for the shift in schedule is to encourage greater attendance. Regardless of when or how frequently you sing, **please** attend the rehearsals. This is where we work on singing technique, learn new music, clean up rough spots in our current repertoire, and develop ensemble technique.

We will start rehearsing Nativity music the weekend of Thanksgiving. After Nativity, we'll start on music for Great Lent, Holy Week, and Pascha. Please come!

## **Sunday School**

Our Sunday School is now in full swing, with the following classes:

1. Lower elementary, taught by Pam Reed, focusing on the example of Saints in learning how to understand right and wrong, and to forgive.
2. Upper elementary, taught by Amy McLellan, focusing on the stories of martyrs and other heroes of the Faith.
3. Middle school, taught by Michael Lang, which is also learning about the Saints and the major Feasts of the Church, following the Menologion
4. High school, taught by Reader Constantine Desrosiers, studying Church History. Dr. Desrosiers' extensive knowledge of this topic has made this journey especially exciting for our youth.

## **Parish Activities**

Our first Bible Study with Father Michael got off to a rousing start—on Election Day! We thank all who devoted their time to a study of Paul's letter to the Romans, rather than staying home to watch election results in an admittedly exciting race. Due to Father's time schedule, and the distance he travels, we are only able to hold Bible study once a month, on the first Tuesday, but we hope to expand this into a bi-monthly session once Father is able to move closer.

We also have a monthly study group on the "Law of God," a basic catechism of Orthodoxy for adults. It meets on the third Tuesday of each month. Both classes meet at 7:30 p.m., and run for approximately an hour. Newcomers always welcome!

## **St. Herman's Youth Conference**

The annual Youth Conference will be held this year from December 22-26 at St. Sergius Cathedral in Cleveland, Ohio. The cost is \$325, which includes all meals and lodging. For further information, please see Matushka Nancy or Amy McLellan.

## **Upcoming Events**

**Youth Group Meeting** on December 8 to discuss what we would like to accomplish this year, and to organize a ski trip.

**Yolka** is set for Sunday, January 12, 2003. Anna Johnson has agreed to organize a play with the children of the parish (ages 13 and under), probably a folk tale having to do with the Nativity. The last four weeks of Sunday School prior to Nativity will be set aside for rehearsals. There will also be other forms of entertainment. A food sign-up sheet will be put up on the bulletin board, and Amy McLellan will put together a list of children's names for gifts.

**The Giving Tree:** Janet Donley will contact Lazarus House and ask for a list of needs for our "Giving Tree." The lower elementary class of the Sunday School will make paper ornaments, which will have these needs on them. We will then put up our tree in the parish hall with these "ornaments" on it. Anyone can take an "ornament" off the tree to fill the need, then put the unwrapped gift in a box under the tree with the "ornament" taped on top. On the Sunday before December 25, we will re-decorate the tree for our own celebration of the birth of our Lord.

## SOME THOUGHTS ON THE MYSTERY OF CONFESSION FROM FR. MICHAEL

The Mystery of Confession is one of the center points of our Orthodox Christian lives, and one that we ought to return to on a regular basis. The Church encourages us to this Mystery at least four times a year during the major Lenten periods. Many of us wishing to partake more frequently of the precious Body and Blood of Christ, though, come to the Mystery much more often than this as a part of our preparation.

It is likely that you have experienced confessing before various priests, and that each one has been different. I am aware of priests who rarely let you say a word, but instead confess sins for you. I am equally aware of priests who rarely let you get past the first thing that you confess before going ahead, saying the prayer of absolution and sending you on your way. There are some priests who question you on every point of your confession, or are inclined to speak at length with you to encourage repentance. I am sure that there are many other examples.

Your parish priest is, for all intents and purposes, your spiritual father and confessor. Occasionally an individual may have another spiritual father and/or confessor, perhaps a monastic or other very experienced spiritual guide, but this is not the norm and is usually discouraged in the ROCOR. I believe that this has to do with various abuses that have occurred in the past, and the havoc that has been caused in parishes. I have made a practice of addressing this on an individual basis, attempting to take all things into consideration rather than taking a hard and fast stand in either direction.

I always set aside time, usually during the Canon and Lauds of Matins, to hear confessions at Vigil on Saturday evenings, on the eves of Great Feasts, and on Sunday mornings during the Hours for those who really cannot make it to Vigil. There are usually a number of people waiting for confession and we often run rather short on time. I generally see this particular time of confession as something of a “brushing off” time. Individuals come and confess the sins of the past week or so, and I try and help them both remember where they may have erred and offer some words of guidance for their going forward. Occasionally, an individual may have trouble remembering what they have done because of nervousness or whatever, so I keep the “Short Confession of St. Dimitri of Rostov” handy so that they can read down the list of sins to prompt their remembrance. I also have it

available in Russian so that a person who is not yet comfortable with English may read it softly in Russian and I will be aware of what they are reading.

It is necessary to develop a confessional relationship on a deeper level with your priest as well. To do this I have, in the past, scheduled special appointments for deeper confession either at church or in homes. This offers some very personal, unrestricted time for spiritual/confessional conversation, time for me to get to know an individual more thoroughly than is possible in the few minutes given during Vigil. This can occur as often as is necessary. I would encourage everyone towards this, or at least, to take the time themselves to prepare an in-depth confession during each of the Lenten periods. We have reading material available for those who might be unable to meet with me so that they are truly cleansing their souls and making the commitment to “turn away from evil and do good.”

I will offer more instruction on the Mystery of Confession at one of our upcoming adult Law of God classes. I am always, of course, available to speak with you concerning your questions, if not in person, at least by phone or email

### Appropriate Dress for Church

We come to Church to worship God. It is appropriate then to dress as though we were coming to meet the most important Person in our lives.

Our dress should be modest and formal. Casual clothing of any sort is inappropriate. Shorts, tee shirts (particularly with any writing on them), tennis shoes, sweat shirts and casual clothing like this should not be worn to Church.

Men should come in their “Sunday best.” Jackets and ties are optional, but shirts should have a collar and be buttoned up, and trousers should be neat and clean. Blue jeans are inappropriate.

Women should also wear clean and modest attire. Dresses/blouses should have sleeves and not be low and revealing in back or front. Skirts should be modest and at least knee length. Pants of any sort are not allowed. All women should have their heads covered with a scarf or a hat. Makeup should be minimal, if worn at all. Lipstick, which generally should not be worn to Church, should at least be wiped off before venerating the icons or the Cross.

# Church Calendar

## December 01 - 31, 2002

### December

#### 1 Sunday

9:30 AM Hours

10:00 AM Pentecost 23 Divine Liturgy Tone 6

Fish, wine & oil allowed

#### 2 Monday

(19 Nov) Pr. Obadiah

#### 3 Tuesday

6:30 PM Vigil of the Entry

(20 Nov) St Gregory the Decapolite

Wine & oil allowed

#### 4 Wednesday

9:30 AM Hours

10:00 AM Entry of the Theotokos Divine

Liturgy

Fish, wine & oil allowed

#### 5 Thursday

(22 Nov) Ap. Philemon

Wine & oil allowed

#### 6 Friday

(23 Nov) St Amphilocius

#### 7 Saturday

6:30 PM Vigil

(24 Nov) GM Catherine

Fish, wine & oil allowed

#### 8 Sunday

9:30 AM Hours

10:00 AM Pentecost 24 Divine Liturgy Tone 7

Fish, wine & oil allowed

#### 9 Monday

(26 Nov) St Alypius

#### 10 Tuesday

7:30 PM Bible Study - Epistle to the Romans

(27 Nov) GM James the Persian; Kursk Icon

Fish, wine & oil allowed

#### 11 Wednesday

(28 Nov) M Stephen the New

#### 12 Thursday

(29 Nov) MM Paramon & comp

Wine & oil allowed

#### 13 Friday

(30 Nov) Ap Andrew

Wine & oil allowed

#### 14 Saturday

6:30 PM Vigil

(1 Dec) Pr Nahum

Fish, wine & oil allowed

#### 15 Sunday

9:30 AM Hours

10:00 AM Pentecost 25 Divine Liturgy Tone 8

Fish, wine & oil allowed

### December

#### 16 Monday

(3 Nov) Pr Zephaniah

#### 17 Tuesday

7:30 PM Adult Class - Law of God

(4 Dec) GM Barbara; St John Damascene

Wine & oil allowed

#### 18 Wednesday

(5 Nov) St Sabbas the Sanctified

Fish, wine & oil allowed

#### 19 Thursday

(6 Dec) St Nicholas

Fish, wine & oil allowed

#### 20 Friday

(7 Dec) St Ambrose

#### 21 Saturday

6:30 PM Vigil

(8 Dec) St Patapius

Fish, wine & oil allowed

#### 22 Sunday

9:30 AM Hours

10:00 AM Conception of the Theotokos Divine

Liturgy Tone 1

Fish, wine & oil allowed

#### 23 Monday

(10 Dec) MM Mennas & comp

#### 24 Tuesday

(11 Dec) St Daniel the Stylite

Wine & oil allowed

#### 25 Wednesday

(12 Dec) St Spyridon; St Herman of Alaska

Fish, wine & oil allowed

#### 26 Thursday

(13 Dec) M Eustratius & comp

Fish, wine & oil allowed

#### 27 Friday

(14 Dec) MM Thyrsus & comp

#### 28 Saturday

6:30 PM Vigil

(15 Dec) HM Eleutherius; St Paul

Fish, wine & oil allowed

#### 29 Sunday

9:30 AM Hours

10:00 AM Forefathers Divine Liturgy Tone 2

Fish, wine & oil allowed

#### 30 Monday

(17 Dec) Pr Daniel

Wine & oil allowed

#### 31 Tuesday

(18 Dec) MM Sebastian & comp

Wine & oil allowed

# January 01 - 31, 2003

## January

### 1 Wednesday

(Dec 19) M Boniface

### 2 Thursday

(20 Dec) HM Ignatius the Godbearer

Wine & oil allowed

### 3 Friday

(21 Dec) VM Juliana of Nicomedia & comp

### 4 Saturday

#### 6:30 PM Vigil

(22 Dec) GM Anastasia

Wine & oil allowed

### 5 Sunday

#### 9:30 AM Hours

#### 10:00 AM Sunday before Nativity Divine Liturgy Tone 3

Wine & oil allowed

### 6 Monday

#### 6:30 PM Vigil of the Nativity

Wine & oil allowed

### 7 Tuesday

#### 9:30 AM Hours

#### 10:00 AM Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ Divine Liturgy

### 8 Wednesday

Jan 8 - Jan 10 Fast Free

(26 Dec) HM Euthymius

### 9 Thursday

(27 Dec) Protomartyr & Archd. Stephen

### 10 Friday

(28 Dec) 20,000 MM of Nicomedia

### 11 Saturday

#### 6:30 PM Vigil

(29 Dec) Holy Innocents

### 12 Sunday

#### 9:30 AM Hours

#### 10:00 AM Sunday after Nativity Divine Liturgy Tone 4

### 13 Monday

Jan 13 - Jan 17 Fast Free

(31 Dec) St Melania the Younger

### 14 Tuesday

#### 7:30 PM Bible Study - Epistle to the Romans

(1 Jan) Circumcision of the Lord; St Basil the Great

### 15 Wednesday

(2 Jan) St Sylvester of Rome

### 16 Thursday

(3 Jan) Pr Malachi

### 17 Friday

(4 Jan) Synaxis of the 70 Apostles

## January

### 18 Saturday

#### 6:30 PM Vigil

(5 Jan) St Syncretia

### 19 Sunday

#### 9:30 AM Hours

#### 10:00 AM Theophany of our Lord Jesus Christ Divine Liturgy

### 20 Monday

(7 Jan) Synaxis of the Prophet & Forerunner John

### 21 Tuesday

(8 Jan) St George the Khozebite

### 22 Wednesday

(9 Jan) M Polyeuctus

Wine & oil allowed

### 23 Thursday

(10 Jan) St Gregory of Nyssa

### 24 Friday

(11 Jan) St Theodosius the Great

Wine & oil allowed

### 25 Saturday

#### 6:30 PM Vigil

(12 Jan) M Tatiana of Rome

### 26 Sunday

#### 9:30 AM Hours

#### 10:00 AM Sunday after Theophany Divine Liturgy Tone 6

### 27 Monday

(14 Jan) Holy Fathers slain at Siani & Raithu

### 28 Tuesday

#### 7:30 PM Adult Class - Law of God

(15 Jan) St Paul of Thebes

### 29 Wednesday

(16 Jan) Chains of St Peter

Wine & oil allowed

### 30 Thursday

(17 Jan) St Anthony the Great

### 31 Friday

(18 Jan) SS Athanasius the Great & Cyril of Alexandria

Wine & oil allowed

**Inside:**

**Schedule of Parish Services**

**Sunday School Update**

**Choir News**

**Sisterhood News**

**St. Herman's Youth Conference**

**Plans for the Yolka**

**...and more...**

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