



St. Xenia Parish News

170 North Lowell Street, Methuen, MA 01844

January-February 2004

THE MYSTERY OF LOVING-KINDNESS

A Sermon by St John of Kronstadt on the Nativity of Christ

Great is the mystery of piety: God is manifested in the flesh. (1 Tim. 3, 16)

It is on this day that, throughout the entire inhabited world, the Holy Church brings to our remembrance and observes that most majestic and sublime of mysteries: the Incarnation of God the Word from a Most-pure virgin through an outpouring of, and an overshadowing by, God's Holy Spirit. Wondrous, inexpressible, and awesome is this mystery, both for the exalted and all-contemplating celestial minds of those who dwell in the heavens: the ranks of the angels, – and for the minds of men, enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Imagine: the unoriginate God from Whom everything received the commencement of its existence: the Angels, and the human race, and the entire world, both visible and invisible, – takes a beginning in His humanity. He Whom the heavens cannot contain – is contained in a virginal womb. God becomes an infant, and is borne upon the arms of a Mother. He Who nourishes every breath – is nourished by paps.

The science of astronomy has learned and affirms that, in the order of creation, our earth is but a barely-noticeable point; that millions of worlds around our own fill up the vastnesses of space. And, lo! this single point, this barely-noticeable globe of God's creation, being inhabited by men, – has been accounted worthy of the inexpressible honour of bearing upon itself God-in-the-Flesh, the God-Man, Who did deign to dwell amongst men, to teach erring mankind the knowledge of God, to work innumerable miracles of good, to preach repentance and complete forgiveness of sins; to suffer and to die as an holy Sacrifice for the sins of the world, to be resurrected through the power of Divinity from amongst the dead, – having vanquished death, which is natural to all men, – and to make a gift of resurrection to the entire human race.

Not a single one of the visible worlds, save the earth, has been deemed worthy of this greatest of all honours: for it was only upon the earth that Jesus Christ, the only-begotten of the heavenly Father, had a Virgin-Mother, and He alone was Her Son by way of humanity. Why was the earth given such preference? Why was it only on earth that God appeared in the flesh? – This is a great Divine mys-

tery, a mystery of immeasurable loving-kindness and of God's condescension to perishing mankind.

Thus, God did appear in the flesh: rejoice and be exceedingly glad, O earth; rejoice and celebrate, ye earth-born. The Creator Himself did come to you, in order to create you anew; to restore you, who were corrupted by transgressions. To you did He come: the almighty Physician Himself, – powerful to treat all the inveterate afflictions of sin, – in order that He might heal all the passions of the soul and all the infirmities of the body, – all of the which He truly did do, as we know from the Gospel and from the history of the Church.

Thus, greet Him joyfully – with pure minds and hearts, with bodies chaste and restrained by fasting and abstinence, which the Holy Church has thoughtfully instituted prior to this great feast in order to prepare us worthily to meet the heavenly 'Tsar', Who comes to us in order to abide in us.

He came to us with the mercy and good will of His heavenly Father, – and from us He demands mercy toward our neighbours; He is the righteous 'Tsar' – and He demands of us all righteousness; for He, too, as a man, fulfilled all righteousness (**Matt. 3,15**), showing us an example and providing us with grace and the strength to carry it out. He Himself did suffer for us, having borne the cross; and He taught us to deny ourselves, – or our sins and our passions, – and to follow after Him, doing what is holy out of reverence for God (**2 Cor. 7, 1**).

He came to heal our souls, ailing from sin, and commanded all to repent; let us ever, then, be earnestly contrite, correcting ourselves and striving toward holiness and perfection. The holy Angels, at the Nativity of the God-man, did declare peace unto the world; and unto men – the good will of the Heavenly Father. Let us then, ourselves, have within us a peaceful conscience, and let us be at peace with everyone, if possible. Be at peace and be holy with all, sayeth the apostle, – for without this shall none see the Lord. (comp. Heb. 12, 14).

Amen.

Translated into English by G. Spruksts, from the Russian text by St. Ioann [John] (Sergiev) of Kronstadt. English-language translation copyright (c) 1999 by The St. Stefan Of Perm' Guild, The Russian Cultural Heritage Society, and the Translator. All rights reserved.

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@ttlc.net, or to Father Michael at tcrowley@maine.rr.com. Thank you.

Rector:

Rev. Michael Crowley
 16 Channel Road
 South Portland, ME
 (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
- Peter Danas (978) 459-9541
- Roberto Gonzales (978) 264-9594
- Michael Johnson (978) 691-0045
- Anna Johnson (978) 691-0045
- John Kekis (978) 264-6604
- John Rush (603) 898-4315

Non-Council Ministries:

- Sunday School: 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.

January:

- *4: Diane and Caroline Sarantakis, Pamela Reed
- 11: Yolka Pot Luck
- 18: Karen Schidlovsky, Nancy Harris
- 25: Masha Harris, Anna Johnson



February:

- 1: Tanya Sciaudone, Mireille Lang
- 8: Matushka Nancy
- 15: Helena Doohovskoy, Marianne DiMatteo, Anna Kekis (**Meatfare Sunday**)
- 22: Blini Pot Luck (**Cheesefare Sunday**)
- 29:* Nicholas Kronauer, Vera Sarantakis



Sisterhood News: Over the past year, our parish has donated to the following causes:

January-August 2003:

Clothing to Russia:	\$634
Hermitage of the Holy Cross:	\$200
Church of the New Martyrs vandalism repair:	\$ 25
Cemetery Cross:	\$100
Orthodox Orphanage in Mexico:	\$100
Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem:	\$100
Local needy family:	\$ 30

September 2003-present:

Local needy family:	\$ 50
San Francisco Youth Conference:	\$ 25
Church of the New Martyrs of Russia building:	\$200
Haitian Mission:	\$100

Sisterhood dues are \$5 per year, and membership is open to all women of the parish. Our next meetings will take place on January 25 and February 29.

Thank You:

...to all who made possible the improvements to our parking lot. The space for additional cars was badly needed, it is finally possible to walk on the cemetery road, and best of all, the improvements were made with no disturbance to the natural beauty of the property.

...to all who donated towards the bells of our parish, which were consecrated to use by Father Michael during Vigil on Saturday, December 13, n.s. (postponed from December 6, n.s.). See Property Committee notes for further details.

...to Alexei Klar, for helping Father install the bells.

...to all who donated towards the frescoes in the altar area, and to iconographer Father Yakov, for doing such a wonderful job with them. Special thanks to Lilly Dombrowski and her family for their sponsorship of the principal fresco, the icon of the Resurrection immediately behind the holy table.

Please remember in your prayers...

Nicholas, Paul, Nina, David, Basil, Vassilisa, Seraphim, Bart, Alice, Athanasia, Dimitri, Lily, Kyriaki, Genevieve, Anne, and Apostolos. We would also like to request prayers for the Crowley family, as Father Michael's father just underwent quadruple-bypass surgery in the early part of December.

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

Financial Update: As of December 2003, the balance on the church mortgage stands at \$87,092.64. If you have any questions, please see Reader Constantine Desrosiers.

Sunday School News: The children of the Sunday School are eagerly looking forward to their Nativity presentation, which will be offered at the Parish Yolka on January 11. Mark your calendars!

Property Committee: "No cloud without its silver lining" turned out to be true during the first major snowstorm of the season on December 6/7 n.s. – iconographer Father Yakov was working on the altar frescoes at the time, and expressed his appreciation for the snow, which gave him additional time to work on them. The frescoes are:

- the Resurrection, directly behind the holy table;
- the Theotokos of the Sign, located above the icon of the Resurrection, and flanked on either side by icons of Six-Winged Seraphim;
- the Four Liturgists: St. Basil the Great, St. John Chrysostom, St. James, and St. Gregory the Dialogist, located on the walls above the windows.

The bells from Russia have been hung at least temporarily under the front stairs that lead to the basement, well protected from weather and vandals. A bell-ringing workshop with an accomplished bell ringer from Jordanville is planned for the near future, and we are hoping to enlist the aid of the youth of our parish, as well as any adults who would be interested to learn this important liturgical art. We will hopefully be able to construct a bell tower out of doors once the weather turns warm again.

Now that we have had our first snowstorm of what promises to be an active snow season, it is important to keep our sidewalks shoveled. We have someone who comes to plow the road and parking lot, but we have to do the rest ourselves. Donations of sand and/or salt would also be welcome, since several of our parishioners are elderly and we should consider their fears of slipping and falling.

It is very important to keep snow from our deck as well, particularly the areas where the deck meets the building. Long-term moisture contact is giving us a problem with carpenter ants. We may have to do something more with the deck to alleviate the problem, once the spring arrives, but having the snow removed from where it lies against the building would help a lot.

RESPONSE of the COUNCIL OF BISHOPS of the RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA to HIS HOLINESS PATRIARCH ALEXY

Your Holiness!

Your letter addressed to the Council of Bishops was not the first step which expressed your positive attitude towards the proper normalization of the relationship of the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate and the Russian Church Abroad.

We accept with gratitude the warm welcome given our delegation, which visited Moscow in November of this past year. We thank you also for sending the three educated and good-willed pastors to the All-Diaspora Pastoral Conference held in the suburbs of New York, who related a great deal of important information on the situation of the Church in Russia in the past and present.

We hope that these clergymen were able to report to you the spirit of freedom which is so dear to us, in which our pastors were bred and which infused our pastoral conference, headed by twelve bishops of the Church Abroad. We think that they may also attest to the fact that, along with the wide scope of opinions on our relationship, the absolute majority of pastors admit the vital need to continue the dialog already begun.

Your combination of cautious action with the earnest effort to overcome confrontation in the spirit of brotherly, mutual understanding and Christian love serves as an example for us. We thank you for your care in seeing that previous obstacles and misunderstandings are set aside, in order to open new paths of relations between the Russian Orthodox people wherever they may be, for the people have truly been scattered across the face of the earth. This scattering has occurred in different periods of time and in the most varying of circumstances, which leads to differences in mindset even in our day. But the Church is strong in the love of Christ to embrace all.

We—Russian Orthodox bishops, the pastors entrusted with our care, the clergymen and the people—have always felt this power, we lived in it. Now new challenges face us. In the contemporary world, civil borders do not play the same role that they played even in the recent past. The “iron curtain” fell, communication is now possible, and families once divided—seemingly, forever—now have contact with each other. At the same time, wounds are healing which were inflicted decades ago.

The tribulations visited upon the Russian Orthodox people are well known to us. We also saw them firsthand at the All-Diaspora Pastoral Conference, when the most wide-ranging points of view were expressed with frankness and in pain. At the same time, those of other nations whom the Lord brought to communion with the Church through the providential scattering of the Russian people also participate in this pain from what had occurred. Who will heal us? We rely on the One Merciful Lord.

Indeed, as you expressed in your Epistle, the “external ecclesial garment was torn asunder,” yet “the Body of Christ preserved its holy unity.” This truly ecclesiastical unity, preserved in the depths, must be brought forth by us, for the Body of Christ is the Church, and the Mystery of all the mysteries is one—the Body of Christ. We are given this responsibility; despite all the hindrances we may meet on the path of overcoming divisions, we must open our hearts for the acceptance of God’s providence for His Church.

Moreover, at the same time we look to the struggle of the Holy New Martyrs of Russia, who lay down their lives for Christ during the persecution of the Church, not knowing what will come of this chosen path for future generations on this earth, for us today; yet they hoped that they would be heard by the Lord. And they were! That is why their glorification initiated that which at one time seemed impossible in light of countless external obstacles. Now we must fully make sense of this miracle together. We took from your Epistle a readiness to continue upon the path of this miracle of the Russian Church, and, in turn, we attest to our willingness to travel the path shown to us by the Lord, Who glorified His saints.

Our Council established a committee for the study of crucial questions alongside a similar committee from your side. We hope that the meeting of our First Hierarch Metropolitan Laurus with Your Holiness at the scheduled time will be the next step in the overcoming of the obstacles that arose in the church life of the Orthodox people in recent decades, so that together we might glorify our Lord Jesus Christ “with one mouth and one heart,” having “abolished in His flesh the enmity:” (Eph. 2:15).

PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS

+LAURUS, Metropolitan of Eastern America and New York
First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia.

+ALYPY, Archbishop of Chicago and Detroit

+MARK, Archbishop of Berlin, Germany and Great Britain

+HILARION, Archbishop of Sydney, Australia and New Zealand

+KYRILL, Archbishop of San Francisco and Western America

+AMBROISE, Bishop of Geneva and Western Europe

+EVTIKHII, Bishop of Ishim and Siberia

+AGATHANGEL, Bishop of Simferopol and Crimea

+ALEXANDER, Bishop of Buenos Aires and South America

+DANIEL, Bishop of Erie

+GABRIEL, Bishop of Manhattan

+MICHAEL, Bishop of Boston

+AGAPIT, Bishop of Stuttgart

+PETER, Bishop of Cleveland

The Russian Corner

Memories of Christmas from Long Ago



I remember that Christmas was an occasion for joy. There was the clean smell of snow. The trees and the shrubs around the house looked like blue porcelain covered in frost. Thick snow was falling heavily. In a day it would be Christmas Eve.

On the morning of Christmas Eve, the fir tree was brought into the dining room. The scent spread throughout the entire house, and the smell of Christmas was everywhere. In preparation, my brothers and I painted silver and gold nuts as Christmas-tree decorations for an entire week. Many colored garlands were made. The gold and silver sparkled gloriously. Christmas crackers, painted nuts and garlands were tied to the tree branches as decorations.

After the Evening Service and supper, we were sent to bed with the great anticipation of a visit from "*Ded' Morozh'*" (Grandfather Frost). He would be passing by our house and leave gifts for the good children, such as a book or toy, and for the naughty ones — birch rods.

In the morning, we would find our gifts under the Christmas tree. After church and breakfast, we would go outside and enjoy playing in the snow on our new sleds and skates, knowing that hot chocolate awaited to warm us up. The beauty of winter is etched in our memory for all time.



Fresco Iconography in the Church

The addition of the fresco icons on the back wall and ceiling of the altar are an inspiration to us all. It is a great blessing to our church that Fr. Yakov Ferins was able to write these icons, for the most part in his studio in New York, and then mount and finish them here. There are many special thanks that need to go out in appreciation.

First of all, it was through the insistence of our Lily Dombrowski that we even began this project. She wanted an icon of the Resurrection of Christ behind the Holy Table, and she took it upon herself to raise over \$5,000 from the members of her family to fund this stunning work.

Second, we should all be aware of the wonderful contribution of Natalie Pishenin, her husband Hugh Riley and their children. This family hosted Fr. Yakov in their home for the entire two weeks that he was at our church doing his work. Not only did they provide him with a place to sleep, but also made sure that he was well supplied with food so that he would not have to be bothered while doing his work.

And third, we have to remember and say thank you to the wonderful group of sponsors who donated so generously to our sponsorship fund in the early years of the church for the addition of beautiful iconography. It was truly a joy to take this money that had been waiting in a special account and finally put it to its stated purpose.

We have now come to the end of these resources. There are still some funds in the sponsorship account but they are earmarked for other projects like the mosaic of St. Xenia, which is being created right now in Russia, and which will be placed over the front door after it is complete and we receive it.



St Xenia of Petersburg Orthodox Church

January 2004

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				<i>1</i>	<i>2</i> (20 Dec) St. John of Kronstadt	<i>3</i> 4:30 PM Young People's Class 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil
Nativity Fast						
<i>4</i> 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM Sunday of the Holy Forefathers Divine Liturgy Tone 4 12:30 PM Parish Council Mtng.	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i> 6:30 PM Nativity Vigil	<i>7</i> 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ Divine Liturgy	<i>8</i> (26 Dec) Synaxis of the Theotokos	<i>9</i>	<i>10</i> 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil
Nativity Fast			Fast Free Period			
<i>11</i> 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM Sunday after the Nativity Divine Liturgy Tone 5 12:00 PM Yolka Celebration	<i>12</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>14</i> 7:30 PM Bible Study - Epistle to the Romans (1 Jan) Circumcision of our Lord; St Basil the Great	<i>15</i> (2 Jan) St Seraphim of Sarov	<i>16</i>	<i>17</i> 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil
Fast Free Period						
<i>18</i> 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM Sunday before Theophany Divine Liturgy Tone 6 6:30 PM Theophany Vigil Fast Day - Wine & Oil allowed	<i>19</i> 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM Theophany of our Lord Jesus Christ Divine Liturgy	<i>20</i> (7 Jan) Synaxis of the Prophet and Baptist John	<i>21</i> Fast Day - Wine & Oil allowed	<i>22</i>	<i>23</i> (10 Jan) St Theophan the Recluse Fast Day - Wine & Oil allowed	<i>24</i> 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil
<i>25</i> 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM Sunday after Theophany Divine Liturgy Tone 7 12:00 PM Young People's Class	<i>26</i>	<i>27</i> 7:30 PM Enquirer's Class (14 Jan) St Nina, Enlightener of Georgia	<i>28</i> Fast Day - Wine & Oil allowed	<i>29</i>	<i>30</i> Fast Day - Wine & Oil allowed	<i>31</i> 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil

St Xenia of Petersburg Orthodox Church

February 2004

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM Sunday of the Publican & Pharisee Divine Liturgy Tone 8 12:30 PM Parish Council Mtng.	2	3	4	5 7:00 PM St. Xenia Vigil	6 10:00 AM (24 Jan) St Xenia of Petersburg Divine Liturgy	7 4:30 PM Young People's Class 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil
Fast Free Week						
8 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM Sunday of the Prodigal Son Divine Liturgy Tone 1	9	10	11 7:30 PM Bible Study - Epistle to the Romans Fast Day - Wine & Oil allowed	12 (30 Jan) Synaxis of the Three Hierarchs	13 Fast Day - Wine & Oil allowed	14 5:30 PM Commemoration of the Departed 6:30 PM Sunday / Meeting of the Lord Vigil
15 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM Meat-Fare Sunday / Meeting of the Lord Divine Liturgy 12:00 PM Young People's Class	16	17	18	19	20	21 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil
Cheesefare Week - No Meat						
22 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM Forgiveness Sunday Divine Liturgy Tone 3	23 7:30 PM Great Canon of St Andrew of Crete	24	25 7:30 PM Great Canon of St Andrew of Crete	26	27 7:30 PM Akathist to the Theotokos followed by a short reading from her life	28 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil
Great Lent						
29 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM Sunday of Orthodoxy Divine Liturgy Tone 4						

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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.