



St. Xenia Parish News

170 North Lowell Street, Methuen, MA 01844

July-August 2004

End of Life Issues

Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep (Jn:11:11)

We are very blessed at St. Xenia Church to have the custodianship of the Sts. Peter & Paul Cemetery. Each time that I arrive at the church for Divine Services, I make a point of driving through the cemetery. On a practical note, I look around to see that all is in order, noting anything I see that needs attention. Spiritually, I am reminded of our responsibility to pray for those buried here, to cherish their memory and to remember that we will allow follow in God's time.

The scriptural story of the raising of Lazarus from the dead serves to remind us, though, that the grave is not our final or ultimate goal. Our Lord refers to Lazarus as sleeping. His raising of Lazarus not only foreshadows His life-giving Resurrection, but reminds us that we too will be raised on the day of the Final Judgement, that is, raised bodily from the grave and reunited with our soul.

Thus, in a traditional Christian cemetery, bodies are laid in the grave with their feet towards the East so that when our Lord comes and calls us from the grave and we rise, we will behold His Glory shining in the Heavens.

Sadly, our society has strayed far from any Traditional understanding of death and burial. It is this departure from Tradition which I intend to address. Since we have a majority of people who have purchased plots in the cemetery but who are not of our parish we encounter issues which we hope to avoid with our own parishioners.

Perhaps the most common issue we are confronted with is cremation. I am told that many people choose cremation over traditional burial for economic reasons. Apparently, it is less expensive for a loved one to be taken away to a crematorium and burned before interment than to be treated in a truly Christian manner.

While we have not prevented persons who in times past have purchased plots in the cemetery to bury even cremated remains of their loved ones, we make it perfectly clear that they are not offered the Orthodox Christian Burial Service, or even a Memorial Service at St. Xenia Church.

Occasionally, we are met with cremations which are associated with extraordinary circumstances, particularly circumstances which could not be avoided by the reposed person. In these cases, we seek the counsel of our Bishop and follow his guidance. In most cases, however, the circumstances are not at all extraordinary and we adhere strictly to the precepts of the Orthodox Church which forbid ministration to cremated individuals.

The theology surrounding these precepts is relatively simple. The body is the co-struggler with the soul for salvation and must be accorded the appropriate respect. And, as stated earlier, the body will be reunited with the soul at the Final Judgement, and thus should be left intact at burial. To do otherwise is to act in profound disobedience to the Orthodox Faith.

But what of the expense, we are asked? Most of us have been told that funeral expenses are astronomical! Well, this is not necessarily the case. There is for example an organization, "Funeral Consumers Alliance," which has representatives throughout the U.S. who encourage people not to simply hand the responsibility of a funeral over to the "professionals" but rather to make sure that they are making informed choices getting only what is truly needed.

It is not unusual in our Russian Church for the reposed remains of a person to be laid in a simple pine coffin and placed in their parish church where family and loved ones read the Psalter over the body through the night before the funeral. Most often the funeral takes place the next day after the person's repose. There is no need for embalming, no need for ornate pieces of furniture which will only be placed in the ground anyway, no need to rent some random

funeral home space for people to come to pay their respects.

In the not so distant past, the bodies of the reposed were prepared for burial by family members, or women in the parish. While this is now far from the norm, it is still possible and still legal in just about every state.

These are simple examples which may seem radical to some but are meant to the point to the fact that modernity, not money is the problem. As Orthodox Christians we cannot fear being seen as different because we do not conform to the godless norms of our secular society. If we are willing to “follow the old ways” the funeral and burial of a Christian person can be done with abundance of respect and love, but without pouring out an abundance of cash.

The next most common issue we face is suicide. Suicide is, of course, an even more serious issue than cremation. When a person chooses to take their own life they place themselves outside of the Grace of God, and for all intents and purposes, declare themselves unbelievers. They are thus not given a Christian burial or remembered in Memorial Services.

Even more often than cremation, though, we are met with extraordinary circumstances in suicide. We endeavor to make every effort to determine if the person who took their own life was reasonably sane at the time of their action. This can be a very sensitive issue that must be dealt with confidentially by the family of the deceased and the priest who in turn seeks the guidance of his bishop.

If a person is determined to have been insane, Memorial Services are often allowed quietly in the family home, over the grave at the time of burial or wherever is deemed most appropriate. It is not, however, a time in which the family of the deceased can expect to be comforted by the normal Orthodox course of things at the time the parting of a soul.

The third thing which we encounter, and perhaps the most common and the one that often determines the other two, is persons who are not members of our parish, or any other parish, and yet have families who regard them as Orthodox Christians and want appropriate services at the time of repose.

Canonically speaking, to be in good standing in the Orthodox Church a person must have confessed their sins and communed the Holy Mysteries at least once in the past year. This does not seem much of a requirement to those of us who attend Divine Services regularly and wish as often as possible to partake of

the Divine Life. But, it is not at all unusual to be met with a reposed individual who has not been to Church since childhood, who has never kept a fast or even celebrated Pascha (in the way of the Church), and who, having come to the end of this life on earth has the expectation of an Orthodox Christian burial. This is a very difficult situation for the priest. How does he minister to this person who he has never met, or bring comfort to this family who he does not know?

Well, more often than not, we do the best that we can. There are, though, lines that we may not cross. If by the Grace of God we are able to make it to a bedside before the person reposes, and are able to hear whatever confession of sins the person is capable of, and are able to communicate the Holy Mysteries, we are full of joy – as is the Lord when any sinner repents.

All too often, the person or family waits too long. They have not had an ongoing relationship with the Church and so the priest is called as an afterthought, as a part of making formal funeral arrangements. In cases such as this, the priest may be prevented from performing the full Funeral Service, and constrained to a greatly abbreviated Memorial Service at best.

When a person is a member of a parish and they are sick we pray for them continually both in Divine Services and in our personal prayer. We long to be by their side to comfort them and their families when they are nearing their end. There should never be a hesitation to call the priest in time of sickness, and particularly when a person is nearing their end. Failure to do so nearly always brings complications. No matter how far away from the Faith a person may have strayed, an Orthodox priest is always ready and eager to go to their bedside to help them reconcile with God before passing.

I have not written these things as an admonition to anyone. My intent is to help you know what is normal in Orthodoxy, and especially to help you be prepared to deal with the repose of a loved one.

Proceeding according to the Tradition greatly eases a person’s transition to the heavenly realm, while providing the maximum comfort and reconciliation for those left behind.

Let us all pray for one another that we are not taken unaware!

— Fr. Michael

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
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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

President: Rev. Michael Crowley (207) 767-1889
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Secretary: Natalie Pishenin (978) 658-5564
Treasurer: Tony Sarantakis (978) 263-2016
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Cemetery: Lily Dombrowski (978) 851-2972
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Anna Johnson (978) 691-0045
John Kekis (978) 264-6604
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Non-Council Ministries:

Sunday School: Michael Lang (603) 465-9754

Trapeza Schedule

During the summer months, Trapeza is scheduled on a volunteer basis. There is a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board in the parish hall. Please consider signing up for this important part of our parish ministry.

Remember that the Apostles' Fast lasts this year from June 7 until July 11 inclusive (dates are n.s.), and thus the Trapeza on July 4 and 11 will need to consist of fasting meals. Also, from August 14 until August 28 (n.s.) is the Dormition Fast, which is a strict fast.

We wish to extend our thanks to those who have already signed up to provide Trapeza for us. In addition, particular thanks to Ellen Pishenin Williams, who has donated several coffee carafes so that it will be easier for us to provide coffee during Trapeza.

Sisterhood News: Lilac Nights was a great success – we sold out of tickets. Our goal for the evening was to break even, but it proved to be profitable for both parishes (St. Xenia's and Holy Epiphany of Roslindale). Our thanks to Paul Blinow for the generous donation of his accordion for the raffle. This was a great hit, and was won by a young man from New York. Thanks too to Natalie for filling the "Gardening Basket" that we raffled off. Thank you to Nick Chaplain for his direction in the kitchen and Matushka Miriam Crowley for her hard work in and out of the kitchen.

In Charity donations, we sent \$200 to the Serbian Monastery that burned on Mt. Athos. We sent \$300 with Anna Johnson to Russia to give to our needy friends there, and we sent \$200 to Project Mexico with Steven and Ann Marie DiMatteo, who will be volunteering there this month.

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

Thank You...

...to Ellen Pishenin Williams, for the donation of coffee carafes to help ease the coffee production during Trapeza.

...to Fr. Joachim Provatakis and his son Joseph for filling in for Fr. Michael during his absence.

...to Matushka Nancy for initiating the successful Lilac Nights dinner dance. **Huge** thanks due here!

...to Matushka Lena of Holy Epiphany, and to the sisterhoods, ladies, girls, men, and all the helpers of both parishes, as well as to our parishioners' family members who lent a hand.

...especially big thanks to Matushka Miriam Crowley of Springfield, who worked very hard during the night of our fundraiser, helping to make it the success that it was.

Please remember in your prayers... Nicholas, Paul, Nina, David, Basil, Vassilisa, Seraphim, Bart, Alice, Athanasia, Dimitri, Lily, Kyriaki, Genevieve, Anne, and Apostolos. Also, prayers are requested for Bishop Alexander (Mileant) and Priest Paul Bassett.

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

Financial Update: As of June 30, 2004, the balance on the church mortgage stands at \$80,092.64. If you have any questions, please see Reader Constantine Desrosiers.

Memory Eternal: We received word that on June 11, 2004, Hieromonk Averky of Holy Trinity Monastery reposed in the Lord. Father Averky was well known to many of us for his great knowledge of and love for the Church. He will be greatly missed, but we rejoice that his sufferings are at last at an end. Glory to God for all things!

Congratulations to our Graduates: Andre Doohovskoy, graduated from Georgetown University with a degree in Russian; John Sarantakis, graduated from UMass Amherst with a degree in History (cum laude, no less!); and high-school graduate Suzy McLellan, who plans to attend Wellesley College in the fall.

Upcoming Events: Just a reminder that there are still places at the St. Seraphim Camp, which will take place from August 1 – August 8 of this year. The cost per camper is \$150. For further details, please see Father Michael or Matushka Nancy, or visit the camp web site at www.orthodoxinfo.biz for registration information online.

Yard Sale Update: The Sisterhood has postponed the Yard Sale until early September. While you're doing your spring cleaning, please set aside any "good junque" (no clothing please, unless it's really a special item). We'll start collecting donated items at the church in August.

Bishop's Visit: Our bishop Gabriel of Manhattan will be coming for an Episcopal visit in September. We are still negotiating the actual date, but will keep you informed when we arrive at a mutually acceptable time.

The Russian Corner

Day After Day

From the collection of short spiritual thoughts for every day compiled by an unknown author in Russia in 1908.

Mark 16:1-4 (the Stone at the Tomb of Our Lord)

How often in our life we find a heavy stone, a great obstacle toward reaching our goal and we think that there is no way that we can remove it. We feel helpless, and we repeat the words of the myrrh-bearing women, “Who is going to roll away the stone?”

And what? Where the main obstacle was for them, there they met unexpected joy. The stone had been rolled away, and they found out about the Resurrection of Christ.

What a lesson this story has for us! Let’s completely depend on our Lord, not allowing even a shadow of doubt, and the Angel of our Lord will guide us on our thorny path.

He will remove the stone and when we find ourselves in front of what previously was terrifying to us, we will discover that, by the Grace of God, it has turned for us to joy and has become easy.

Green Shchi

(a summer soup)

“Shchi da kasha, mat nasha”

“Shchi and kasha, that’s our mother”

- 2 Tbsp. oil
- ½ lb. spinach
- ¼ lb. sorrel
- 1 parsnip
- 2 carrots
- 2 baking potatoes
- 6 C vegetable stock or canned broth
- ½ tsp. salt
- Pepper to taste
- Garnish: Fresh dill, sour cream, hard-boiled egg



Wash spinach and sorrel. Cook in boiling water. Puree.

In a heavy pot, add oil and sauté the parsnip, carrots and baking potatoes which have been cut into small pieces.

Stir and add vegetable stock and pureed greens, salt, and pepper and boil for 5 min.

To serve, ladle soup into individual bowls.

Garnish with fresh dill, a tsp. of sour cream or hard-boiled egg.

May be served hot or cold

St Xenia Orthodox Church

July 2004

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				<i>1</i> (18 June) MM Leontius & comp Wine & oil allowed	<i>2</i> (19 June) Ap Jude Wine & oil allowed	<i>3</i> 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil (20 June) St John of Shanghai & San Francisco Fish, wine & oil allowed
Apostles Fast						
<i>4</i> 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM Pentecost 5 Divine Liturgy Tone 4 Fish, wine & oil allowed	<i>5</i> (22 June) HM Eusebius	<i>6</i> (23 June) M Agrippina Wine & oil allowed	<i>7</i> (24 June) Nativity of St John the Baptist Fish, wine & oil allowed	<i>8</i> (25 June) VM Febronia Wine & oil allowed	<i>9</i> (26 June) St David of Thessalonica	<i>10</i> 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil (27 June) St Sampson the Hospitable Fish, wine & oil allowed
Apostles Fast						
<i>11</i> 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM Pentecost 6 Divine Liturgy Tone 5 Fish, wine & oil allowed	<i>12</i> 8:30 AM Hours 9:00 AM App. Peter & Paul Divine Liturgy	<i>13</i> (30 June) Synaxis of the 12 Apostles	<i>14</i> (1 July) MM Cosmas & Damian Wine & oil allowed	<i>15</i> (2 July) Deposition of the Robe of the Theotokos	<i>16</i> (3 July) M Hyacinth	<i>17</i> 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil (4 July) St Andrew of Crete; Royal Martyrs of Russia
<i>18</i> 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM Pentecost 7 Divine Liturgy Tone 6	<i>19</i> (6 July) St Sisois the Great	<i>20</i> (7 July) St Thomas	<i>21</i> (8 July) GM Procopius; Kazan Icon Wine & oil allowed	<i>22</i> (9 July) HM Pancratius	<i>23</i> (10 July) 45 MM at Nicopolis	<i>24</i> 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil (11 July) GM Euphemia; St Olga
<i>25</i> 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM Pentecost 8 Divine Liturgy Tone 7	<i>26</i> (13 July) Synaxis of Archangel Gabriel	<i>27</i> (14 July) Ap Aquila; St Priscilla	<i>28</i> (15 July) St Vladimir the Enlightener Fish, wine & oil allowed	<i>29</i> (16 July) HM Athenogenes	<i>30</i> (17 July) GM Marina Wine & oil allowed	<i>31</i> 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil (18 July) M Emilian

St Xenia Orthodox Church

August 2004

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM Pentecost 9 Divine Liturgy Tone 8	2 (20 July) Pr Elijah	3 (21 July) St Symeon of Emessa	4 (22 July) St Mary Magdalen Wine & oil allowed	5 (23 July) MM Trophimus & comp	6 (24 July) M Christina of Tyre	7 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil (25 July) Dormition of St Anna
Fr. Michael at St. Seraphim Camp in PA						
8 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM Pentecost 10 Divine Liturgy Tone 1	9 (27 July) GM Panteleimon	10 (28 July) Ap Prochorus	11 (29 July) M Callincus of Gangra	12 (30 July) App Silas & Silvanus	13 (31 July) R Eudocimus	14 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil (1 Aug) Procession of the Cross Wine & oil allowed
Theotokos Fast						
15 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM Pentecost 11 Divine Liturgy Tone 2 Wine & oil allowed	16 (3 Aug) St Isaacius & comp	17 (4 Aug) 7 Youths of Ephesus	18 6:30 PM Vigil of the Transfiguration (5 Aug) M Eusygnius	19 9:00 AM Transfiguration of the Lord Divine Liturgy Fish, wine & oil allowed	20 (7 Aug) M Dometius & comp	21 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil (8 Aug) St Emilian of Cyzicus Wine & oil allowed
Theotokos Fast						
22 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM Pentecost 12 Divine Liturgy Tone 3 Wine & oil allowed	23 (10 Aug) M Laurence	24 (11 Aug) M Euplus	25 (12 Aug) MM Photius & Anicetas	26 (13 Aug) St Tikhon	27 6:30 PM Vigil of the Dormition (14 Aug) Pr Micah	28 10:00 AM Dormition of the Theotokos Divine Liturgy 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil
Theotokos Fast						
29 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM Pentecost 13 Divine Liturgy Tone 4	30 (17 Aug) M Myron of Cyzicus	31 (18 Aug) MM Florus & Laurus				

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Methuen, MA 01844

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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.