



St. Xenia Parish News

170 North Lowell Street, Methuen, MA 01844

February-March 2003

The Light of Christ

From the Spiritual Treasure Trove of Archpriest Nikolai Deputatov

"In Your light we shall see light."

Man thirsts for revitalization, inspiration... For a lamp to shine, the presence of transparent glass is not enough, there must be a candle burning within; there is a need for a candle to burn within him. This is what the Lord did with His apostles: first, having purified them with truth, He enlivened them with the Holy Spirit, and only then did they become a light for the world.

This process is inevitable for every Christian. First, a cleansing by Truth and then enlightenment by the Spirit. Truth repudiates the inborn inspiration as something ludicrous; it deadens it so that the Spirit, having come, will resurrect him in a renewed form. If a person, before he is cleansed by truth, begins to be guided by his own inspiration, he will begin to emit, not a pure light, but one that is tainted and polarized by a filter of his own damaged heart, where good is interspersed with evil.

The soul is lonely in this world and seeks the source of true, meaningful life and renewal outside it. At times the soul locks itself in, becomes introverted, lives inside its own world, and there, finds light.

The fundamental characteristic of the inner world or the emotional life is a troubled soul, an unceasing search for light and joy. A constant ebbing and flowing of the tide, striving, lifting up and being dropped to the ground, — calling like shadows of a spring dawn, and without hope, like the twilight. Flashes of lightning of partially solved mysteries and a bitter feeling of futility of all efforts...

"The beloved pierces the mind with a ray of his own light, and instantly flees from the fast traveling mind. The more it becomes aware, the more it distances itself, wrenching itself from the hands, beckons and draws the soul to follow" (Gregory the Theologian).

"All sensations of my mind and soul concentrated on the indescribable pleasure seeking and joy from that ebullient light. But when that immeasurable light appeared before me and then diminished little by little, and finally became invisible, I then came to my senses and found out what wonders the power of this light had suddenly created in

me.... That light, when it comes, brings joy, and when it disappears, leaves a wound and an ache in the heart" (St. Simeon the New Theologian 86th sermon).

"When I see the increasing malady of the tongue nowadays, fast evolving sages, newly created theologians, for whom it is sufficient to only want to become wise: then I feel a need for wisdom from above and I search with Jeremiah 'a lodging place for travelers' (Jeremiah 9.2) and I want to be alone, by myself.... Denying the flesh and turning back on the world, and only in dire need succumbing to anything human, communing with God and oneself, to live above the visible; always to have divine images in the mind, pure ones that are not jumbled with distant and deceptive impressions; to be and unceasingly become an untainted mirror of God and of the divine; to accumulate more light to an existing light, to a light less clear, a beaming one, until we ascend to the Source of that radiance and reach a blessed end..." (Gregory the Theologian, pt. 2).

Perceptions of light, in the experience of visions of an "inner light," are as real as perceptions of physical light. In the written works of the saints, quite often we read that they perceived this immaterial, Divine light. At times it appears so powerful, that it emits light to the outside and is perceived as physical light, making the body of the ascetic radiant. Spiritual beauty is a blinding beauty of a radiant, light-bearing image, incomprehensible to mortal beings.

The face of Abba (=father) Pamvo "shone like lightning, and he was like a king, sitting upon his throne..." Before the repose in the Lord of Abba Sisoï, when the holy fathers were gathered around him, his face shone like the sun.... A passerby encountered Abba Silouan and, seeing that his face and body shone like an angel, fell on his face... One brother, having come to a monastery, looked through the door of Abba Arseny's cell and saw that the starets was as if ablaze. Motovilov said to Saint Seraphim: "Father, I cannot look, because flashes of light are gushing out from your eyes. Your face has become brighter than the sun, and my eyes are aching with pain..."

The wondrous Fire that was burning inside St. Sergius attracted those people who had seen him, at least once. During the singing of "To You we sing," the fire came down "

as if from the sky, and moved on the altar engulfing the whole altar and surrounding St Sergius as he was serving the liturgy. While he was partaking of the Holy Sacrament, the divine light descended into the chalice. Something similar had also occurred in the life of the starets (elder) Hieromonk Ambrosy. To some extent there was an illuminating in the face of Bishop Theophan the Recluse and the righteous St. John of Kronstadt. Father John stood before the Lord as if before the sun and feeling an ineffable brilliance of the divine light, closed his eyes, and clearly felt himself to be in the rays of this light, and from them he felt warmth, joy and closeness to Christ the Savior... From the grace of God his face was beautiful, like that of an angel, and one wanted to gaze at him... Sin perverts man but grace luminously adorns him... The Holy Spirit lives in us and makes us resemble the Lord Jesus Christ, just like children resemble their father.

There had been many emissions of inner light of ascetics of the 6th century and recorded in "The Spiritual Field" and in the lives of the saints. The heritage of the holy fathers on the divine light is enormous. This amazes us and unspeakably gives us joy. In it, is Christ's concerned love for helpless people... However, there is no Mt Tabor without suffering, and there is no support for one's spirit, outside contemplation of Christ.

Know the Lord and His likeness will reflect in you and it will not allow darkness to overpower you, to bind you like a sinner until eternity, deprived of the ability to do good. Let deathly horror and sanguine sweat and the Lord's suffering pass before your eyes. When you look at Him, He who endures suffering, will look at you and will do with you, what He did, at one time, with Peter, and you will "go and begin to cry bitterly..."

The Gospel is the fullness of the Revelation. It is — the sun, in comparison with which, other holy books are only planets, that shine with reflected light. There, God prophesied with the mouths of prophets. Here, the Son of God, Himself, converses with us — God-man, whose whole life was the revelation of light. "I am the light of the world" (Jn.8:12).

He is not just a bearer of light, but is Himself — Light, incarnate, light of the Hypostasis. Whoever believes in Him, knows through experience, that he owes his inner

enlightenment to this universal Light, just as, in the physical world, he owes it to the sun. Christianity is not only a religion of love, but also of light. Christ taught the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, teaching about the laws of an eternal, divine life, of the "inner light" as a spiritual life, of one being God-man. Inasmuch as the soul is more precious than the body, the inner or spiritual life is more important than the outer, physical life. Conversely, the inner, spiritual darkness is more dangerous, more perilous, more horrific than the black of the night, or blindness. Whoever loses the inner sight, forfeits with it the eternal, divine life, to which light belongs, just as it is in the physical life (Jn.1:4).

Enlightenment of both the body and soul is only necessary within the parameters of space and time. Meanwhile, what is the point of examining infusorians under the microscope and not even once glancing into one's own soul? What joy is there in using electricity and never seeing the sun's rays during the day? Inner, spiritual light not only enlightens, but it also enlivens. The quantity of inner light will always be proportionate to the level of our spiritual growth. Abundance of spiritual light is conditional upon some great feat. We are convinced of this because of the examples and teachings of the saints, who embodied these, together with spiritual excellence and a vivid brilliance reaching an outer radiance, the brilliance of the "inner light."

Mysterious is the nature of spiritual light. The essence of this light is divinely incomprehensible. In its ultimate revelations, the inner light is Divine Light. It reveals the mysteries of the past and the future. It brings one to an understanding of religious truths, speculations, ideas... In its unfathomable essence, the Divine Light is superior to any soul. It is inherent in the spiritual world, as a whole. A pure heart, a brilliant mind, a sensitive conscience—are only ways of contemplating it. In its own right, it is "a great mystery of godliness" (1Tim.3:16).

You, O Lord art all sweetness, all light and life. Enlighten us with the light of Your Divine wisdom. Glorify us with Your Divine power and abandon us not, we who depend on Your.

St. Xenia of St. 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 bi-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 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

- 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. Maelrubha 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) 465-9754
- Youth Choir: Patricia Crowley (207) 767-1889

Trapeza Schedule:

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

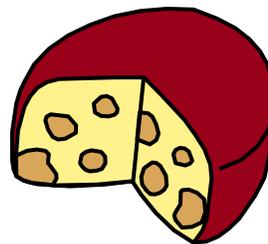
If you cannot be at church on your assigned Sunday please call and switch with someone. If you have any questions contact Karen Schidlovsky at (603) 868-6410. Trapeza can be whatever you would like to prepare on your day. Some parishioners prefer to make a big lunch but this isn't necessary. As long 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.

February

- 2 Nicholas Kronauer; Vera Sanrantakis; Arnolds
- 9 Tatyana Pishenina; E. Williams
- 16 Diane, Carolyn and Pamela Reed
- 23 Anna Johnson; Masha Harris

March

- 2 Meatfare Sunday) Xenia Rush and Kyriaki Lavoie
- 9 (Cheesefare Sunday)Tanya Sciaudone; Mireille Lang
- 16 * Janet Donley and Amy McLellan
- 23 * Mariana Haven; Josephine Kniaziuk; Irene LaPage
- 30 * Nicholas Kronauer; Vera Sarantakis; Arnolds



Sisterhood News

The Nativity decorations, feast and Yolka were a great success. Our “giving tree” brought generous donations to Lazarus House. A special collection was taken in Church to send to the needy in Russia with our sister Anna Johnson on her trip.

At our regular meeting on January 26 we are going to discuss Cheesefare Week and the Blini Meal.

Sisterhood dues are \$5 per year, and membership is open to all women of the parish. Our next meeting will be held on February 23rd, the last Sunday of the month.

Thank You...Спасибо...Ευχαριστο...

...to all those who helped make the pre-Nativity cleanup a success.

...to David Lavoie, who spearheaded the brick walkway up to our parish hall, and whose name was inadvertently omitted from last month's list. Sincerest apologies, David!

...to all who donated flowers for the Nativity, and the time spent decorating. Our church has never looked so beautiful!

...to all who also provided helping hands in the removal of the Nativity decorations.

...to all who have donated floral arrangements for the other feasts of the Church. Flowers remind us of the Garden of Eden, and therefore of our heavenly home, and so their presence is always welcome in the church.

...special thanks to Matushka Nancy for the floral arrangements donated for the Nativity.

...to Mrs. Anne E. Drelick for her generous donation to our Cemetery Fund.

...to David Lavoie and Michael Johnson for digging through the mounds of snow to provide extra parking. Thanks especially to Michael for the use of his snow-blower!

Please remember in your prayers...

Nicholas, Vasily, Judith, Seraphim, Kyriaki, John, Nina, David 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

Our thanks to all who adapted to the new rehearsal schedule and helped us celebrate the Nativity season in a manner befitting the solemnity and joy of the feast. We are currently rehearsing music for Great Lent and the Feast of Feasts, Pascha; please attend regularly.

Congratulations!

...to Patricia Crowley and Alexei Klar on their engagement. The wedding is scheduled for this summer.

...to Mr. & Mrs. Peter Danas on the two grandchildren who have appeared since our last newsletter.

...to the Engalichevs on the baptism of their daughter Elizabeth.

Condolences

...to Lilly Dombrowski on the death of her brother-in-law Stephen. May his memory be eternal!

Parish Activities

Our Bible study group and “Law of God” class continue to meet on the first and third Tuesdays of each month. Both classes meet at 7:30 p.m., and run for approximately an hour. Newcomers always welcome!

Parish Needs: The Parish Council is asking anyone with an old sofa in good condition if they would consider donating it to the church for use in the loft. A futon would be ideal, but any kind of sofa would be gratefully accepted, as long as it is in good condition.

In addition, the vestments and paraments of the church are currently stored in the basement – not the best of conditions for such fine fabric. If anyone has a chest of drawers or chifferobe to donate for storage of these items, please see any Council member.

A Reminder from Fr. Michael

Behavior in the House of the Lord

An Orthodox church is a special place of God's presence on earth. We must behave ourselves reverently in church, so as not to offend the dignity of the sacred place and not to call God's wrath on ourselves. We should come 5-10 minutes before the service begins. Coming into church we must make the sign of the cross and bow. On entering a church, men are to remove their headwear. Women should cover their heads, and dress according to their sex, there must be no lipstick left on their lips. We must be dressed appropriately and neatly. We should not speak loudly, keep our hand in pockets, or chew the gum in church. We should not wander around needlessly in church.

We must put candles and venerate icons so that we do not interfere with other people praying in church. Any conversation should be restricted to the very minimum. You can greet your acquaintances briefly and postpone talking to them for a later time. Having come to church with children you must prevent them from running, misbehaving and laughing. A crying child who cannot be calmed down, should be taken out of church by the parent.

We can join the singing chorus very softly. If the entire parish is singing, we must prevent "loud cries." While in church one can be sitting only due to illness or extreme fatigue. One should not sit with his or her legs crossed. If all the praying people kneel, you should join them. It is prohibited to smoke on a church-porch. Animals or birds are not allowed in church.

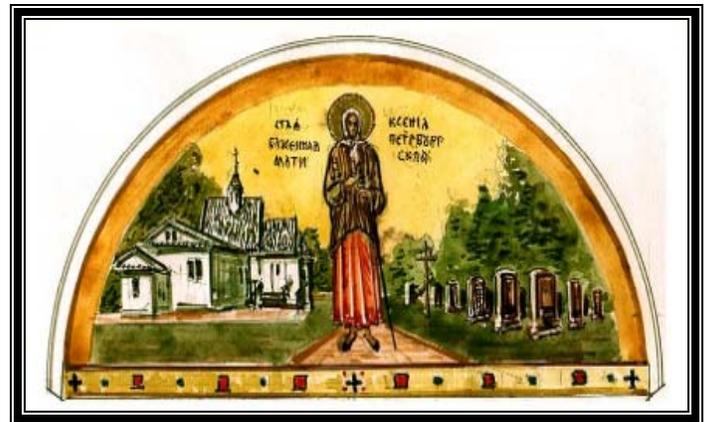
No walking or talking is allowed during Gospel reading or when the Cherubic hymn is sung, as well as while Eucharistic Canon (from "The Symbol of Creed" to "Our Father") is read. During that time it is also advised to refrain from putting candles and venerating icons. One can correct a fellow parishioner only in a soft and delicate manner. It would be better not to make any remarks unless a person behaves like an impertinent hooligan. Finally we should stay in church till the end of service. You may leave earlier only due to bad health condition or if a very serious matter requires it.

Special Sponsorship Projects

The beautification of our church is an ongoing project, and we have some new, as well as continuing plans, to implement. A member of our parish has started a sponsorship account for bells. Presently we have \$1000 towards bells which may cost as much as \$5000. A video tape has been ordered that will answer questions, and this will be brought up at a subsequent Parish Meeting.

The beautiful new shrine to the Theotokos, which is to the left of the iconostasis, was built by Fr. Michael's future son-in law, Alexei Klar, from donations given for that purpose. While in Russia recently, Matushka Irene Gorsky purchased 20 lampadas for us with @ \$1000 from the sponsorship fund. Ten of these lampadas will grace our iconostasis, and the other ten will be used as need on the walls of the church over various icons. They are being shipped from Russia and we should receive them soon.

Also, we are now renewing our talks with artists in St. Petersburg for a mosaic of St. Xenia to be put up over the front door. Father Michael has contacted other artists in America, and found that the price is better in Russia, and no one has been found here that has the same expertise. Presently there is \$3050 in the sponsorship for the icon and the final price is being negotiated but expected to be around \$4000. Below is a sketch by the artist of one of several icons proposed. In this icon, St Xenia is pictured with our church and cemetery in the background.



Another important effort is to build an additional parking area. A member has donated \$2000, with the hope that work can begin in the spring.

Our parish is growing, and it's exciting to see the new efforts to improve our church, and ample opportunities for parishioners who want to help with both finances and labor. If you want to start a new Sponsorship for the improvement of the church (such as finishing off the basement for our poor cold Sunday School students and their teachers?) please discuss your ideas with Father Michael, and if approved, a fund can be set up.

With gratitude for all your continuing support,
Anthony Sarantakis, Treasurer

The Russian Corner

Starting this month, we welcome a new contributor to our newsletter, Tania Pishenina, who has offered to provide us with poetry, literature and general articles about the Russian culture. This month, she has submitted a note concerning Great Lent from the Martynov Calendar. Thank you, Tania!

Great Lent

The Forty Day lent which is called Great, according to its length of days, is by this special in its importance and significance for Orthodox Christians. "The more days," teaches Saint Augustine, "of Lent, the better the healing, the longer the duration of restraint, the more plentiful the gain of salvation. God, the Healer of our souls, set up a suitable time for the pious for glorification, for sinners to pray, for those who are seeking peace, and for others to asking for forgiveness."

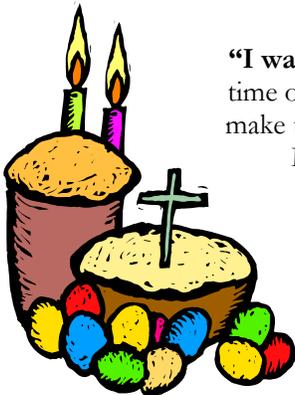
"Let him eschew evil, and do good" (1 Peter, 3,11) - these words from the Holy Writings must in first order be remembered by us for the duration of Great Lent.

Русский Уголок

Великий Пост

Пост св. Четыредесятницы называется Великим, как по количеству дней, так особенно по важности и значению его для православного христианина. «Чем более,- учит блаженный Августин- дней поста, тем лучше врачевство, чем продолжительнее поприще воздержания, тем обильнее приобретение спасения. Бог, Врач душ наших, установил удобное время для благочестивых к славословию, для грешников к молению, для одних искать покоя, для других испрашивать прощение.»

«Уклонись от зла и сотвори благо» (1 Петра 3,11) – эти слова Священного Писания должно в первую очередь помнить всем нам на протяжении Великого поста.



“I was a stranger, and you welcomed Me”: Even Christians who never attend church at any other time of year, make a point of attending Paschal services. The beauty and joy of the Feast of Feasts make this a particularly difficult time for an Orthodox Christian to be unable to come to church.

Many of our parishioners are not local and travel great distances to attend Sunday Liturgy; there are also a great many college students in need of a parish home. If you know of anyone who needs transportation to church at this or any other time, please tell a member of the Outreach Committee. Please also consider offering a ride, or even a place to stay overnight, to someone who may otherwise be unable to attend Holy Week services. “For thereby, many have entertained angels unawares”