



St. Xenia Parish News

170 North Lowell Street, Methuen, MA 01844

March-April 2008

Love of God

by St. Ignatius Brianchaninov (1807-1867)

Love God as He commanded you to love Him, and not as self-deluded daydreamers think they love Him.

Do not fabricate raptures for yourself, do not excite your nerves, do not inflame yourself with a material fire, with the fire of your blood. The sacrifice pleasing to God is humility of heart, contrition of spirit. With wrath does God turn away from sacrifices offered with self-confident presumption, with a proud opinion of oneself, though the sacrifice be a whole burnt offering.

Pride excites the nerves, heats the blood, arouses daydreaming, enlivens the life of the fall; humility calms the nerves, subdues the motion of the blood, eliminates daydreaming, mortifies falls, enlivens the life in Jesus Christ.

“Obedience” before the Lord “is greater than good sacrifice, and submission than the fat of rams,” said the Prophet to the Israelite king who had dared to offer to God a wrong sacrifice (1 Samuel 15:22). When you wish to offer to God the sacrifice of love, do not offer it self-willfully, from a thoughtless impulse; offer it with humility, in that time and that place which the Lord commanded

The spiritual place on which alone spiritual sacrifices are commanded to be offered is humility. (Saying of St. Pimen the Great from the Alphabetical Patericon).

The Lord marked the one who loves and the one who does not love by true and exact signs: *“If a man love Me, he will keep My word. He that loveth Me not keepeth not My sayings”* (John 14:23-24).

Do you wish to learn the love of God? Shun every deed, word, thought, and feeling forbidden by the Gospel. By your enmity towards sin that is so hated by All-holy God, you will show and prove your love for God. When due to weakness it happens that you fall into transgressions, heal them at once by repentance. But it is better to strive not to allow yourself even these transgressions, by strict watchfulness over yourself.

Do you wish to learn the love of God? Assiduously learn the commandments of the Lord in the Gospel, and strive to fulfill them in very deed. Strive to turn the Gospel virtues into habits, into your qualities. For a person who

loves, it is natural to fulfill the will of the beloved with exactness.

“I have loved Thy commandments more than gold and topaz; therefore, I directed myself toward all Thy commandments; every path of unrighteousness have I hated,” says the Prophet (Ps. 118:127, 128, LXX). Such conduct is indispensable for maintaining fidelity to God. Fidelity is the unalterable condition of love. Without this condition, love is dissolved.

By the constant shunning of evil and fulfilling of the Gospel virtues—which comprises the whole Gospel moral teaching—we attain the love of God. And by this same means do we abide in the love of God: *“If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love,”* said the Savior (John 15:10).

The perfection of love consists in union with God; advancing in love is joined with inexpressible spiritual consolation, delight, and enlightenment. But in the beginning of the struggle, the disciple of love must undergo a violent warfare with himself, with his own deeply damaged nature: evil, which through the fall became innate to our nature, has become for it a law, warring and revolting against the Law of God, against the law of holy love.

Love of God is founded on love of one’s neighbor. When the remembrance of wrongs is obliterated in you: then you are close to love. When your heart is overshadowed by holy, grace-given peace towards all humanity: then you are at the very doors of love. But the Holy Spirit alone opens these doors. Love of God is a gift from God in a person who has prepared himself to receive this gift by purity of heart, mind, and body. The degree of the gift is according to the degree of preparation: because God, even in His mercy, is just.

Love of God is entirely spiritual: *“that which is born of the Spirit is spirit”* (John 3:6). *“That which is born of the flesh is flesh”* (John 3:6): carnal love, as something born of flesh and blood, has material, corrupt properties. It is inconstant, changeable: its fire is completely dependent on matter.

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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 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: woolfolk3@gmail.com, 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: Sdn. Constantine Desrosiers (603) 775-0320
 Secretary: Natalie Pishenin (978) 658-5564
 Treasurer: Anthony Sarantakis (978) 263-2016
 Sisterhood: Matushka Nancy Crowley (207) 767-1889
 Cemetery: to be determined by search committee.
 Interim, Rev. Michael Crowley

Peter Danas (978) 459-9541
 John Danas (978) 454-0315
 Laryssa Doohovskoy (978) 841-5960
 Roberto Gonzalez (978) 692-1229
 Michael Johnson (603) 893-4593
 John Kekis (978) 456-9865
 Choir Director: Michael Lang (603) 465-9754

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 50 people, anything is appreciated. Donuts, fruit and pastries are as acceptable as soup and sandwiches. Thank you in advance for your contribution.

March

2 Anna Johnson, Mereille Lang, Alexandra Gonazalez

* 9 Nina Yakuboff, Maria Kasarda

*16 Matushka Nancy, Megan Crowley, Natasha Kirichok

*23 Karen Schidlovsky, Nancy Harris

*30 Masha Harris. Kot Engalichev

April

*6 Natalie Botchkov, Tania Sciaudone

*13 Helena Doohovskoy, Marianne Dimatteo, Laryssa Doohovskoy

*20 Palm Sunday – Pot Luck

27 Pascha

Sisterhood News: The Sisterhood spearheaded a very successful campaign to collect food and clothing for "Neighbors In Need" a community charity based in Lawrence.

We thank all who contributed to the wonderful Blini Trapeza on March 2nd.

The Sisterhood has decided not to put on the "Lilac Nights Ball" this year. Hopefully, it will resume in 2009.

There will be a church-cleaning day following the Liturgy on Lazarus Saturday. There is a long list of tasks that need to be met, so please try to set aside some time to help out.

Thank You... to Mireille Lang for once again organizing the Yolka play, choosing the topic and directing it. Thank you also to Pamela Reed, who handled the stage management, and Natalie Pishenin, who made costumes.

...to Marianne DiMatteo for her help in organizing the Yolka gifts.

...to all who helped to prepare our church for the Nativity of our Lord, whether by cleaning, by serving, or by preparing food for the potluck.

...to George Pishenin for his incredible fund-raising efforts for the Sunday School.

Please remember in your prayers...Nicholas, Lilly, Nina, Josephine, David, Vassilisa, Lilly Anne, Margaret.

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

Financial Update: As of February 29, 2008, the balance on the church mortgage stands at \$45,335. If you have any questions, please see Subdeacon Constantine Desrosiers.

Congratulations: ...to John, Anna, and Demetrios Kekis on the birth of their new daughter Christina, born February 22, 2008. Many years to all!

Memory Eternal: The servant of God David Dennis reposed on February 20, 2008, and his funeral was held at St. Xenia Church on February 26. As some of you know, David suffered greatly in his physical body these last four years or so. In spite of this, he always kept a good spirit and did his best to keep the Faith. His deepest disappointment was his inability to get to Church for Services. Our condolences go to his sister and to all in this parish who constituted his family here.

Church School Update:

Church School attendance remains strong this year. Thank you to the parents for recognizing this important aspect of their children's religious education.

The preschool class successfully raised \$300 for their outreach project this year. These monies will be donated to Heifer International to help fund the Ukraine - Carpathian Project. To learn more about this project, please visit www.heifer.org. Thank you to all who donated by purchasing a box of Noah's Ark cards.

Thanks to the tireless efforts of Mr. George Pishenin, the Sunday School received two generous donations from California charitable foundations totaling \$7,000! The first, for \$5,000, came from the St. John's Volunteers. The second, for \$2,000, came from the Ivan V. Koulaieff Educational Fund. This second is an annual pledge that will be continued in the future. These funds will help us finish improvements to the basement school area, as well as buy materials and plan events for the students.

Our Yolka production was a great success! Mireille Lang did a wonderful job choosing and directing the play. A special thank you to Mireille Lang, Pamela Reed (stage manager), and Natalie Pishenin (costumes) for their work on the play. Thank you also to Marianne DiMatteo for her help with organizing the Yolka gifts this year. See the pictures on the following page.

Please remember that church school information is available at www.stxenia.org. A list of the Spring High School lectures can be found here, as well as weekly updates of class lessons and announcements for church activities that may be of interest to families with school aged children.

Summer School of Liturgical Music: The 17th session of the Summer School of Liturgical Music at Holy Trinity Seminary, Jordanville, New York, will be held from Sunday, July 6 until Saturday, July 19, 2008. This is a three-year program of intense study of Russian Orthodox church music history, Typicon, vocal training and choir conducting, Slavonic, music theory, and Liturgical Performance Practice. Singers and conductors aged 16 to 80 have participated in the program. The fee for two weeks of concentrated training (room, board, and tuition) is \$900.00, and as always, our parish has set aside money for a scholarship. The web address is <http://sslm.hts.edu>, where students can register. If you have any questions, you may email musicschool@msn.com, or call Matushka Natalia Papkova at 847-299-2585. Please keep in mind that completion of all three years of this course earns three college credits!

Parish Yolka, 2007/2008



Continued from front page

Hearing from Scripture that our God is a fire (Heb.12:29), that love is a fire, and feeling in yourself a fire of natural love, do not think that this is one and the same fire. No! These fires are at enmity with one another and are swallowed up by one another (Ladder, steps 3 and 15). *“Let us serve in a manner well-pleasing to God, with reverence and fear; for our God is a consuming fire”* (Heb. 12:28-29).

Natural love, i.e. fallen love, heats a person’s blood, excites his nerves, and arouses daydreaming; holy love cools the blood, calms both soul and body, draws the inner man towards prayerful silence, and immerses him in rapture through humility and spiritual delight. Many ascetics, having taken natural love for Divine love, excited their blood, and excited their daydreams also. The condition of excitement passed very easily into a condition of frenzy. Many took those who were in a state of excitement and frenzy for persons filled with grace and holiness, while they were actually unfortunate victims of self-delusion.

There were many such ascetics in the Western Church from the time it fell into heresy, in which Divine properties are blasphemously ascribed to a man, and veneration which is due and fitting to God alone is given to a man; many of these ascetics wrote books from their excited condition in which frenzied self-delusion seemed to them to be divine love, in which their disordered imagination painted for them a multitude of visions which flattered their self-love and pride.

Son of the Eastern Church! Shun the reading of such books, avoid following the precepts of those who are self-deluded. Guided by the Gospel and the holy Fathers of the true Church, ascend with humility to the spiritual height of Divine love by the means of fulfilling Christ’s commandments in deed.

Know firmly that love for God is the highest gift of the Holy Spirit, and a person can only prepare himself, through purity and humility, for the receiving of this great gift, through which mind and heart and body are changed.

In vain is the labor, fruitless is it and harmful, when we seek to discover in ourselves high spiritual gifts prematurely: merciful God gives them in His own time, to the constant, patient, humble fulfillers of the Gospel commandments. Amen.

*--from **The Arena***

The Great Entry: The question has been asked, “How do we respond at the Great Entry?” This part of the Liturgy symbolizes the solemn passing of Jesus Christ to His voluntary suffering and death by crucifixion. The faithful should stand during this time with bowed heads and pray that the Lord remember them and all those close to them in His Kingdom. After the priest says the words, "and all

you Orthodox Christians, may the Lord God remember in His kingdom," one says softly:

"And may the Lord God remember thy priesthood in His Heavenly Kingdom always, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen"

Brief Confession

For some time now, we have had this "Brief Confession" on the stand where confessions are heard. It seemed beneficial, however, in this Lenten season to print it in the newsletter since it offers such help in preparing for the confessing one's sins.

I CONFESS TO THE LORD MY GOD and before you, reverend Father, all my countless sins which I have committed till the present day and hour: in thought, word, and deed. Every day and every hour I sin through ingratitude to God for His great and numberless blessings to me and His most gracious providence and care for me, a sinner.

I have sinned through idle talk, condemnation of others, scorn, insubordination, pride, unkindness, envy, anger, slander, inattention, carelessness, negligence, impudence, discourtesy, irritability, sloth, despondency, resentment, remembrance of wrongs, paying back evil with evil, violence, obduracy, disobedience, grumbling, self-justification, contradiction, independence, self-will, reproachfulness, evil speaking, lying, laughing, tempting, self-love, ambition, fastidiousness, gluttony, excess in eating and drinking, eating and drinking in secret, drunkenness, attachment to things, conceit, laziness, harboring of licentious unclean thoughts, dallying with them and taking pleasure in them, sensual imaginings, daydreams and issues. I have sinned through excessive sleeping, impure glances, omitting divine service from laziness or neglect, dozing and whispering in church, arriving late for the beginning of church services, inattention during prayer in church and in private, not fulfilling properly the monastic rule of private prayer.

I have sinned in thought, word and deed and by sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch, and by my other spiritual and bodily senses. But I repent of these sins and ask forgiveness.

Here it is necessary to mention, also, other sins, if you have anything special on your conscience.

I also repent and ask forgiveness for everything which I have not confessed through ignorance or forgetfulness.

Forgive and absolve me, reverend Father, and bless me to partake of the Holy and Life-giving Mysteries of Christ for the remission of my sins and for eternal life.



ST. XENIA ORTHODOX CHURCH
 170 N. Lowell St. (Rt. 113)/PO Box 147 - Methuen, MA 01844
 (phone) Fr. Michael Crowley (978) 204-0428 -- Church (978) 688-1211



MARCH 2008						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Feb 24 (Feb 11) Prodigal Son Tone 6 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy	Feb 25 (Feb 12) St. Meletius	Feb 26 (Feb 13) St. Martinian	Feb 27 (Feb 14) St. Auxentius Fast	Feb 28 (Feb 15) Ap. Onesimus	Feb 29 (Feb 16) MM Pamphilius & comp Fast	1 (Feb 17) GM Theodore the Recruit 4:00 Small Vespers 6:30 All-Night Vigil
2 (Feb 18) Meatfare Sunday Tone 7 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy	3 (Feb 19) App. Archippus & Philemon Fast: dairy, fish, wine, & oil	4 (Feb 20) St. Leo of Catania Fast: dairy, fish, wine, & oil	5 (Feb 21) St. Timothy; St. Eustace Fast: dairy, fish, wine, & oil	6 (Feb 22) MM at Gate of Eugenius Fast: dairy, fish, wine, & oil	7 (Feb 23) HM Polycarp Fast: dairy, fish, wine, & oil	8 (Feb 24) 1st & 2nd Findings of the Head of the Forerunner 6:30 All-Night Vigil Fast: dairy, fish, wine, & oil
9 (Feb 25) Forgiveness Sunday Tone 8 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy followed by the Forgiveness Vespers Fast: dairy, fish, wine, & oil	10 (Feb 26) St. Porphyrius of Gaza 7:00 Canon of St. Andrew of Crete Fast	11 (Feb 27) St. Procopius Fast	12 (Feb 28) St. Basil 7:00 Canon of St. Andrew of Crete Fast	13 (Feb 29) St. John Cassian Fast	14 (Mar 1) M Eudocia 7:00 Akathist Fast	15 (Mar 2) St. Theodore Tyro 6:30 All-Night Vigil Fast: wine & oil
16 (Mar 3) Sunday of Orthodoxy Tone 1 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy Fast: wine & oil	17 (Mar 4) St. Gerasimus Fast	18 (Mar 5) M Conon; St Nikolai of Ochrid Fast	19 (Mar 6) 42 MM of Ammorias Fast	20 (Mar 7) HMM of Cherson Fast	21 (Mar 8) St. Theophylactus Fast	22 (Mar 9) 40 Martyrs of Sebaste 4:00 Class TBA 6:30 All-Night Vigil Fast: wine & oil
23 (Mar 10) St. Gregory Palamas Tone 2 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy Fast: wine & oil	24 (Mar 11) St. Sophronius Fast	25 (Mar 12) St. Theophanes Fast	26 (Mar 13) St. Nicephorus Fast	27 (Mar 14) St. Benedict Fast	28 (Mar 15) MM Agapius & comp 7:00 Akathist Fast	29 (Mar 16) M Sabinus 6:30 All-Night Vigil Fast: wine & oil
30 (Mar 17) Veneration of the Cross Tone 3 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy Fast: wine & oil	31 (Mar 18) St. Cyril of Jerusalem Fast	Apr 1 (Mar 19) MM Chrysanthus & Daria Fast	Apr 2 (Mar 20) MM of St. Sabbas' Monastery Fast	Apr 3 (Mar 21) St. James of Catania Fast	Apr 4 (Mar 22) HM Basil of Ancyra Fast	Apr 5 (Mar 23) MM Nikon & comp 4:00 Small Vespers 6:30 All-Night Vigil Fast: wine & oil



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APRIL 2008						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Mar 30 (Mar 17) Veneration of the Cross Tone 3 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy Fast: wine & oil	Mar 31 (Mar 18) St. Cyril of Jerusalem Fast	1 (Mar 19) MM Chrysanthus & Daria Fast	2 (Mar 20) MM of St. Sabbas' Monastery Fast	3 (Mar 21) St. James of Catania Fast	4 (Mar 22) HM Basil of Ancyra Fast	5 (Mar 23) MM Nikon & comp 4:00 Small Vespers 6:30 All-Night Vigil Fast: wine & oil
6 (Mar 24) 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy 6:30 Vigil of Annunciation Fast: wine & oil	7 (Mar 25) ANNUNCIATION 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy Fast: fish, wine, & oil	8 (Mar 26) Archangel Gabriel Fast	9 (Mar 27) St. Matrona 7:00 Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete Fast	10 (Mar 28) St. Hilarion the New; St. Stephen Fast	11 (Mar 29) HM Mark of Arethusa 7:00 Matins w/Akathist Fast	12 (Mar 30) St. John Climacus 6:30 All-Night Vigil Fast: wine & oil
13 (Mar 31) 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy Fast: wine & oil	14 (Apr 1) St. Mary of Egypt Fast	15 (Apr 2) St. Titus Fast	16 (Apr 3) St. Nicetas Fast	17 (Apr 4) St. Joseph the Hymnographer Fast	18 (Apr 5) M Theodulus & comp Fast	19 (Apr 6) Lazarus Saturday 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy 4:00 Class TBA 6:30 All-Night Vigil Fast: wine & oil
20 (Apr 7) PALM SUNDAY 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy Fast: fish, wine, & oil	21 (Apr 8) Great & Holy Monday 7:00 Bridegroom Matins Fast	22 (Apr 9) Great & Holy Tuesday 7:00 Bridegroom Matins Fast	23 (Apr 10) Great & Holy Wednesday 7:00 Office of Holy Unction Fast	24 (Apr 11) Great & Holy Thursday 9:30 Vesperal Divine Liturgy 7:00 Matins w/12 Gospels Fast	25 (Apr 12) Great & Holy Friday 10:00 Royal Hours 4:00 Vespers w/Taking Down from the Cross 6:30 Matins w/Lamentations Fast	26 (Apr 13) Great & Holy Saturday 9:00 Vesperal Divine Liturgy 10:30 Reading of Acts 11:30 Midnight Office Fast: wine & oil
27 (Apr 14) PASCHA 12 Midnight Paschal Matins and Divine Liturgy 12 Noon Agape Vespers Fast free	28 (Apr 15) Ap. Aristarchus Fast free	29 (Apr 16) NMM Raphael & comp Fast free	30 (Apr 17) HM Symeon & comp Fast free	May 1 (Apr 18) Fast free	May 2 (Apr 19) Fast free	May 3 (Apr 20) 6:30 All-Night Vigil Fast free

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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.