



St. Xenia Parish News

170 North Lowell Street, Methuen, MA 01844

January-February 2013

The Gift of Grace

by Archpriest Nikolai Deputatov †

Only through the action of the Holy Spirit the inner person grows stronger and renews each day, but the outer, physical person, i.e. the human flesh, the sensual, does the opposite. It decays and falls away (2 Cor. 4:16). How can the strengthening by the Holy Spirit of the inner person be observed? By the entry of Christ in the heart, by the establishing of Him in the inner person – preparing the person as a dwelling for Christ. Christians have received the Holy Spirit and have received Christ into their hearts (Heb.1:13). It is not thought or motive, demanded by Christ, which penetrates us, but Christ Himself, like a Living Entity, enters us. How Christ dwells in the human heart, listen to what He Himself says: "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him" (John14:23). Christ enters the heart in the presence of grace found in the Holy Spirit, through faith. And the more our faith grows and strengthens, the more concentrated, more profound, more life-involving our communion with the Lord is. Christians become stronger in their inner being through the power of the Holy Spirit, and this is the preparation of the dwelling place for Christ in us. With the unflinching presence of Christ in our hearts, we will be powerful in the foundations and strong in our love, like a plant that has firmly rooted itself in the ground or a building with a sound foundation. These comparisons exemplify the stability, steadfastness and affirmation of Christian love. Christian understandings are supported by a Christian life. The strengthening of the inner person, receiving Christ into our hearts and having love abide in us – these are the necessary prerequisites for Christ's indwelling. This is not an abstract concept, but a concept based on Christian experience. Having received the power, we become competent to comprehend the truth of Christianity. To comprehend the truth is to master it, to acquire it. It is essential to understand the truth of Christianity in accordance with all the saints. The comprehension of Christianity is acquired not "in some unusual way, set apart from others, but it matures and becomes absolute under the conditions of communion with all other Christians" (Bishop Theophan). An immeasurable element of understanding Christianity is Christ's love, shown on the Cross, and consequently the love of God, Who sent His Son for the salvation of the world (John 3:16; Rom. 5:6-8).

Christ's love surpasses the ordinary mind, the ordinary rational reasoning. But that which is hidden from the natural human understanding is revealed to the Christian, not fully though, but through the power of the Holy Spirit, through the indwelling of Christ, and through a true life in Christ's love. That which cannot be comprehended in the normal way, is understood by the inner being, through life in the spirit. "Even though Christ's love is above all human understanding, you will understand it through the indwelling of Christ in you" (St. John Chrysostom).

Perfection is infinite, but its ultimate limit and highest goal for Christians is the fullness of God's blessings or blessed strengths from God, given to us in Christ. The highest virtue is humility – a modest perception of oneself, admitting one's weakness, feebleness, poverty of spirit, meekness in thoughts and feelings. Christian humility rests on a most living understanding that everything a Christian has, he received through grace. The humble person recognizes his great Christian spiritual treasure, but knows that he did not earn it, for it is given to him by the grace of God, because he, on his own, is powerless and weak. In the words of St. John Chrysostom: "Humility is seen when whoever is great, humbles himself; in recognizing his greatness he does not become vain." Humility is bound with wisdom, for whoever admits his own weakness, will then relate to others without anger and annoyance. After humility and meekness comes patience. On the one hand there is firmness, steadfastness and on the other generosity, patience, no harboring of ill feeling and the absence of revenge. Christian patience is not cold and heartless, but is full of love. If you do not have patience with your fellow human beings, how then is God going to show you patience? Where there is love, all can be endured. That is why the Holy Spirit is given, to reconcile people who differ in many ways. Just as there is our spirit within us, working in all parts of the body and is all-unifying, so the Holy Spirit is given to us, the children of the Church, binding and forming us into one body, even though we are different in numerous ways. This unity is expressed in one common hope, emanating from the very calling of Christians. All are enlivened with the one hope, to be eternally in Christ's Kingdom.

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St. Xenia of Petersburg Orthodox Church is a parish of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, under the omophorion of Met. HILARION of Eastern America & New York. 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 woolfolk3@gmail.com, or to Father Michael at fmichael@stxenia.org. Thank you.

Rector:

V. Rev. Michael Crowley
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Confessions on Saturday during Vigil, on Sunday during the Hours, and by appointment

Parish Council

- President: Rev. Michael Crowley (978) 204-0428
- Fr. Constantine Desrosiers (603) 775-0320
- Dcn. Alexander Doohovskoy (978) 369-4486
- Starosta: Anthony Sarantakis (978) 263-2016
- Secretary: Katia Fredette (603) 458-1370
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- Sisterhood: Mireille Lang (603) 465-9754
- Building Expansion: Aquila Choi (603) 560-4425
- Cemetery: Natalie Pishenin (978) 658-5564
- Choir Director: Laryssa Doohovskoy (978) 841-5960
- Church School: Laryssa Doohovskoy (978) 841-5960
- Peter Danas (978) 459-9541
- Roberto Gonzalez (978) 692-1229
- Peter Reed (781) 643-0070
- John Kekis (978) 456-9865

Trapeza Schedule

* = strict fast

Trapeza can be whatever you would like to prepare. Some parishioners prefer to make a big lunch, but this isn't necessary, especially during the summer. As long as there is enough food for about 150 people, anything is appreciated. Donuts, fruit and pastries are as acceptable as soup and sandwiches. **Note: If you are preparing anything containing nuts or other allergens, please put a small label to that effect in front of your dish. Nut allergies are especially fatal to small children.**

January

- 6 Pot Luck
- 13 Yolka
- 20 Vera Sarantakis, Priscilla Choi
- 27 Josephine Kniaziuk, Mariana Haven

February

- 3 Pam Reed, Carolyn Savage, Diane Mendez
- 10 Amy McLellan, Anna Johnson, Mireille Lang
- 17 Maria Kasarda, Tania Sciaudone, Abby Lagospe
- 24 Chaplain Family

Sisterhood News: Lilly Dombrowski has officially been moved to a nursing facility. She will not be returning to her home. It's very important to note that she does not have a direct phone line to her room. In order for Lilly to take or make a phone call the nurses have to get her up, put her in a wheelchair and drive her down to the nurse's station. Of course, the call is not private. Clearly, phone calls at this time are a difficulty for her. Hopefully, her family will provide her with some sort of cell phone. Visits and cards from us will help to ease the transition, no doubt. Her address is:

Mrs. Lilly Dombrowski
Room 206
Fairhaven Healthcare Center
476 Varnum Ave.
Lowell MA 01854

Congratulations to the newly-illuminated Jacob Justinen, son of Brigid Crowley, and to Anastasia Nettleton, daughter of Meghan and David Nettleton. Both children were received into the Church on November 17, 2012. Their godparents are David Nettleton and Patricia Klar (Jacob) and Alexei Klar and Mireille Lang (Anastasia).

Many years to all!

Building Committee Update: Below is a brief summary of the presentation of the building committee at the annual parish meeting in November:

- Doubling overall church capacity to accommodate increase in Orthodox worshippers from 70 to 150
- Raising \$250,000 in the next three years to complete the project
- Donating via mail or our on-line website at www.stxenia.org

As of December 30, 2012, we have over \$32,000 in the Building Expansion Fund Account. Also, we received 13 pledge forms back from the 70 sent out. Thank you very much for your support! Please remember to submit your pledge form for the building fund. We need these as soon as possible so that we can begin planning the financial aspect of our building project.

A Reminder Concerning Income Tax Deductions: Beginning in 2007, the tax code changed, especially for people who give cash contributions. These contributions include those made by cash, checks, electronic funds transfer, credit card, or payroll deductions. Donors who want to itemize deductions cannot claim a tax deduction for any contribution regardless of the amount, unless you keep one of the following:

1. A bank record that shows the name of the qualified organization, the date of the contribution, and the amount of the contribution. Bank records may include:

- a. A canceled check.
 - b. A bank or credit union statement, or
 - c. A credit card statement.
2. A receipt (or letter or other written communication) from the qualified organization showing the name of the organization, the date of the contribution, and the amount of the contribution.
 3. The payroll deduction reductions (see Publication 526 (2007)).

To ensure tax compliance for 2011 contributions to our parish, if you are planning to itemize your deductions using Schedule A, the following donation methods are recommended:

1. If you plan to include deduction of your cash donations, please use the parish envelopes provided to you on the candle counter and write your name on the envelope.
2. For checks, if your name is not on the check (for instance, if it is the name of your business), please put the check in the donation envelope and write your name on the envelope.
3. Direct deposit from your bank account
4. Payroll deduction.

Our parish does track contributions made and will, upon request, produce a written statement of contributions made during 2011. This information will include the name of our parish, name of the parishioner, date of each individual contribution, and the dollar amount. Our parish cannot track cash contributions, regardless of amount, that are not properly identified by using the contribution envelope and writing in your name. Everyone who has given single contributions of \$250 or more will still receive a statement without needing to request it, as required by the tax code. This is our best understanding of the current law; if you have additional questions, please consult with your tax advisor.

St. John of Damascus Church School News:

Sunday, January 13, 2013 – Yolka

The Trapeza Discussion Series for our young people continues to be a great success. These talks are designed for our High School students and young adults, and will focus on a variety of topics. Classes meet on the 2nd and 4th Sunday of every month during Trapeza. All are welcome to observe. Special thanks to Danny McLellan for organizing the series!

Please keep in mind:

Friday, May 3, 2013 - Holy Friday Retreat

July 8-12, 2013 - Vacation Church School

If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, please contact Laryssa Doohovskoy or Fr. Michael.

On January 21, we celebrate the Feast of one of the great theologians of the Church, St. Maximos the Confessor. The theology of the Monk Maximos the Confessor, based on the spiritual experience of the knowledge of the great Desert-Fathers, was continued and developed in the works of the Monk Simeon the New Theologian (comm. 12 March), and Saint Gregory Palamas (comm. 14 November).

The Monk Maximos the Confessor was born in Constantinople in about the year 580 and raised in a pious Christian family. In his youth he received a very diverse education: he studied philosophy, grammar, and rhetoric; he was well-read in the authors of antiquity; and he mastered to perfection theological dialectics. When Saint Maximos entered into government service, the scope of his learning and his conscientiousness enabled him to become first secretary to the emperor Heraclius. But court life vexed him, and he withdrew to the Chrysopoleia monastery (on the opposite shore of the Bosphorus – now Skutari), where he accepted monastic tonsure. By the humility of his wisdom he soon won the love of the brethren and was chosen hegumen of the monastery, but even in this dignity, in his own words, he "remained a simple monk." But in 633 at the request of a theologian, the future Jerusalem Patriarch Saint Sophronios (comm. 11 March), the Monk Maximos left the monastery and set off to Alexandria.

Saint Sophronios was known in these times as an implacable antagonist against the Monothelite heresy. The Fourth Ecumenical Council (451 A.D.) had condemned the Monophysite heresy, which confessed the Lord Jesus Christ in only one nature (His Divine, but not His human nature). Influenced by this erroneous tendency of thought, the Monothelite heretics introduced the concept that in Christ there was only "one Divine will" (*thelema*) and only "one Divine effectuation or energy" (*energia*) – which sought to lead back by another path to the repudiated Monophysite heresy. Monothelism found numerous adherents in Armenia, Syria, and Egypt. The heresy, fanned also by nationalist animosities, became a serious threat to church unity in the East. The struggle of Orthodoxy with these heresies was particularly complicated by the fact that in the year 630, three of the Patriarchal thrones in the Orthodox East were occupied by Monothelites: by Sergios at Constantinople; by Athanasias at Antioch; and by Cyrus at Alexandria.

The path of the Monk Maximos from Constantinople to Alexandria led through Crete, where indeed he began his preaching activity. He clashed there with a bishop, who adhered to the heretical opinions of Severus and Nestorius. At Alexandria and its surroundings, the monk spent about six years. In 638 the emperor Heraclius, together with the patriarch Sergios, attempted to downplay the discrepancies in the confession of faith, and he issued an edict, the so-called "Exposition of Faith, which ultimately decreed that there be confessed the teaching about "one will" (*monothelema*) operative under the two natures of the Savior. In defending Orthodoxy against this exposition, the Monk Maximos had recourse to people of various

vocations and positions, and these conversations had success. "Not only the clergy and all the bishops, but also the people, and all the secular officials felt within themselves some sort of invisible attraction to him," testifies his Vita.

Towards the end of 638 the patriarch Sergios died, and in 641, the emperor Heraclius also died. The imperial throne came to be occupied by the cruel and coarse Constans II (642-668), an open adherent of the Monothelites. The assaults of the heretics against Orthodoxy intensified. The Monk Maximos went off to Carthage and he preached there and in its surroundings for about five years. When the successor of patriarch Sergios, patriarch Pyrrhos, arrived there, forsaking Constantinople because of court intrigues, and being by persuasion a Monothelite, there occurred between him and the Monk Maximos an open disputation in June 645. The result of this was that Pyrrhos publicly acknowledged his error and even wanted to put into writing to Pope Theodore the repudiation of his error. Together with Pyrrhos, the Monk Maximos set off to Rome, where Pope Theodore accepted the repentance of the former patriarch and restored him to his dignity.

In the year 647 the Monk Maximos returned to Africa. And there, at a council of bishops, Monothelism was condemned as a heresy. In the year 648, in place of the "Exposition", there was issued a new edict, commissioned by Constans and compiled by the Constantinopolitan patriarch Paul, the "Pattern of the Faith", which overall forbade any further deliberations, whether if be about "one will" or about "two wills", as regarding the acknowledged "two natures" of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Monk Maximos thereupon turned to the successor of the Roman Pope Theodore, Pope Martin I (649-654), with a request to examine the question of Monothelism at a conciliar consideration by all the Church. In October of 649 there was convened the Lateran Council, at which were present 150 Western bishops and 37 representatives of the Orthodox East, amongst which was also the Monk Maximos the Confessor. The Council condemned Monothelism, and its defenders, the Constantinopolitan patriarchs Sergios, Paul and Pyrrhos, were consigned to anathema.

When Constans II received the determinations of the Council, he gave orders to arrest both Pope Martin and the Monk Maximos. This summons took five years to fulfill, in the year 654. They accused the Monk Maximos of treason to the realm and locked him up in prison. In 656 he was sent off to Thrace, and again later brought back to a prison in Constantinople. The monk, together with two of his students, was subjected to the cruelest torments: for each they cut out the tongue and cut off the right hand. Then they were sent off to Colchis. But here the Lord worked an inexplicable miracle: all three of them found the ability to speak and to write. The Monk Maximos indeed foretold his own end. Over the grave of the Monk Maximos shone three miraculously-appearing lights, and there occurred many a healings.

The Monk Maximos has left to the Church a large theological legacy. His exegetical works contain explana-

tions of difficult places within the Holy Scripture, also Commentary on the Prayer of the Lord and on the 59th Psalm, various "scholia" (text-margin commentaries) on treatises of the Priest-Martyr Dionysios the Areopagite (+ 96, comm. 3 October) and Saint Gregory the Theologian (+ 389, comm. 25 January). To the exegetical works of Saint Maximos belongs likewise his explication of Divine-services, entitled "Introduction Concerning the Mystery".

To the dogmatic works of the Monk Maximos belong: the Exposition on his dispute with Pyrrhos, and several tracts and letters to various people. In them are contained expositions of the Orthodox teaching of the Divine Essence and about Hypostatic-Persons of the Holy Trinity, about the Incarnation of God, and about the "theosis" ("deification", *obozhenie*) of human nature.

"Nothing in theosis is the product of human nature," the Monk Maximos writes in a letter to his friend Thalassios, "since nature cannot comprehend God. It is only but the mercy of God that has the capacity to endow theosis unto the existing... In theosis man (the image of God) becomes likened to God, he rejoices in all the plenitude that does belong to him by nature, since the grace of the Spirit doth triumph within him and because God doth act within him" (Letter 22).

To the Monk Maximos belong also works concerning the anthropologic (i.e., concerning man). He deliberates on the nature of the soul and its consciously-personal existence after the death of a man. Among his moral compositions, especially important is his "Chapters on Love". The Monk Maximos the Confessor wrote likewise three hymns in the finest traditions of church hymnography, following the lead of Saint Gregory the Theologian. (*Source: Menologion 3.0*)

Troparion of St. Maximus, Tone 8: O instructor of Orthodoxy, teacher of piety and purity, / beacon of all the world, divinely inspired adornment of monastics: / O all-wise Maximus, by thy doctrines thou hast enlightened all. // O harp of the Spirit, entreat Christ God, that our souls be saved.

The Feast of the martyr Dorothea is celebrated on February 6. Her life story illustrated the importance of Christian witness, as well as of repentance.

The Holy Martyrs Dorothea, Christina, Callista and Theophilos lived in Caesarea Cappadocia and suffered under the emperor Diocletian in either the year 288 or 300.

Saint Dorothea was a pious Christian maiden, distinguished by her great beauty, humility, prudence, and wisdom bestowed by God, which astonished many. Arrested upon orders of the governor Saprikios, she steadfastly confessed her faith in Christ and was subjected to tortures. Failing to break the will of the saint, the governor sent to her two women, the sisters Christina and Callista, who formerly were Christians, but in fearing the tortures they had abjured Christ and began to lead impious lives. He

ordered them to talk Saint Dorothea into offering sacrifice to the pagan gods. But just the reverse happened: persuaded by Saint Dorothea, that the mercy of God is granted to all that repent, they repented themselves and again were converted to Christ. For this they were tied back to back and burned in a tar barrel. The holy sisters Christina and Callista died suffering, offering up a prayer of repentance to the Lord and atoning for the sin of apostasy.

Saint Dorothea was again subjected to tortures, and she very gladly endured them and accepted the death sentence. When they led the saint to execution, a certain student, the Scholastic Theophilos, with mockery said to her: "Bride of Christ, throw to me rose blossoms and apples from the garden of thy Bridegroom". In reply the martyr nodded to him. Before death, the saint requested time to pray. When she finished the prayer, an Angel appeared before her in the form of a handsome youth, presenting her on a pure linen cloth three apples and three rose blossoms. The saint requested all these be handed over to Theophilos, after which she was beheaded by the sword. Having received the gracious gift, the recent mocker of Christians was shaken, and he believed in the Savior and confessed himself a Christian. Subjected to cruel tortures because of this, Saint Theophilos accepted a martyr's death through beheading by the sword.

The relics of Saint Dorothea are located at Rome in a church in her name, and her head likewise is at Rome, in a church of the Mother of God at Trastevere.

The Gift of Grace continued from page 1

Those who have received the one Spirit and drink from the one source should not be divided. God enters and lives in us through the Holy Spirit, but works in us, reconciles and saves us through the Son. Christ the Savior gives to the faithful blessed gifts of the Holy Spirit by His own measure, so that they do not remain infants in faith, inexperienced youth, wavering and capable of digressing into all kinds of non-Christian ways, where Satan's deceit entices the inexperienced by various means of guile and perfidy. All believers should be permeated by Christ, by His Spirit, and be constantly striving towards Him and be enlivened by Him. Christ is the unchangeable goal in growth and maturity of all that is good within us. Everything is directed towards Him, as all emanates from Him and is perfected by Him...

How sweet it is to be with Christ, and how unbearable is life without Him. He is our joy and comfort.



ST. XENIA ORTHODOX CHURCH
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FEBRUARY 2013						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Jan 27 (Jan 14) 34th Sunday after Pentecost. Tone 1 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy	Jan 28 (Jan 15) St. Paul of Thebes	Jan 29 (Jan 16) Precious Chains of the Holy Apostle Peter	Jan 30 (Jan 17) St. Anthony the Great Fast: fish, wine, & oil	Jan 31 (Jan 18) St. Athanasius the Great	1 (Jan 19) Ven Macarius the Great Fast	2 (Jan 20) Ven Euthymius the Great 5:30 All-Night Vigil
3 (Jan 21) 35th Sunday after Pentecost. Tone 2 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy	4 (Jan 22) Ap Timothy of the 70	5 (Jan 23) HM Clement, bp of Ancyra 6:30 Vigil of St Xenia	6 (Jan 24) St. Xenia of Petersburg 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy Fast: fish, wine, & oil	7 (Jan 25) St. Gregory the Theologian	8 (Jan 26) St. Xenophon and his wife, St. Mary, and their two sons Fast	9 (Jan 27) Trans. of the relics of St. John Chrysostom 5:30 All-Night Vigil
10 (Jan 28) New MM and Confessors of Russia, Tone 3 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy	11 (Jan 29) Trans. of the relics of HM Ignatius the God-bearer	12 (Jan 30) Three Holy Hierarchs	13 (Jan 31) Holy Unmercenaries Cyrus and John Fast	14 (Feb 1) M Tryphon of Campsada 6:30 Vigil of the Meeting of the Lord	15 (Feb 2) MEETING OF THE LORD 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy Fast: fish, wine, & oil	16 (Feb 3) R Symeon the God-receiver and Pr Anna 5:30 All-Night Vigil
17 (Feb 4) 37th Sunday after Pentecost. Tone 4 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy	18 (Feb 5) M Agatha of Palermo	19 (Feb 6) Ven Bucolus, bp of Smyrna	20 (Feb 7) Ven Parthenius, bp of Lampsacus Fast	21 (Feb 8) GM Theodore Stratelates	22 (Feb 9) M Nicephorus of Antioch Fast	23 (Feb 10) HM Charalampus, bp of Magnesia 5:30 All-Night Vigil
24 (Feb 11) Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee. Tone 5 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy	25 (Feb 12) Iveron Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos Fast free	26 (Feb 13) Ven Martinian, monk of Caesarea Fast free	27 (Feb 14) St. Cyril, Equal-to-the-Apostles, teacher of the Slavs Fast free	28 (Feb 15) Ap Onesimus of the 70	Mar 1 (Feb 16)	Mar 2 (Feb 17) 5:30 All-Night Vigil Fast free

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St. Xenia Orthodox Church
170 North Lowell Street
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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.