

St. Xenia Parish News

170 North Lowell Street, Methuen, MA 01844

January – February 2021

On Spiritual Struggle by Elder Porphyrios

What makes a person holy is love, the adoration of Christ

When Christ enters our soul, everything within us will be altered

Man is a mystery. We carry within us an age-old inheritance—all the good and precious experience of the prophets, the saints, the martyrs, the apostles and above all of our Lord Jesus Christ; but we also carry within us the inheritance of the evil that exists in the world from Adam until the present. All this is within us, instincts and everything, and all demand satisfaction. If we don't satisfy them, they will take revenge at some time, unless, that is, we divert them elsewhere, to something higher, to God.

That is why we must die to our ancestral humanity and enrobe ourselves in the new humanity. This is what we confess in the sacrament of baptism. With baptism we enter into the joy of Christ. "As many as are baptized in Christ, have put on Christ" (Gal. 2:27). Confession is a second baptism in which we are purified of our passions, in which our passions are benumbed. Thus divine grace comes through the sacraments.

The Lord said to His disciples, 'When the Holy Spirit will come, it will teach you all things' (Cf. John 14:26). The Holy Spirit teaches us everything. It sanctifies us. It assimilates us to God. When we have the Spirit of God, we become incapable of all sin, incapable of sinning. When we have the Holy Spirit, we cannot do evil. We cannot be filled with anger or hate or speak evil.

We must become filled, replete with the Holy Spirit. This is where the essence of spiritual life lies. This is an art—the art of arts. Let us open our arms and throw ourselves into Christ's embrace. When Christ comes, we will have gained everything. Christ will alter everything within us. He will bring peace, joy, humility, love, prayer and the uplifting of our soul. The grace of Christ will renew us. If we turn to Him with intense longing and desire, with devotion and love, Christ will give us everything.

Without Christ it is impossible to correct ourselves. We will not be able to detach ourselves from our passions. On our own we cannot become good. Without me, you can do nothing (John 15:5). However much we try, we will achieve nothing. There is one thing we must do, and that is turn to Him and love Him with all our soul (Mark 12:30). Love for Christ: this is the best and sole remedy for the passions.

God has placed a power in man's soul. But it is up to him how he channels it—for good or for evil. If we imagine the good as a garden full of flowers, trees and plants and the evil as weeds and thorns and the power as water, then what can happen is as follows: when the water is directed towards the flower-garden, then all the plants grow, blossom and bear fruit; and at the same time, the weeds and thorns, because they are not being watered, wither and die. And the opposite, of course, can also happen.

It is not necessary, therefore, to concern yourselves with the weeds. Don't occupy yourself with rooting out evil. Christ does not wish us to occupy ourselves with the passions, but with the opposite. Channel the water, that is, all the strength of your soul, to the flowers and you will enjoy their beauty, their fragrance and their freshness.

You won't become saints by hounding after evil. Ignore evil. Look towards Christ and He will save you. Instead of standing outside the door shooing the evil one away, treat him with disdain. If evil approaches from one direction, then calmly turn in the opposite direction. If evil comes to assault you, turn all your inner strength to good, to Christ. Pray, "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me." He knows how and in what way to have mercy on you. And when you have filled yourself with good, don't turn any more towards evil. In this way you become good on your own, with the grace of God. Where can evil then find a foothold? It disappears!

All things are possible with Christ. Where is the pain and effort for you to become good? Things are simple. You will invoke God and He will transform things into good. If you give your heart to Him, there will be no room for the other things. When you "put on" Christ, you will not need any effort to attain virtue. He will give it to you. Are you engulfed by fear and disenchantment? Turn to Christ. Love Him simply and humbly, without any demand, and He Himself will free you. Turn to Christ and say with humility and hope like Saint Paul, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24) Turn towards Christ, therefore, and He will come immediately. His grace will act at once.

St. Xenia of St. 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 Father Michael at frmichael@stxenia.org. Thank you.

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Confessions on Saturday during Vigil, on Sunday during the Hours, and by appointment.

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Trapeza Schedule

*Organized Trapeza is on hold for the foreseeable future.
We all look forward to the day we can gather again after Liturgy!*



PARISH NEWS

Please Remember in Your Prayers ~

Jane Rockwell, Peter Danas, Dimitri Nikshych, Laryssa Doohovskoy, and Matushka Anna.

Please be sure to inform the Sisterhood if someone is in the hospital or shut in at home.

Congratulations!

To the Justinien family and Poletti family on the Baptism of Samson and Isaiah Justinien and Basil Poletti on November 21.

We ask God's blessings and many years to all!

Attending Liturgy ~

In consideration of capacity limitations due to Covid, sign-ups continue to be made available for Liturgy. There is no sign-up required for Vigil. To sign-up, please go to:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30e0548a5ae2fa64-stxenial>

Services will continue to be live-streamed from our YouTube Channel. The link is on our website.

House Blessings ~

Fr. Michael will begin scheduling house blessings after Theophany on Jan 19. There will be a signup sheet on the candle table or you may contact him directly.

Choir News ~

If you have a private service - wedding, baptism, funeral, etc. – and would like to have choir singers, please contact Laryssa at stxenichoira@gmail.com.

Sisterhood News ~

We have so many things for which we wish to thank our Parish community. Glory be to God for all things!

Thank you to everyone who donated to the children's coat collection!! We collected 26 beautiful, warm jackets for the needful children of the Methuen School System. In addition, a donation was made from our parish lawn mower's wife who works with a wholesaler and was able to provide 18 more new jackets. 44 jackets in all were donated to the Methuen Superintendent's office. They were received with much appreciation and gratitude.

Thank you to our community for fulfilling this need in such a wonderful manner and thank you to Natalie Pishenen for helping to organize this and make the delivery.

Thank you to everyone who donated to the St. Martha's Food Pantry collection. We collected boxes and boxes of items that were delivered on New Year's Day. What a wonderful way to start off 2021!

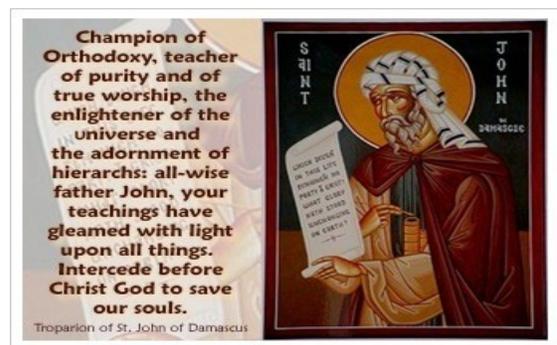


Thank you to all who donated towards the 3 Haiti boy's school tuition. We raised over \$1,500 which was wired directly to Fr. Augustin in Haiti. I don't think we can imagine how much we are changing those boys' lives! Glory be to God for all things!

Finally, thank you to everyone who helped decorate and clean the Church for Nativity!

Sunday School News ~

Sunday School teachers are meeting with their students in various capacities. If you have not been contacted by a teacher or have questions, please reach out to Alexei Doohovskoy at 617-824-0754, www.adtrombone.com.



DIOCESE NEWS

The year 2020, the centenary year of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR), was marked by the release of a new version of the ROCOR Studies website. Deacon Andrei Psarev, Professor of Russian Church History and Canon Law at Holy Trinity Orthodox Seminary in Jordanville, NY, founded this website and remains its editor.

Since the launch of this educational resource in 2008, more than 700 materials related to the theology, history, and current state of the ROCOR, as well as its personalities, have been made available to a general audience through ROCOR Studies, which is available in both English and Russian at rocorstudies.org.

The educational Facebook group [Historical Studies of the Russian Church Abroad](#) continues its growth.

LIVES OF THE SAINTS

The Nun Theodora of Tsargrad (*Commemorated Dec 30/Jan 12*) lived at Constantinople during the first half of the X Century. She had been married, but was widowed early on and led a pious life, attending the destitute and hopeless, and then she accepted monasticism and lived under the guidance of the Monk Basil the New (Comm. 26 March), devoting herself to monastic life in her own home in a solitary cell. The Nun Theodora died in extreme old age in the year 940. Upon the death of Saint Theodora, a student of Saint Basil the New, Gregory by name, prayerfully besought his teacher to reveal to him the after-death fate of the deceased nun. "Thou thus very much do wish this?", -- asked the Monk Basil. "Yes, very much I should wish it", -- answered Gregory. "Thou shalt see her today, if thou with faith ask of this and if deeply thou be convinced of the possibility of the fulfilling of the request". Gregory was greatly surprised and he thought it all over, how and where he was going to be able to see someone, who had gone off into eternal life. When Gregory that same night was falling asleep, a youth of comely appearance came to him and said: "Rise up, the monastic father Basil doth summon thee, so as to visit together with Theodora; if thou wishest to see her, then come along and see". Gregory immediately went off to the Monk Basil, but did not find him there. Those present said to him, that the Monk Basil had gone himself to visit the Nun Theodora. To the distressed Gregory they pointed out the way, along which had gone the Monk Basil. Gregory proceeded along it, until he found himself in a unknown labyrinth. The narrow and difficult path led

to a bolted gateway. Seeing through a crack in it, that a courtyard was situated beyond the gates, Gregory called out to a woman seated there. She explained, that this courtyard belonged to Father Basil, who was wont to come hither to visit with his spiritual children. "Open to me, for I too am a spiritual child of Saint Basil," -- besought Gregory. But the servant girl would not open the doors without the permission of the Nun Theodora. Gregory began to knock loudly on the doors. The Nun Theodora heard it and joyfully let him through, exclaiming: "Here he is -- the beloved son of my master, Basil!" Having greeted him, the Nun Theodora inquired: "Brother Gregory, who hath guided thee hither?" Then he in turn related, how through the prayer of Saint Basil he had the good fortune to behold her in the glory, which she had attained by her ascetic life. Gregory began to implore her to tell him, for purposes of spiritual benefit, how she had parted from the body and bypassing the slanderers she had come to this holy habitation. The Nun Theodora replied: "how can I, dear child Gregory, tell thee everything? After the point, in which I was with tribulation in fear and trembling, I have forgotten much, moreover, I did see such faces and hear such voices, as never one doth happen to see nor hear over all the course of one's life. What I can say, is this, that death should have come upon me fiercely because of my unjust deeds, done on earth, were it not for the prayers of our Father Basil. His prayers alone did make my death the more easy". After this the Nun Theodora began to relate, how a multitude of suddenly appearing evil spirits accosted before her end. They carried large books, into which were written down all the sins of her whole life, and they reviewed them with impatience, as though any minute expecting the arrival of some sort of judge. Seeing all this, the Nun Theodora went into such fear and terror, that finally she began exhausted and in agony she glanced about on all sides, wanting to see someone, who would be able to drive away he devils. Finding herself in this tormenting situation, she then beheld two Angels, standing to the right side of her. The evil spirits then withdrew farther off. "Why do ye, grim enemies of the race of man, seek to harass and torment the soul of the deceased? Rejoice not, for here be not one of yours", -- exclaimed an Angel. Then the shameless spirits began to recount everything, that the saint had done from the time of her youth, whether by word, or deed or thought. To all this they added on much of their own invention, seeking to slander the saint. Finally there came death. It poured something into a bowl and offered it to the

saint to drink, and afterwards, taking a knife, it cut off her head. "Ah, my child, -- continued on the Nun Theodora with her account, -- how bitter it became for me then, how bitter! At this moment death snatched away my soul, which quickly separated from the body, just like a bird leaps off the hand of the fowler, if he sets it to freedom". Radiant Angels took the soul of the Nun Theodora and began to set off with it to Heaven, whereas her body was left to lay upon the earth, like discarded clothing. When the holy Angels had hold of the soul of the nun, the evil spirits again showed up, saying: "We have her many sins, answer us for them". And then the Angels began to recount all the good deeds, which the saint had done: her charity, her love of peace, the love for the temple of God, patience, humility, fasting, and many other ascetic deeds which the nun had undertaken in life. All taken together, they set opposite the sins her good deeds, which expiated them. The evil spirits gnashed their teeth, wanting yet to abduct the holy soul and hurl it down into the abyss. At this time suddenly there appeared in spirit the Monk Basil and he said to the holy Angels: "My protectors, this soul hath rendered me many a service, lessening the distress of mine infirmity and old age. I have prayed concerning her to the Lord, and He bestowed this good thing". With this the Monk Basil gave the Angels some sort of small chest, adding: "When ye want the coelestial trials to finish, redeem her, taking what be from this chest and giving it to the wicked and evil spirits". Having giving them the chest, the saint went away. Seeing all this, the evil spirits for a long time remained perplexed and speechless, and then suddenly, loudly shrieking, they howled: "Woe to us! In vain have we toiled, watching and following her, as to how and where she did sin". Having said this, they instantly disappeared. Then the Monk Basil again appeared and brought with him many different vessels with fragrances, which he entrusted to the Angels. Opening one vessel after the other, the Angels poured out the fragrances upon the Nun Theodora. She was filled with a spiritual sweetness and felt, that she had changed and become very luminous. The Monk Basil said: "My protectors! When ye have done everything needful over her, then, having brought her to the habitation prepared by the Lord for me, leave her there". Having said this, he withdrew. The holy Angels took the Nun Theodora and proceeded upwards to Heaven, rising up as though through the air.

And here upon the way suddenly was encountered the First Trial, which is called the Trial of Idle and Nasty Words. The tormentors demanded an answer be given to everything, that the Nun Theodora

had ever spoken badly about anyone, and they pointed out the indecorous laughter, mockery and crude songs. All this the saint had forgotten, since quite a length of time had passed, when first she began to lead a life, pleasing to God. But the Angels defended her.

Further on was the Trial of Lies. The evil spirits situated there were very nasty, stubborn and fierce. They furiously began to slander the saint, but the Angels gave it to them from the small chest and passed by unhindered.

When the Nun Theodora reached the Third Trial -- that of Judging and Slander, from the evil spirits there emerged one rather older and it began to relate, how with what vile words the nun had slandered someone during her life. Much he indicated was false, but it was amazing still, with what detail and exactness the demons remembered things, things which the nun herself had forgotten.

The servants of the Fourth Trial -- that of Gluttony and Drunkenness, literally like ravenous wolves were ready to devour the saint, recollecting, how she ate in the morning without praying to God, how she ate at lunch and supper without measure, and transgressed the fasts. Trying to snatch the nun from the hands of the Angels, one of the evil spirits said: "Did thou not promise to the Lord God at holy Baptism to renounce Satan and all his works and everything, that pertains to him? Having given such a vow, how canst thou have done the things which thou hast done?" And the devils even calculated up all the cups of wine, which the Nun Theodora had imbibed over the course of all her life. When she said: "Yes, this was so, and this I do remember", -- the Angels again gave out a portion from the small chest of Saint Basil, just as they had done at each of the trials, and set off further.

"Do the people located on earth know, what awaits them here and with what they will meet at the time of their death?" -- asked the Nun Theodora of the Angels. "Yes, they do know, -- answered an Angel, -- but the pleasures and delights of life act so strongly upon them, it so consumes their attention, that they involuntarily forget about that which doth await them beyond the grave. Good it be for those, which remember the Holy Scripture and work charity or do yet other good deeds, which afterwards can redeem them of the eternal torments of hell. But woe to those, which live carelessly as though forever, thinking only of the sweets of the belly and their pride. If suddenly death should overtake them, they perish completely, since they have not in their defense any good deeds; the souls of these people are fiercely tor-

mented by the dark princes of these trials, they lead them off into the dark places of hell and will hold on to them until the Coming of Christ. Thus also thou, Theodora, wouldst have suffered, had thou not received of the saint of God Basil the gift, which hath saved thee here from all harm".

With suchlike discourse by the Angel was reached the Fifth Trial -- that of Laziness and Sloth, where sinners are tormented for all the hours of the day spent in idleness. Here the indolent are held, having been too lazy to go to the Church of God on feastdays. Here too the careless and the despondent are tested, both the layfolk and the clergy, and there is discerned the lack of attentiveness of each about their own soul. Many here are hurled off into the abyss. The Angels made up for the insufficiencies of the nun with the gifts of Saint Basil and proceeded on further.

The Sixth Trial -- was that of Thievery, and they passed through freely. Thus also the Seventh Trial -- that of Greed and Avarice, the Angels managed to pass through unhindered because, by the mercy of God, the Nun Theodora had always been satisfied with what God provided, and she diligently distributed what she possessed to the needy.

The spirits of the Eighth Trial -- that of Bribery, gave torment for Bribe-taking and Flattery, and gnashed their teeth out of malice, when the Angels went on from them, since they had nothing against the Nun Theodora.

And the Angels proceeded freely thus through the Ninth Trial -- that of Unrighteousness and Vanity, the Tenth Trial -- that of Envy and Jealousy, and the Eleventh Trial -- that of Pride.

Along their way they soon encountered the Twelfth Trial -- that of Anger. The eldest of the spirits, full of the wrath of anger and arrogance, commanded its servants to torment and torture the nun. The devils repeated all the original words of the nun, spoken by her in anger, they remembered even, how with anger she had glared at her own children or strictly punished them. For all this the Angels gave answer, handing out from the small chest.

Literally like robbers, there rushed out the evil spirits of the Thirteenth Trial -- that of Spitefulness, but finding nothing in their records, they wailed bitterly. Then the Nun Theodora made bold to ask one of the Angels, from whence do the evil spirits know, who and what is done bad in life. The Angel answered: "Every Christian through holy Baptism doth receive a Guardian Angel, who does invisibly protect him from everything bad and urges him to everything good, and who records all the good deeds done by this person. But on the other side, there is an evil an-

gel keeping watch over all the course of life for the evil deeds of people and writes them down into his book. He records all the sins which, as thou hast seen, do accost people in passing through the trials on their way to Heaven. These sins are able to deny a soul entry into Paradise and lead directly into the abyss, in which the evil spirits themselves do dwell. And therein these souls will dwell until the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, if they have not for themselves good deeds, wherewith to snatch them from the hands of the devil. People, those truly believing in the Holy Trinity, and having communed as they are able a portion of the Holy Mysteries of the Body and Blood of Christ the Saviour, directly ascend to Heaven without any hindrance. And the holy Angels of God be manifest as their defenders, and the Saints pleasing to God do intercede for the salvation of souls of righteously living people. Concerning however the impious and heretics of malicious-faith, and those who accomplish nothing of benefit in their lives, no one looks after them and in their defense the Angels are able to say nothing".

The Angels then reached the Fourteenth Trial -- that of Thuggery, where are tested all, who have lashed out with anger, smiting someone on the cheek or using some other weapon. And this trial too the Angels passed through freely.

Suddenly they found themselves at the Fifteenth Trial -- that of Sorcery and Necromancy (Conjuring), amidst poisonously beckoning demons. Here are located the viperous-mannered spirits, the purpose of whose existence is to lead people into temptation and corruption. Through the grace of Christ the Nun Theodora soon bypassed this trial. But after this she inquired, is it for every sin, which a man commits in life, that he is tormented with at the trials, or is it possible even during life to expiate the sin, in order to be cleansed of it and not be tormented with it at the trials. The Angels answered the Nun Theodora, that not all thus experience the trials, but only those, who like her, did not make a heart-cleansing confession before death. "If I had confessed to my spiritual father all my sinfulness without shame or fear, and if I had received absolution from my spiritual father, -- said the Nun Theodora, -- then I should have gone through all these trials unhindered, and not one of my sins would have tormented me. But since I was not wont to confess in a heart-cleansing manner all my sins to my spiritual father, then here they do torment me for this. Certainly, it did help me much, that I strove and desired over all the course of my life to flee sin. Whoever with diligence strives after repentance, doth receive always from God the forgiveness, and through

this also unencumbered passage from this life to the blessed life beyond the grave. The evil spirits, which be situated amidst the trials together with their records, in opening them find nothing written, since the Holy Spirit will make invisible everything written. And they see this and they know, that everything written by them is wiped out, thanks to confession, and they then be deeply saddened. If a person be still among the living, then they aspire to write down there some other sort of sins. Great in truth is the saving of the person in confession! It doth save one from many a woe and distress, it provides the possibility without hindrance to go through all the trials and come nigh to God. Some do not make confession in the expectation, that there will still be time for salvation, and for the remission of sins. Others simply at confession are ashamed to tell the priest their sins -- here such people will be severely tested by the trials. There are also such, who are ashamed to tell everything to one spiritual father, and they choose rather to tell one sin to one priest, and others -- to another, and so forth. For such a confession they will be punished and they will suffer not a little the transition from trial to trial".

Imperceptibly they approached the Sixteenth Trial -- that of Fornication. The tormentors were astonished, that the saint had reached them without hindrance, and when they began to relate, what she had done in life, they gave much false testimony, while providing in the account names and places. Thus also it happened with the servants of the Seventeenth Trial -- that of Adultery. The Eighteenth Trial -- that of Sodomy, was where there are tormented all the sins of fornication against nature and of incest, all the nasty, secretly done deeds about which, in the words of the Apostle, it is shameful even to speak. The Nun Theodora passed through quickly. The Angels said to her: "Thou didst see the dreadful and loathsome fornications of that trial. Know, that it is the rare soul that passes by them freely. All the world is immersed in the evil of temptations and filth, nearly all people are lascivious, and "the inclinations of the heart of man -- are evil from the time of his youth" (Gen. 8: 21). Few are they that have mortified the passions of the flesh, and there be few such, who would freely get through these trials. A large part, arriving hither, do perish. The forces of the fornicative trials boast, that they alone most of all of the trials fill up the fiery raging in hell. Give thanks to God, Theodora, that thou hast bypassed these tormentors of prodigality through the prayers of thine father, the Monk Basil. Thou shalt see no greater terror".

At the Nineteenth Trial -- that of Idol-Worship and Every-Heresy, there was nothing to torment the Nun Theodora with.

At the final, the Twentieth Trial -- that of Lack of Pity and Hardness of Heart, there was recorded everything unmerciful, cruel, spiteful and of hate. The soul of a person, not following the command of God about mercy, is flung from hither into hell and shut up in it until the general resurrection. Literally like a mass of bees, there swooped down servants of the fierce demon, but finding nothing concerning the nun, they went away.

The rejoicing Angels then transported the saint through the gates of Heaven. When she entered into Heaven the water on the ground gave way, and behind her it again joined together. A triumphant host of Angels met the saint and conducted her to the Throne of God. As they went, there descended upon them two Divine clouds. At an inexplicable height stood the Throne of God, so white, that it illumined all present before it. "Everything there is situated such, that it be not possible either to comprehend or explain; the mind is beclouded with perplexity, and memory lulls, and I did forget, where I was situated", -- went on the Nun Theodora with her narration. She bowed down to the Unseen God and heard a Voice, commanding to be shown her all the souls of the righteous and of sinners, and after this to grant repose, where the Monk Basil should indicate. When all this had been shown her, one of the Angels said: "Thou knowest, Theodora, that in the world it is the custom: on the 40th day after death those remaining alive make memory of the departed. And thus, there upon the earth the Monk Basil doth today remember thee". "And so, -- the Nun Theodora concluded her story, -- my spiritual child Gregory, after the 40th day of the separation of my soul from the body, I am now situated in this place, which was prepared for our father the Monk Basil". After this she led him through the Heavenly habitation, where Gregory encountered the Monk Basil in the courtyard beyond the refectory. Afterwards Saint Theodora led him into the garden. Astonished at all the good things, Gregory wanted to find out about them. But the Nun Theodora merely said, that all this be not of earth, but attainable for those, who in the earthly life endure many a sorrow and misfortune, yet who keeps the commands of the Lord and precisely fulfills them. When the Nun Theodora said, that life in Heaven is distinctly different from life on earth, Gregory involuntarily pinched himself, wanting to know whether he was still in the flesh. His spirit was joyful, his senses and thoughts pure. He wanted to return from the garden, which the

nun had pointed him to, and go to the courtyard. When he returned, there was no one there at the refectory. Having made a bow to the Nun Theodora, Gregory started to return homewards, and at that very moment he awoke and began to wonder, where he was and what it all it had been, that he had heard and seen. He became afraid, lest it was all just a demonic deceit, and he went to his teacher. Then he Monk Basil himself recounted everything, that Gregory had seen, and asked him to write down everything he had seen and heard, for the benefit of others.

On the Feast of the Meeting of the Lord, (*Commemorated Feb 2/ Feb 15*) the Church commemorates an important event in the earthly life of our Lord Jesus Christ (Lk 2: 22-40). On the 40th day after birth the God-Infant was taken to the Jerusalem Temple -- the centre of religious life of the God-chosen nation. By the Law of Moses (Lev 12) a woman, having given birth to a child of the male gender, was forbidden for 40 days to enter into the Temple of God. After this interval the mother came to the Temple with the child, so as to offer to the Lord thanksgiving and a purification sacrifice. The MostHoly Virgin, the Mother of God, did not have need for purification, since without defilement she had given birth to the Source of purity and sanctity, but in profound humility she submitted to the precepts of the Law.

At this time there lived at Jerusalem the righteous elder Simeon (the account about him is located under the day of his commemoration -- 3 February). It had been revealed to him that he would not die until he should behold Christ the Saviour. By inspiration from above, the pious elder went to the Temple at that very moment when the MostHoly Mother of God and Righteous Joseph had brought there the Infant Jesus, so as to fulfill the ritual ceremony of the Law. The God-Bearer Simeon took the God-Infant in his arms, and having given thanks to God, he uttered a prophecy about the Saviour of the world: "Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart, O Lord, with peace according to Thy word, wherefore hath mine eyes beheld Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to the enlightening of gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel" (Lk 2: 29-32). Righteous Simeon said to the MostHoly Virgin: "Behold, This One is set for the fall and rising up of many in Israel and for the sign spoken against, and for Thee Thyself a sword shalt pierce the soul, so that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed" (Lk 2: 35).

At the Temple also the 84 year old widow Anna the Prophetess, daughter of Phanuel (Comm. 3

February), "who did not leave the temple, serving God both day and night in fasting and prayer. And she also at that time, having drawn near, glorified the Lord and spake about Him (the God-Infant) to all awaiting deliverance at Jerusalem" (Lk 2: 37-38).

Before the Birth of Christ, all righteous men and women lived by faith in the Future Messiah the Saviour of the world, and they awaited His coming. The final righteous ones of the closing Old Testament -- Righteous Simeon and the Prophetess Anna -- were deemed worthy to meet at the Temple the Bearer of the New Testament, in the Person of Whom both Divinity and humanity do meet.

The Feast of the Meeting of the Lord is among the most ancient feasts of the Christian Church. It is known, that on the day of this solemnity were proclaimed sermons by Sainted Bishops Methodios of Patara (+ 312), Cyril of Jerusalem (+ 360), Gregory the Theologian (+ 389), Amphylokios of Iconium (+ 394), Gregory of Nyssa (+ 400), and John Chrysostom (+ 407). But in spite of its early origin, this feast was not so solemnly celebrated until the VI Century. During the reign of Justinian in the year 528, a catastrophe befell Antioch -- an earthquake, in which many people perished. And upon this misfortune there followed others. In the year 544 there appeared a pestilential plague, daily carrying off several thousand people. During these days of widespread travail, it was revealed to a certain pious christian that the celebration of the Meeting of the Lord should be done more solemnly.

When at the day of the Meeting of the Lord the all-night vigil was finally made with church procession, the disasters at Byzantium ceased. In thanksgiving to God, the Church established in 544 that the Meeting of the Lord should be done more solemnly.

Church melodists adorned this feast with many a church work of song: in the VII Century -- Sainted Andrew ArchBishop of Crete; in the VIII Century -- Sainted Cosma Bishop of Maium, Monk John Damascene, Sainted Germanos Patriarch of Constantinople; and in the IX Century -- Sainted Joseph the Studite, ArchBishop of Thessalonika.

With the event of the Meeting of the Lord is associated the icon of the MostHoly Mother of God named: "the Softening of Evil Hearts" or "Simeon's Prophecy", which it is necessary to distinguish from the icon "Seven Arrows".

The icon "Simeon's Prophecy" symbolises the fulfillment of the prophecy of the righteous elder Simeon: "for Thee Thyself a sword shalt pierce the soul" (Lk 2: 35).



ST. XENIA ORTHODOX CHURCH
P.O. Box 147 - Methuen, MA 01844
(phone) (978) 204-0428



JANUARY 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Dec 27 (Dec 14) 29th Sunday after Pentecost. Tone 4 Holy Forefathers 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy Fast: fish, wine, & oil	Dec 28 (Dec 15) Fast	Dec 29 (Dec 16) Fast: wine, & oil	Dec 30 (Dec 17) Fast	Dec 31 (Dec 18) Fast: wine, & oil	1 (Dec 19) Fast	2 (Dec 20) 5:30 All-Night Vigil Fast: wine & oil
3 (Dec 21) Sunday of the Holy Fathers, Tone 5 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy Fast: wine & oil	4 (Dec 22) Fast	5 (Dec 23) Fast: wine & oil	6 (Dec 24) Forefeast of Nativity 9:00 Royal Hours 10:30 Vespers Divine Liturgy 6:00 Vigil of Nativity Fast: wine & oil	7 (Dec 25) NATIVITY OF THE LORD 9:30 Hours & Divine Liturgy	8 (Dec 26) Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos Fast free	9 (Dec 27) 5:30 All-Night Vigil Fast free
10 (Dec 28) Sunday after Nativity 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy Fast free	11 (Dec 29) Fast free	12 (Dec 30) Fast free	13 (Dec 31) Fast free	14 (Jan 1) Circumcision of the Lord Fast free	15 (Jan 2) Fast free	16 (Jan 3) 5:30 All-Night Vigil Fast free
17 (Jan 4) Sunday Before Theophany Tone 7 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy Fast free	18 (Jan 5) 9:00 Royal Hours 10:30 Vespers Divine Liturgy w/Blessing of Waters 6:00 Vigil of Theophany Fast: wine & oil	19 (Jan 6) THEOPHANY OF THE LORD 9:30 Hours & Divine Liturgy w/Blessing of Waters	20 (Jan 7) Synaxis of the Baptist Fast: wine & oil	21 (Jan 8) Fast: wine & oil	22 (Jan 9) Fast: wine & oil	23 (Jan 10) 5:30 All-Night Vigil
24 (Jan 11) Sunday After Theophany Tone 8 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy	25 (Jan 12) Fast	26 (Jan 13) Fast	27 (Jan 14) Fast: wine & oil	28 (Jan 15) Fast	29 (Jan 16) Fast	30 (Jan 17) St. Anthony the Great 5:30 All-Night Vigil
31 (Jan 18) 34th Sunday after Pentecost. Tone 1 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy	Feb 1 (Jan 19) Fast	Feb 2 (Jan 20) Fast	Feb 3 (Jan 21) Fast	Feb 4 (Jan 22) Fast	Feb 5 (Jan 23) 5:30 Vigil of St. Xenia Fast	Feb 6 (Jan 24) St. Xenia of Petersburg 9:30 Hours & Divine Liturgy 5:30 All-Night Vigil



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FEBRUARY 2021						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Jan 31 (Jan 18) 34th Sunday after Pentecost. Tone 1 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy	1 (Jan 19)	2 (Jan 20)	3 (Jan 21) Fast	4 (Jan 22)	5 (Jan 23) 5:30 Vigil of St. Xenia Fast	6 (Jan 24) St. Xenia of Petersburg 9:30 Hours & Divine Liturgy 5:30 All-Night Vigil
7 (Jan 25) New Martyrs and Confessors of Russian Church, Tone 2 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy	8 (Jan 26)	9 (Jan 27)	10 (Jan 28) Fast	11 (Jan 29)	12 (Jan 30) Three Holy Hierarchs Fast: fish, wine, & oil	13 (Jan 31) 5:30 All-Night Vigil
14 (Feb 1) Forefeast of the Meeting of Our Lord, Tone 3 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy 12:30 Vespers of the Meeting of the Lord	15 (Feb 2) MEETING OF THE LORD 9:30 Hours & Divine Liturgy	16 (Feb 3)	17 (Feb 4) Fast	18 (Feb 5)	19 (Feb 6) Fast	20 (Feb 7) 5:30 All-Night Vigil
21 (Feb 8) Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee, Tone 4 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy	22 (Feb 9) Fast free	23 (Feb 10) Fast free	24 (Feb 11) Fast free	25 (Feb 12) Fast free	26 (Feb 13) Fast free	27 (Feb 14) 5:30 All-Night Vigil Fast free
28 (Feb 15) Sunday of the Prodigal Son. Tone 5 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy	Mar 1 (Feb 16)	Mar 2 (Feb 17)	Mar 3 (Feb 18) Fast	Mar 4 (Feb 19)	Mar 5 (Feb 20) Fast	Mar 6 (Feb 21) 5:30 All-Night Vigil