



St. Xenia Parish News

170 North Lowell Street, Methuen, MA 01844

November-December 2007

First Homily on Prayer

by St. Theophan the Recluse

On the feast day of the Entrance into the Temple of the Most-holy Theotokos, I find it timely to give you instruction in prayer - the main work of the temple. A temple is a place of prayer and arena of prayer's development. For us, entry into the temple is entry into a prayerful spirit. The Lord has the kindness to call our hearts His temple, where we enter mentally and stand before Him, ascending to Him like the fragrant smoke of incense. We are going to study how to attain this state.

Gathering in the temple, you pray, of course. And in praying here, you surely ought not abandon prayer at home. Therefore, it would be extraneous to speak to you about our duty to pray, when you already pray. But I do not think that it is extraneous in any way to give you two or three rules about how to pray, if not in the way of teaching, then simply as a reminder. The work of prayer is the first work in Christian life. If in everyday affairs the saying: "live and learn" is true, then so much more it applies to prayer, which never stops and which has no limit.

Let me recall a wise custom of the ancient Holy Fathers: when greeting each other, they did not ask about health or anything else, but rather about prayer, saying "How is your prayer?" The activity of prayer was considered by them to be a sign of the spiritual life, and they called it the breath of the spirit. If the body has breath, it lives; if breathing stops, life comes to an end. So it is with the spirit. If there is prayer, the soul lives; without prayer, there is no spiritual life.

However, not every act of prayer is prayer. Standing at home before your icons, or here in church, and venerating them is not yet prayer, but the "equipment" of prayer. Reading prayers either by heart or from a book, or hearing someone else read them is not yet prayer, but only a tool or method for obtaining and awakening prayer. Prayer itself is the piercing of our hearts by pious feelings towards God, one after another - feelings of humility, submission, gratitude, doxology, forgiveness, heart-felt prostration, brokenness, conformity to the will of God, etc. All of our effort should be directed so that during our prayers, these feelings and feelings like them should fill our souls, so that the heart would not be empty when the lips are reading the prayers, or when the ears hear and the body bows in prostrations, but that there would be some qualitative feeling,

some striving toward God. When these feelings are present, our praying is prayer, and when they are absent, it is not yet prayer.

It seems that nothing should be simpler and more natural for us than prayer and our hearts' striving for God. But in fact it is not always like this for everyone. One must awaken and strengthen a prayerful spirit in oneself, that is one must bring up a prayerful spirit. The first means to this is to read or to hear prayers said. Pray as you should, and you will certainly awaken and strengthen the ascent of your heart to God and you will come into a spirit of prayer.

In our prayer books, there are prayers of the Holy Fathers - Ephraim the Syrian, Makarios the Egyptian, Basil the Great, John Chrysostom, and other great men of prayer. Being filled with the spirit of prayer, they were able to up that living spirit into words, and handed it down to us. When one enters into these prayers with attention and effort, then that great and prayerful spirit will in turn enter into him. He will taste the power of prayer. We must pray so that our mind and heart receive the content of the prayers that we read. In this way the act of praying becomes a font of true prayer in us. I will give here three very simple instructions: 1. always begin praying with at least a little preparation; 2. do not pray carelessly, but with attention and feeling; and 3. do not go on to ordinary work immediately after prayer.

Even if prayer is common for us, it always demands preparation. What is more common for those who can read and write than reading and writing? However, sitting down to read or write, we do not immediately begin, but we calm ourselves before beginning, at least to the point that we can read or write in a peaceful state. Even more so preparation for the work of prayer is necessary before praying, especially when what we have been doing before praying is of a totally different nature from prayer.

Thus, going to pray, in the morning or in the evening, stand for a moment, or sit, or walk, and strive in this time to focus your thoughts, casting off from them all earthly activities and objects. Then call to mind the One to Whom you are praying, Who He is and who you are, as you begin this prayerful petition to Him. (continued on pg. 5)

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

*** = Fast (no meats 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.

November

4 Anna Johnson, Nina Yakuboff, Maria Kasarda
11 Matushka Nancy, Megan Crowley, Katya Fredette
18 Karen Schidlovsky, Nancy Harris
25 Masha Harris, Kot Engalichev

December

*2 Natalie Botchkov, Tania Sciaudone
*9 Helena Doohovskoy, Marianne Dimatteo, Laryssa Doohovskoy
*16 Nicholas Kronauer, Vera Sarantakis
*23 Amy McLellan
*30 Anna Kekis, Mireille Lang

Sisterhood News: The Sisterhood is once again planning to do the "Giving Tree" beginning after Thanksgiving. Each year the tree is put up with ornaments to be taken by parishioners marked with items needed by the local Lazarus House charity. Gifts are brought back to the church and then brought to Lazarus House for distribution during the holiday season. This is a wonderful opportunity to give to the needy who might otherwise not be receiving even the basic necessities of life represented by the ornaments. Please take as many ornaments as you are able and give generously to this worthy cause.

Thank You... to all who helped set up, cook for, arrange, and clean up before, during, and after our Altar Feast on the weekend of September 15/16. It was a blessed event that was so successful thanks to all of you.

...to all the young people who administered the St. John Chrysostom Youth Conference on Saturday, September 15. It was a great effort for a great result!

...to Alexei Doohovskoy for his input and time spent on our Parish Council. He will serve this year on our annual Auditing Committee, where his background in economics will be well utilized.

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

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

Financial Update: As of October 31, 2007, the balance on the church mortgage stands at \$49,335. If you have any questions, please see Subdeacon Constantine Desrosiers.

St. John Chrysostom Youth Event

The "Lectures in Honor of St. John Chrysostom" on Saturday, September 15 was a great success. Over 50 young people, and various other "young at hearts" interested in the topics, were in attendance. The lectures by Fr. Victor Boldewskul and Fr. Michael Crowley were listened to with great attention, indicated as well by the excellent questions offered in the Q&A period in the afternoon.

All enjoyed the fine outdoor barbeque before Vigil.

The organization and man-power for the day came from the young adults of the parish. Many thanks to John Sarantakis, Meghan Crowley, Mary DiMatteo, David Nettleton, Dimitri Doohovskoy and all others who pitched in.

The day ended with a choir conducted by Dimitri Doohovskoy, composed of many of the young people singing the Vigil of the Feast with Metropolitan Laurus in attendance.

Yolka Play: The Yolka play has been selected and will once again be directed by our own talented Mrs. Mireille Lang. Anyone who would like to have their children participate or who would like to offer some assistance can

Speak with Mrs. Lang. We look forward to another great Yolka performance in January.

New Church Website: We are happy to announce an up-to-date website for our parish:

www.stxenia.org

Please take a look at it and visit it often to see our updated events and news. Of special interest would be Sunday School news, which will help to keep both parents and students current with their lessons.

A cemetery reminder: Burning candles and vigil lights are a fire hazard! Please extinguish all flames after visiting the cemetery. Thank you for your cooperation.

Also, please remember to keep the cemetery road clear, not only on Sundays, but also when visiting.

Children's Play Loft: If your child has played (or eaten) in the loft area, please remember to pick up toys from the floor and discard food and plates. This will keep the area clean and safe for everyone's use and will help our hall cleaner to clean that area more thoroughly. Thanks!

Welcome to the Parish Council to the newly elected Laryssa Doohovskoy. Her input as Sunday School Coordinator/Director, and fill-in Choir Master and website contact will be very much appreciated.

The Annual Parish Meeting: was held on Sunday, October 14. The election results are:

2007 Auditing Committee (3)
Daniel McLellan - reelected
Nicholas Kronauer - reelected
Anna Kekis - reelected
Alexei Doohovskoy - alternate

Starosta: Subdeacon Constantine (3rd yr. of 3 yr. term)
Treasurer: Anthony Sarantakis - reelected
Secretary: Natalie Pishenin - reelected

Parish Council (2 - 8*):
Peter Danas - reelected
John Kekis - reelected
Roberto Gonzalez - reelected
Michael Johnson - reelected
John Danas - reelected
Michael Lang - reelected
Laryssa Doohovskoy - newly elected
Cemetery contact; TBD by search committee

Fixed Council Seats:
Pastor, Council President
Head Sister

Membership Dues: Membership dues, on honor basis, to continue as a % of income: 1% minimum with a goal toward 10%.

Church School

The new series of classes began in October and are proving to be very successful and well attended.

The first three groups, Pre-School, Elementary School and Middle School, meet during the sermon at the end of Divine Liturgy. The Advanced group meets during Trapeza.

Laryssa Doohovskoy, the school coordinator, has organized the Church School section of our web site. Not only are the studies of the different levels explained and illustrated with a study plan, but the various teachers also post notes from their previous week's class so that parents can follow up at home.

It is our prayer that this coordinated system of study will help to equip our young people to be successful in their struggle to live as Orthodox Christians in this secular society.

Fr. Michael asks that all parents take this program of instruction seriously and make every effort to bring their children for the classes weekly.

Advanced Sunday School Classes

November 4	How to Read the Psalms	Rdr. Robert
November 11	The Soul after Death	D. McLellan
November 18	Hidden Parts of the Divine Liturgy	Fr. Michael
November 25	The Incarnation of Christ	Rdr. John
December 2	Ecumenical Councils Part II	Sdn. Constatine
December 9	Nativity	Rdr. Robert

NOTE: The advanced classes are principally for High School and College aged young people. Others are welcome to attend but are asked to be respectful of the person teaching and their attention to the particular need of this group.

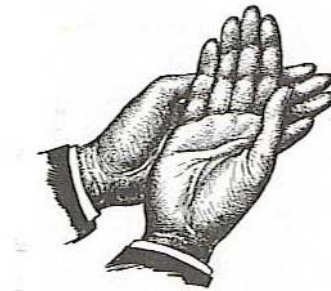
The Priest's Blessing

When the priest blesses us, he forms the Greek letters **IC XC**, that is, Jesus Christ, with the fingers of his hand. This means that through the priest our Lord Jesus Christ Himself blesses us. Therefore, we must receive the blessing of the clergy with reverence.

When we hear in the church the words of blessing, "Peace unto all" and others, in reply to them we should bow without making the sign of the Cross.



When receiving a personal blessing (or anointing) from a bishop* or priest, we should place our hands in the form of a cross: The right hand on the left with the palms upward. When we have received the blessing (or anointing) we kiss the hand that blesses us - we kiss, as it were, the invisible hand of Christ the Saviour himself.



*When receiving a blessing from a bishop or metropolitan it is customary to bend from the waist and first touch the ground in extreme humility.

(continued from front page)

From this, awaken in your soul the feeling of humility and reverent awe of standing before God in your heart. As you stand piously before God, all of this preparation may seem small and insignificant, but it is not small in meaning. This is the beginning of prayer and a good beginning is half the work.

Having stood up in your heart, now stand before your icons, make a few prostrations, and begin with the usual prayers: “Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee. O Heavenly King...”, and so on. Do not read hurriedly; pay attention to every word and let the meaning of each word enter into your heart. Accompany your words with prostrations. With this effort, the reading of prayers becomes pleasant to God and fruit-bearing. Pay attention to every word, and let the sense of each word enter into your heart; understand what you are reading and feel what you are understanding. No other rules are necessary. These two – understanding and feeling – have the effect of making prayer fitting, and fruitful. For example, you read: “cleanse us from every stain” - feel your stain, desire cleanliness, and ask it from the Lord with hope. You read: “forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors” - forgive all in your soul, and having forgiven everyone everything in your heart, ask for forgiveness for yourself from the Lord. You read: “Thy will be done” - completely give up your own will to the Lord in your heart, and honestly be prepared to meet everything that the Lord is well-pleased to send to you with a good heart. If you read each verse of your prayers in this way, then you will be truly praying.

In order to facilitate the development of true prayer, take these steps: 1) keep a prayer rule according to the blessing of your spiritual father - not more than you can read unhurriedly on a normal day; 2) before you pray, in your free time become familiar with the prayer in your rule, fully take in each word and feel it, so that you would know in advance what should be in your soul as you read. It will be even better if you learn the prayers by heart. When you do this, then all of your prayers will be easy for you to remember and feel. There is only one final difficulty: your thoughts will always stray to other subjects, therefore: 3) you must struggle to keep your attention focused on the words of your prayer, knowing in advance that your mind will wander.

When your mind does wander during prayer, bring it back. When it wanders again, bring it back again. Each and every time that you read a prayer while your thoughts are wandering (and consequently you read it without attention and feeling,) then do not fail to read it again. Even if your mind wanders several times in the same place, read it again and again until you read it all the way through with understanding and feeling. In this way, you will overcome this difficulty so that the next time, perhaps, it will not come up again, or if it does return, it will be weaker. This is how

one must act when the mind wanders. On the other hand it may happen that a particular word or phrase might act so strongly on the soul, that the soul no longer wants to continue with the prayer, and even though the lips continue praying, the mind keeps wandering back to that place which first acted on it. In this case: 4) stop, do not read further, but stand with attention and feeling in that place, and use the prayer in that place and the feelings engendered by it to feed your soul. Do not hurry to get yourself out of this state. If time cannot wait, it is better to leave your rule unfinished than to disturb this prayerful state. Maybe this feeling will stay with you all day like your guardian Angel! This sort of grace-filled action on the soul during prayer means that the spirit of prayer is becoming internalized, and consequently, maintaining this state is the most hopeful means of raising up and strengthening a spirit of prayer in your heart.

Finally, when you finish your prayers, do not immediately go off to any sort of work, but remain and think at least a little about what you have just finished and what now lies before you. If some feeling was given to you during prayer, keep it after you pray. If you completed your prayer rule in the true spirit of prayer, then you will not wish to quickly go about other work; this is a property of prayer. Thus our ancestors said when they returned from Constantinople: “he who has tasted sweet things does not desire bitter things”. So it is with each person who has prayed well during his prayers. One should recognize that tasting this sweetness of prayer is the very goal of praying, and if praying leads to a prayerful spirit, then it is exactly through such a tasting.

If you will follow these few rules, then you will quickly see the fruit of prayerful labor. And he who fulfills them already without this instruction, of course, is already tasting this fruit. All praying leaves prayer in the soul - continual prayer in this manner gives it root, and patience in this work establishes a prayerful spirit. May God grant this to you by the prayers of our All-pure Mistress, the Theotokos!

I have given you initial basic instruction in the ways of raising up in yourselves a prayerful spirit, that is, how to pray in a way appropriate to the meaning of prayer - at home in the morning and the evening, and here in the temple. But this is not yet everything. Tomorrow, if God helps, I will teach you a second method. Amen.

--Translated from the Russian by Rev. Fr. Michael van Opstall – January 2007



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



NOVEMBER 2007						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Oct 28 (Oct 15) Pentecost 22 Tone 5 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy	Oct 29 (Oct 16)	Oct 30 (Oct 17)	Oct 31 (Oct 18) Apostle Luke 3:00 St. John of Kronstadt Party for Children 6:00 Vepers of St. John of Kronstadt Fast	1 (Oct 19) Pr. Joel St. John of Kronstadt	2 (Oct 20) GM Artemius Fast	3 (Oct 21) St. Hilarion the Great 6:30 All-Night Vigil
4 (Oct 22) Pentecost 23 Tone 6 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy	5 (Oct 23) Apostle James brother of the Lord	6 (Oct 24) MM Arethas & comp.	7 (Oct 25) MM Marcian & Martyrius Fast	8 (Oct 26) GM Demetrius	9 (Oct 27) M Nestor Fast	10 (Oct 28) MM Terence & family 6:30 All-Night Vigil
11 (Oct 29) Pentecost 24 Tone 7 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy	12 (Oct 30) HM Zenobius	13 (Oct 31) App. Stachys & comp.	14 (Nov 1) SS. Cosmas & Damian Fast: wine & oil	15 (Nov 2) MM Acindynus & comp.	16 (Nov 3) MM Acepimus & comp. GM George Fast	17 (Nov 4) St. Joannicius the Great 4:00 Class - Bible Study 6:30 All-Night Vigil
18 (Nov 5) Pentecost 25 Tone 8 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy	19 (Nov 6) St. Paul the Confessor	20 (Nov 7) 33 MM of Melitene	21 (Nov 8) Synaxis of the Archangel Michael Fast: Fish, wine & oil	22 (Nov 9) Thanksgiving Day MM Onesiphorus & Porphyrius St. Matrona	23 (Nov 10) App. Erastus & comp. Fast	24 (Nov 11) MM Minas & comp. 6:30 All-Night Vigil
25 (Nov 12) Pentecost 26 Tone 1 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy	26 (Nov 13) St. John Chrysostom	27 (Nov 14) Apostle Philip	28 (Nov 15) MM. Gurias, Samonas & Abibus Fast	29 (Nov 16) Apostle Matthew Fast: fish, wine & oil	30 (Nov 17) St. Gregory the Wonderworker Fast	Dec 1 (Nov 18) M Platon 4:00 Small Vespers 6:30 All-Night Vigil Fast: fish, wine & oil



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



DECEMBER 2007						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Nov 25 (Nov 12) Pentecost 26 Tone 1 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy	Nov 26 (Nov 13) St. John Chrysostom	Nov 27 (Nov 14) Apostle Philip	Nov 28 (Nov 15) MM. Gurias, Samonas & Abibus	Nov 29 (Nov 16) Apostle Matthew	Nov 30 (Nov 17) St. Gregory the Wonderworker	1 (Nov 18) M Platon 4:00 Small Vespers 6:30 All-Night Vigil Fast: fish, wine & oil
2 (Nov 19) Pentecost 27 Tone 2 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy Fast: fish, wine & oil	3 (Nov 20) St. Gregory the Decapolite 6:30 Vigil of the Entry of the Theotokos Fast	4 (Nov 21) ENTRANCE OF THE THEOTOKOS 9:30 Hours & Divine Liturgy Fast: fish, wine, & oil	5 (Nov 22) Ap. Philemon	6 (Nov 23) St. Amphilocius	7 (Nov 24) GM Catherine	8 (Nov 25) HM Clement 6:30 All-Night Vigil Fast: fish, wine & oil
9 (Nov 26) Pentecost 28 Tone 3 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy Fast: fish, wine & oil	10 (Nov 27) GM James the Persian	11 (Nov 28) M Stephen the New	12 (Nov 29) MM Paramon & comp.	13 (Nov 30) Apostle Andrew	14 (Dec 1) Pr. Nahum	15 (Dec 2) Pr. Habbakuk 4:00 Class - Bible Study 6:30 All-Night Vigil Fast: fish, wine & oil
16 (Dec 3) Pentecost 29 Tone 4 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy Fast: fish, wine & oil	17 (Dec 4) GM Barbara St. John Damascene	18 (Dec 5) St. Sabbas the Sanctified	19 (Dec 6) St. Nicholas	20 (Dec 7) St. Ambrose	21 (Dec 8) St. Patapius	22 (Dec 9) Conception of the Theotokos 6:30 All-Night Vigil Fast: fish, wine & oil
23 (Dec 10) Pentecost 30 Tone 5 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy Fast: fish, wine & oil	24 (Dec 11) St. Daniel the Stylite	25 (Dec 12) St. Spyridon St. Herman of Alaska	26 (Dec 13) MM Eustratius & comp.	27 (Dec 14) MM Thyrsus & comp.	28 (Dec 15) HM Eleutherius St. Paul	29 (Dec 16) Pr. Haggai 6:30 All-Night Vigil Fast: fish, wine & oil
30 (Dec 17) Forefathers Tone 6 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy Fast: fish, wine & oil	31 (Dec 18) HM Sebastian & comp.	Jan 1 (Dec 19)	Jan 2 (Dec 20)	Jan 3 (Dec 21)	Jan 4 (Dec 22)	Jan 5 (Dec 23) 6:30 All-Night Vigil Fast: wine & oil

Please remove my name from your mailing list.

I no longer wish to receive this newsletter.

Please add the following people to your mailing list:

Name _____

Address _____

Name _____

Address _____

Name _____

Address _____

St. Xenia Orthodox Church
170 North Lowell Street
P.O. Box 147
Methuen, MA 01844

Forwarding Service Requested

Postmaster: Dated Material

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.