



St. Xenia Parish News

170 North Lowell Street, Methuen, MA 01844

March-April 2004

The Nature of the Lenten Services

by Bishop Alexander (Mileant)

During the period of Lent, the Church helps Christians to renew themselves by creating conditions which predispose them towards fasting and repentance. Everything looks and is done differently during church services. This includes the structure and length of the services, the content of prayers, the melodies, the frequent kneeling, and the entire atmosphere inside the church. All splendor and festivity are reduced to a minimum. Clergymen wear dark vestments, the Royal Gates are opened less frequently, lighting is diminished, church bells are rung rarely and cheerlessly; there is less singing and more reading of prayers which predispose to repentance.

St. Ephraim's repentance prayer, "O Lord and Master of my life," is the prayer most frequently said during Lent. The Divine Liturgy, the most solemn of all church services, is performed only on Saturdays and Sundays. The Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, which has a repentant character, is performed twice a week during Lent, on Wednesdays and Fridays.

The first week of Lent is noted particularly for the strictness and length of its services. From Monday to Thursday during all evening services (the Grand Compline), the spiritually moving Great Canon of Archbishop Andrew of Crete is read. This canon softens even the most hardened soul and inclines it towards repentance. On Saturday of the first week, the miracle of the great martyr Theodore Tyron is remembered. This Saint appeared in a dream to a bishop of Constantinople and warned him about food in the market being defiled by the blood of animals sacrificed to idols. This was done on purpose by the pagan emperor to defile the Christian Lent. The Saint commanded the bishop that Christians should eat cooked wheat instead of market foods.

On the first Sunday of Lent, the feast of the Triumph of Orthodoxy is celebrated. This feast commemorates the restoration of reverence to the holy icons, which had been persecuted by iconoclasts in the eighth and ninth centuries. After the Liturgy there is a special service for the conversion of those who have gone astray.

The third Sunday of the Lent is called the Sunday of the Adoration of the Cross. At the Vespers service, after

the Grand Doxology, the Holy Cross is carried out to the center of the church and is placed on the icon stand for veneration. By bringing out the cross, the Church inspires believers to continue the fasting effort, for with the cross the Lord took away the power of the devil and delivered us from our sins. The cross remains in the center of the church throughout the following week. During worship that week, the choir sings, "To Thy Cross we bow down, O Lord, and Thy Holy Resurrection we glorify."

On Wednesday of the fifth week, Saint Andrew of Crete's canon of repentance is read, and believers are reminded of the life of Saint Mary of Egypt. First she was a great sinner, but after having repented, she became a holy woman and an example of true repentance and a pious life. On Friday evening of the same week an Akathist (a series of hymns and prayers) is sung to the Holy Virgin Theotokos (Mother of God). The Virgin Mary surpasses all Saints in spiritual perfection, and Her virtues are an inspiration to all Christians.

On Friday of the sixth week, the 40-day period of repentance ends. The Lord's entrance into Jerusalem is commemorated, and Passion Week, the remembrance of the Lord's last days on Earth, begins. The faithful are prepared for the glorification of the Savior Jesus Christ, who went to Jerusalem to voluntarily suffer and redeem the world.

In summary, restraint from food, in quantity and quality, restraint from any amusements, earnest prayer at home and during the church services — all these contribute to the reform of an individual. Since the old days it has become a custom to complete the Lenten effort by confession and partaking of the Holy Mysteries. Confession in church should not be carried out in haste, but sufficient time should be allocated for it. The best time for confession is during or after the Vespers service preceding the day of communion. It is important to prepare for this sacrament with meditation, prayer, and a deep contrition for committed sins. There should be a sincere desire to change one's life for the better. Since partaking of the Holy Mysteries gives a Christian much spiritual strength, it is preferable to take communion several times during Lent.

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: skovranok@ttlc.net, or to Father Michael at tcrowley@maine.rr.com. Thank you.

Rector:

Rev. Michael Crowley
 16 Channel Road
 South Portland, ME
 (978) 204-0428 (cell phone with voice mail)

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

Parish Council

- President: Rev. Michael Crowley (207) 767-1889
- Starosta: Rdr. Constantine Desrosiers (603) 775-0320
- Secretary: Natalie Pishenin (978) 658-5564
- Treasurer: Tony Sarantakis (978) 263-2016
- Sisterhood: Matushka Nancy Crowley (207) 767-1889
- Cemetery: Lily Dombrowski (978) 851-2972
- Peter Danas (978) 459-9541
- Roberto Gonzales (978) 264-9594
- Michael Johnson (978) 691-0045
- Anna Johnson (978) 691-0045
- John Kekis (978) 264-6604
- John Rush (603) 898-4315

Non-Council Ministries:

- Sunday School: Michael Lang (603) 465-9754

Trapeza Schedule

If you cannot be at church on your assigned Sunday, please call and switch with someone. If you have any questions, contact Karen Schidlovsky at (603) 868-6410. Trapeza can be whatever you would like to prepare on your day. Some parishioners prefer to make a big lunch, but this isn't necessary. As long as there is enough food for about 40 people, anything is appreciated. Doughnuts, fruit and pastries are as acceptable as soup and sandwiches. Thank you in advance for your contribution.

Dates preceded by an asterisk indicate fast days.

March:

- *7 Diane, Carolyn and Pamela Reed
- *14 Karen Schidlovsky and Nancy Harris
- *21 Alexandra Gonzalez and Xenia Rush
- *28 Anna Johnson and Masha Harris



April:

- * 4 Palm Sunday Pot Luck
- 11 Easter Sunday
- 18 Tanya Sciaudone and Mireille Lang
- 25 Matushka Nancy



Sisterhood News: A donation of a set of vestments was made to the Haitian Mission, courtesy of St. Xenia Vestments. Our thanks to them.

The Sisterhood is sponsoring a retreat for women in the Northeast on Saturday, March 27th. The retreat will begin at 10:30 A.M. Our guest speaker will be Matushka Maria Naumenko from the Protection of the Mother of God Church in Rochester, NY. Contact Matushka Nancy if you plan to attend.

Sisterhood dues are \$5 per year, and membership is open to all women of the parish. Our next meetings will take place on March 28 and April 25.

Thank You!

...to all who assisted in the production of our parish Yolka on January 18 (rescheduled from January 11):

- to Anna Johnson, who single-handedly directed the Nativity play. The selection was perfect, and the performances nearly flawless.
- to Michael Lang, who taught the children the traditional *kalyadkii* which they sang so beautifully.
- to George Pishenin, who made the traditional Yolka star and hung the stage and backdrop curtains.
- to Nicolas Lang and Nicholas Kronauer, who wrote the stories recited by our younger parishioners.
- to Helena Doohovskoy, for organizing all the purchases that had to be made, and for all who shopped, for the Yolka.
- to Carolyn Sarantakis for organizing the gifts for the Giving Tree.
- to all who decorated our church and trapeza, and to all who donated towards the lovely decorations.

This Yolka had a very traditional feel and flavor to it, which could not have come about without all the time and effort these people put into it. Thanks also to all who showed up so faithfully for rehearsals!

While we are on the subject of Nativity thanks, the parish as a whole would like to offer thanks to all who sent in donations at this time of year. They are gratefully accepted, and will be put to good use.

Our thanks also to Anna Johnson, whose company, St. Xenia Vestments, donated the set of vestments that the Sisterhood sent to the Haitian Mission, and to all who have given support to the mission throughout the past year.

Please remember in your prayers... Nicholas, Paul, Nina, David, Basil, Vassilisa, Seraphim, Athanasia, Dimitri, Lily, Kyriaki, Genevieve, Anne, and Apostolos.

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

Financial Update: As of February 2004, the balance on the church mortgage stands at \$85,092.64. If you have any questions, please see Reader Constantine Desrosiers.

Property Committee: Now that we are looking forward to the spring, it's time to think about grounds cleanup and planting. We will be announcing outside events as plans are finalized.

We will have a cleaning day for the inside of the church in preparation for Pascha on Lazarus Saturday, beginning at 1:00 P.M. Please come and help us prepare for the Holy Week which follows.

St. Xenia Mosaic: We have received our beautiful mosaic of St. Xenia from Russia! This large icon will be installed above the front doors to the church on the outside. Its purchase was made possible by generous donations of the past, which have been held aside in the Sponsorship Fund.

We do need to raise the money to have it installed. We have contacted a man from Jordanville who was recommended by Fr. Andrei of the monastery icon studio.

The installer, Vyacheslav, intends to set the mosaic inside the stucco on the wall, bounded on its arch by small pieces of marble. He needs also to install a load-bearing shelf to support the mosaic which weighs close to 300 pounds.

We do not know yet what this will all cost. He assured us that his rate would be half of anyone else we could find to do the work. Vyacheslav installed the much larger, beautiful mosaic of St. Alexander Nevsky at the Cathedral in Lakewood, NJ.

Please consider making a donation towards the installation of this wonderful beautification of our church. We are on a very tight budget in our general fund and are in need of donations to complete this project.

Upcoming Events: Plans are moving forward for the fundraiser ball our parish plans to hold on June 4, together with Holy Epiphany Church of Roslindale. There will be a buffet dinner and live music. For further details, contact Matushka Nancy or Matushka Lena Jarostchuk.

GREAT LENTEN EPISTLE TO THE FLOCK

Brothers and Sisters, Beloved in the Lord:

The great, saving days of Holy Lent are approaching. These days will lead us to the Bright Day of the Resurrection of Christ. But in order to begin the joyful Paschal days with worthiness, we are given time to properly prepare for them. This is the period of Great Lent, the time for us to purify ourselves. St. Gregory Palamas, whose memory the Church celebrates on the second week of Great Lent, says: "True lent is one which spreads throughout everything; this kind of lent purifies everything and heals all." Let us try to cleanse ourselves of our sinful burden, which covers our bodies and souls, through fasting. This thick layer of sin does not allow us to hear the word of God, to understand His will for us, it does not allow us to see God's work, which is done for our benefit.

This past week, a regular session of the Synod of Bishops was held. In addition to other matters, there were discussions on the invitation to visit our Fatherland, received by me from Patriarch Alexy II. This invitation was given to me by the Russian President, V.V. Putin, during his visit to New York in September of last year. The very existence of such an invitation, made to the Russian Church Abroad for the first time in 80 years of her existence, the circumstances under which this invitation was received, all undoubtedly speaks of the important changes occurring in Russia. Our holy duty is to try our best to discern what is happening, and in the words of Saint Ignatii Brianchaninov, to "understand the time."

"Teach me Your way, O Lord, and I will walk," says the Orthodox Church daily, in no way daring to stray from the paths of the Lord, but the opposite, prays the Lord to show these paths to us. That is why to decline to seek the paths to healing the divisions in the Russian Church, to stagnate within the rejection of the very possibility of such healing, might mean that we reject the means towards understanding the will of the Lord.

The Synod of Bishops decided that, with God's help, my trip to Moscow is to be made before the Ascension of the Lord. During this trip, I will meet with the head of the Moscow Patriarchate, and also hope to acquaint myself with church life in Russia. In part, I wish to visit Ekaterinburg and other cities of Russia with the aim of prostrating myself before holy relics. In this way, the trip will be first of all an exploratory one. This trip will in no way be the "beginning of unification," as some journalists put it. We are not speaking of prayerful communion, which must be the crowning event of the entire process of healing. This is only a humble effort to seek out a way to grasping our common foundations and mutual understanding. This path may prove fairly long. But to fail to embark upon it would be a profound mistake.

We ask our God-loving flock to arm themselves with patience and to strengthen their prayers. We especially ask that you double your prayerful appeals to the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia, and also to the Holy Royal Martyrs, the veneration of whom is miraculously growing day by day in our Fatherland. It is this veneration of the Holy New Martyrs of Russia that today unites the Russian Orthodox flock, both in the Homeland and in the diaspora.

May God bless you!

Metropolitan LAURUS

The Russian Corner

The Easter Egg - A Symbol of Life, Rebirth and Love

According to a tradition, the first Easter egg was given to the Roman Emperor Tiberius by Saint Mary Magdalene, coequal with the apostles.

Shortly after Christ the Savior's Ascension, Mary Magdalene came to Rome to tell Emperor Tiberius of Jesus' unfair trial and unjust sentence, and to preach the gospel. In those times, people coming to see the emperor were supposed to bring him a present. Mary Magdalene, a noble and rich woman who had lost everything except her faith in Jesus, offered to the Emperor an egg and exclaimed: "Christ has risen!" The emperor, doubting her words, noted that nobody could rise from the dead and it was as hard to believe in what she had said as a white egg turning red. Miraculously, the egg turned scarlet even as he spoke. Thus, from the very first century of Christianity, colored eggs have always been the symbol of Jesus' Resurrection, the egg's red color symbolizing Christ's blood and purification in the name of a new and better life to the believers in God the Son.

The celebration of Easter in Russia was introduced in the late 10th century. Orthodox Easter is observed on the first Sunday following the equinoctial new moon, and always after the Jewish celebration of Passover (between April 4th and May 8th n.s.). The tradition of giving and receiving painted eggs on Easter has existed in Russia from time immemorial. Quite possibly, the Christian custom of dying eggs on Easter is related to Mary's presentation of a red egg as a tribute to the emperor.

Today, we, as Eastern Orthodox Christians end the Easter service by sharing bright red eggs and proclaiming to each other, "Christ is risen!" The eggs represent new life, and Christ bursting forth from the tomb.



YOLKA!

This year's Yolka was a big success. It was actually postponed by a week at the last minute, due to a problem beyond our control. Our very talented young people took the delay in stride and delivered great performances.

The young children performed 4 Ukrainian "kolyadki" or traditional carols, and recited stories about events surrounding the Nativity of our Lord. These stories were written by Nicolas Lang and Nicholas Kronauer.



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The young adults performed a play called "What Men Live By," after a story by Leo Tolstoy. The play was directed by Anna Johnson, who coached each part individually.

Congratulations to all, young and old alike, on the successful fruits of all their hard work

St Xenia Orthodox Church

March 2004

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i> 7:30 PM Akathist w/ short Reading of the Life of the Theotokos	<i>6</i> 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil Wine & oil allowed
<i>7</i> 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM St Gregory Palamas Divine Liturgy Tone 5 12:00 PM Young People's Class 1:00 PM Parish Council Meeting Wine & oil allowed	<i>8</i> (24 Feb) 1st & 2nd Findings of the Head of the Forerunner Wine & oil allowed	<i>9</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>12</i> 7:30 PM Akathist w/ short Reading of the Life of the Theotokos	<i>13</i> 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil Wine & oil allowed
Fr. Michael at Priest's Retreat in NJ						
<i>14</i> 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM Holy Cross Divine Liturgy Tone 6 Wine & oil allowed	<i>15</i> Wine & oil allowed	<i>16</i>	<i>17</i> 7:00 PM Liturgy of the Presanctified	<i>18</i>	<i>19</i> 7:30 PM Akathist w/ short Reading of the Life of the Theotokos	<i>20</i> 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil Wine & oil allowed
<i>21</i> 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM St John Climacus Divine Liturgy Tone 7 12:00 PM Young People's Class Wine & oil allowed	<i>22</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>24</i> 7:30 PM Great Canon of St Andrew of Crete Wine & oil allowed	<i>25</i> Wine & oil allowed	<i>26</i> 7:30 PM Matins w/ Akathist Wine allowed	<i>27</i> 10:30 AM - 3:30 PM Womens Retreat 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil Wine & oil allowed
<i>28</i> 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM St Mary of Egypt Divine Liturgy Tone 8 1:00 PM Sister- hood Meeting Wine & oil allowed	<i>29</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>31</i>			

St Xenia Orthodox Church

April 2004

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				<i>1</i>	<i>2</i> 6:30 PM Vigil of Lazarus Saturday	<i>3</i> 10:00 AM Lazarus Saturday Divine Liturgy 1:00 PM Church Cleaning Day 6:30 PM Palm Sunday Vigil w/ Blessing of Palms & Pussy Willows
<i>4</i> 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM Palm Sunday Divine Liturgy 12:00 PM Young People's Class 1:00 PM Parish Council Meeting	<i>5</i> 7:30 PM Bridegroom Matins	<i>6</i> 6:30 PM Vigil of Annunciation	<i>7</i> 10:00 AM Annunciation Divine Liturgy 6:30 PM Vigil of Holy Thursday Wine & oil allowed	<i>8</i> 10:00 AM Holy Thursday Divine Liturgy 6:30 PM Service of the 12 Gospels Wine & oil allowed	<i>9</i> 9:00 AM Royal Hours 4:00 PM Service of the Taking Down from the Cross 5:00 PM Lamentations of Holy Saturday	<i>10</i> 9:30 AM Vespers Divine Liturgy 10:00 PM Reading of the Acts of the Apostles 11:30 PM Midnight Office
<i>11</i> 12:00 AM PASCHA Matins & Divine Liturgy 1:00 PM Agape Vespers	<i>12</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>17</i> 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil
Bright Week - Fast Free						
<i>18</i> 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM Thomas Sunday Divine Liturgy Tone 1 12:00 PM Young People's Class 1:00 PM Blessing of Graves in Cemetery	<i>19</i>	<i>20</i> Radonitsa	<i>21</i> 7:30 PM Bible Study - Epistle to the Ephesians Wine & oil allowed	<i>22</i>	<i>23</i> Wine & oil allowed	<i>24</i> 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil
<i>25</i> 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM Sunday of the Myrrybearers Divine Liturgy Tone 2 1:00 PM Sisterhood Meeting	<i>26</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>28</i> Wine & oil allowed	<i>29</i>	<i>30</i> Wine & oil allowed	

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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.