



St. Xenia Parish News

170 North Lowell Street, Methuen, MA 01844

January-February 2005

American Christmas and Orthodox Nativity

By Archbishop Seraphim of Chicago (†1987)

On American Christmas, some of you more, some of you to a lesser extent, celebrate, have parties, give presents to each other, etc. Alas, American Christmas is acquiring a more and more pagan character: so much time is wasted on shopping, often unnecessarily, for clothing, for everything exterior, while inner spiritual concerns remain almost in oblivion.

The Nativity of the God-Child Christ, the Redeemer of mankind, is hardly given any thought whatsoever. The kind, gentle image of Christ is supplanted by that of jolly old Santa Claus - a distressing, blasphemous caricature of one of God's greatest saints - Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker of Mira, whom the Roman Catholics contrived to exclude from their order of saints some years ago.

The psychology of the masses is infectious. We, the zealots of religious piety, understand this and, in a fatherly way, for the sake of love, look askance, although not without sadness, at this chaotic tribute in the country which gave shelter to our flock. At the same time, we sincerely ask all members of our Russian Church Abroad: having given notice to the secular world, when the embers of the American festival have died, give some attention to your inner self - prepare yourself spiritually, in the Orthodox way, for our Orthodox Feast of the Nativity of Christ. First of all, for at least the remainder of Lent - *fast*. After all, there are not many fast days left. Whoever is able, prepare yourselves with fasting. On the holy eve of the feast, make certain that you come to church: the Nativity services are so beautiful! On the day of Nativity, try your best to get leave from work or school, even if you must lose a day's wages. Give them to God!

Keep holy, sanctify in a special way, this whole day of the Great Mystery of the Incarnation of the Word of God. Do not do anything thoughtless on the Nativity. It is traditional on this day to visit the clergy, family or friends, to somehow reinforce the joy of the Festival. It is not sinful on this day to have guests or go out, within reason of course, so as not to lose the image of God, which we carry.

It is certainly blessed for families and those of means [who have more of this world's goods] to invite people who are alone to their Nativity dinner, especially those in poverty, to warm them with kindness and attention. How good this is and pleasing to God!

On this great day we can and must celebrate, especially spiritually. Too often this celebration is substituted with uncontrolled drunken parties. It is not a crime to be merry and celebrate a Festival, but not wildly. Examine the Holy Gospels. There the word *joy* appears nearly twenty times, but the word *gladness* appears only once, and even then in conjunction with the word *joy*. I will introduce the text: *But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth* (Luke I, 13-14).

On the Feast day of the Nativity it has become customary, seemingly from the Three Wise Men, to give each other gifts, especially the poor and needy. This is a good and holy custom! In America, we may divide it into two parts: on American Christmas give gifts to family and friends, and on our Nativity to do good deeds; that is, send care packages to needy people, churches and charitable organizations.

In this way, we can pay tribute to the customary American Christmas as well as to our Great Orthodox Feast of the Nativity of Christ. God grant that this advice would find its way to your hearts!

As pastors, we understand how, when all around people are celebrating, it is difficult not to be caught up in the festivities. However, blessed are those who maintain their fasting and prayer throughout the whole period of the Nativity Fast, leaving aside all celebration until our Orthodox Nativity.

Translated from Russian by Alexander Morin

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 bimonthly 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@verizon.net, or to Father Michael at tcrowley@maine.rr.com. Thank you.

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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
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 Michael Johnson (978) 691-0045
 Anna Johnson (978) 691-0045
 John Kekis (978) 456-9865
 John Rush (603) 898-4315

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.

Please note that Sundays preceded by an asterisk (*) denote a fast period, during which we consume no meat or dairy products. Please plan accordingly.

January

- 2* Carolyn Sarantakis, Pamela Reed
- 9 Yolka **Pot Luck**
- 16 Karen Schidlovsky, Nancy Harris
- 23 Tanya Sciaudone, Mireille Lang
- 30 Nicholas Kronauer, Vera Sarantakis

February

- 6 Matushka Nancy Crowley, Anna Kekis
- 13 Helena Doohovskoy, Marianne DiMatteo
- 20 Amy Mclellan, Yekaterina Fredette, Kasarda Family
- 27 Mariana Haven, Josephine Kniaziuk, Irene LaPage

Sisterhood News:

Sisterhood dues are \$5 per year, and membership is open to all women of the parish. Our next meetings will take place on November 28 and December 19.

We'd like to ask for donations of any sort of clothing or costuming or props that people may have in their homes, which they no longer want or need, which would be suitable for use in a children's Yolka / Christmas play. The plays are generally based on Russian fairy tales. We'd like to develop a small wardrobe to help us stage these productions in future years.

We hope to collect fur hats, belts, vests, peasant skirts and blouses, any sort of cosuming for royalty or soldiers, etc. Children sizes range in age from pre-school to high school.

Thank You...

... to Carolyn Sarantakis for organizing this year's Giving Tree in conjunction with Lazarus House.

... to Anna Johnson for contributing her usual skill and enthusiasm to this year's Yolka, which will be held on Sunday, January 9.

Congratulations... from our whole parish

...to Laryssa and Alexei Doohovskoy, and to proud grandparents Helena and Alexander Doohovskoy, on the November 10 birth of Anyasia.

Please remember in your prayers... Nicholas, Paul, Nina, David, Basil, Vassilisa, Seraphim, Lily, Genevieve, Anne, and Abbot George Schaeffer of Holy Trinity Monastery. Please remember to inform the Myrrh-bearers Sisterhood if someone is in the hospital or shut in at home.

Financial Update: As of December 31, 2004, the balance on the church mortgage stands at \$74,092.64. If you have any questions, please see Reader Constantine Desrosiers.

While at the Diocesan Assembly, Fr. Victor Potapov informed us that our donation of \$400 to the families of the victims of the tragedy in Beslan was delivered with other collected funds directly to a group of families. Fr. Vladimir Boikov and John & Joannikia Dean traveled to Moscow and, through trusted contacts there, were put in touch with a group of the victims' families who had been brought to a hospital for treatment of the severe injuries of their children. Each family received \$500, as well as various other things that were bought for them. For example,

many of the children were brought to the hospital without clothes and shoes and so clothing and sneakers were bought for each child. They went with a total of \$19,000. Approximately \$6,000 was set aside for the next group of children scheduled to be received by the hospital. Fr. Vladimir was at the Assembly in New Jersey, and told us heartwarming stories of their trip and the appreciation of the families helped. It is always encouraging to know that the generosity of our parish goes so directly to help people in such desperate need!

Hospitality of Abraham Fresco

Fr. Yakov Ferins, the iconographer who did our altar fresco last year, recently visited the church and spoke to a few of us about his idea of what might be done next.

If we can raise the funds to continue, he suggests that we have the icon of the Hospitality of Abraham, sometimes spoken of as the Old Testament Trinity because of the depiction of the three angels who visited Abraham and Sarah revealing that they would bear a child, done directly above the iconostasis on the blank white wall which faces into the nave. His idea for the fresco, with added ornamentation, would essentially fill this space and frame in, so to speak, our beautiful iconostasis.

Fr. Yakov has revised his estimate on the cost of this fresco. Originally quoted at \$10,000, he recently said that he estimates that it would cost approximately \$7,000. To date, donors have pledged @ \$1,600 so we are well on the way to raising the money for this project.

If you are interested in being a sponsor for this fresco, or have any ideas or comments about doing it, please speak directly with Fr. Michael.

Choir: Choir practice is regularly held on Sunday afternoon from 12:15-1:00, except on the one Sunday a month when there is a Parish Council Meeting. Rehearsals for the Nativity began December 19.

Bible Study: Meets the second Wednesday of every month. This year we are focusing on the book of Genesis. Particular emphasis is being given to contemporary issues involving theories of evolution. Come and join us!

Upcoming Events

Project Mexico: A group of our young people are going to the Project Mexico orphanage in Mexico over Spring vacation in April. If you have any interest in your children participating, please contact Bob DiMatteo directly as soon as possible.

The Russian Corner

The Russian Troika



...And what Russian is there who doesn't love fast driving? How should his soul that yearns to go off into a whirl, to go off on a fling.... How should his soul fail to love it? Is it not a thing to be loved, when one can sense in it something exaltedly wondrous? Some unseen power has caught you up on its wing and you are flying yourself, and all things are flying; some merchants are flying towards you, perched on the front seats of their covered carts. The forest flies on both sides of the road with its dark rows of firs and pines, echoing with the ring of axes and the cawing of crows. The whole road is flying, no one knows where into the unseen distance. There is something fearsome hidden in the objects that are flashing by, so rapid that there is no time for each one to become defined before it disappears; only the sky in the infinity above, the light clouds and the moon breaking through these clouds seem motionless.

(Passage from Nikolai Gogol's novel Dead Souls)

Two Churches in Search of Unity

By Dmitrii Urushev

Recently, the third round of discussions between the Russian Orthodox Church/Moscow Patriarchate (ROC/MP) and the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR) to overcome their differences was held in Moscow. Archbishop Mark (Arndt) of the Diocese of Berlin and Germany of ROCOR granted an interview to NGR on the subject of these discussions and their results.

Your Eminence, the third round of negotiations between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Church Abroad have ended. Please tell us what questions were discussed this time?

At previous discussions, we considered the matter of the relationship of the Church and state. This time, also, we discussed the so-called "Declaration" of Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) and his Synod of 1927 [in which the Church declared its loyalty to the Soviet state—NGR]. The attitude towards this epistle was considered for many years to be one of the fundamental obstacles in principle to establishing liturgical communion between the two parts of the Russian Church.

Representatives of the Church Abroad felt that it was important to return to this question with the aim of developing commentaries to the previous joint documents. In this new text, a new analysis is made of the "Declaration" from the point of view of the "Basic Social Concept of the ROC" adopted by the Council of Bishops of the Moscow Patriarchate in 2000. The "Social Concept of the ROC" was well received and viewed in a positive light by the Council of Bishops of the ROCOR that same year and paved the way for the beginning of our process of negotiations. I think that the document developed by us now, which will be presented to the hierarchies of both Churches, will satisfy both sides equally and will give the fullness of the Russian Church the impetus to proceed further.

Besides this, we discussed the matter of our Ecclesiastical Missions in the Holy Land, about the blow dealt to our relationship by the expulsion of monastics belonging to the Church Abroad by the Palestinian Authority police in Hebron in 1997 and in Jericho in 2000, and the handing over of the monasteries there to representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate. At the same time, looking to the future, we are considering the possibility of joint witnessing of Russian Orthodoxy in the Holy Land.

Another difficult topic we touched upon were the mutual claims made against clergymen received by both Churches without canonical release and without the possibility of checking their canonical status due to the impossibility of normal relations. If the reception of clergymen in such a

manner seemed entirely justified during the Soviet era, by the 1990's, such an approach was unacceptable. Now we must seek a means to heal the wounds inflicted upon each other in this regard.

In all these matters, we outlined possible constructive resolutions acceptable to both sides. Our aim as negotiators is only to propose resolution options to the hierarchies of both Churches. In any case, the final word, or the request for further negotiations, must be expressed by the Councils or Synods of both Churches—the separated parts of one Russian Church.

How did the talks go? How do you rate their results?

As always, talks held between people who have had no communication for a long time for one reason or another prove difficult. But I view the results of this serious task in a positive light, having no doubt that both sides in this process are striving to create the most hospitable grounds for continuing upon the mutual path in the service of God and people, both in Russia and abroad. Upon this road, with the good will and readiness for painstaking work that I observe on both sides, I believe one can count firmly on positive results.

Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad, President of the Office of External Church Affairs of the Moscow Patriarchate, stated that the result of the negotiating process will be the reunification of the two Churches. Do you share his optimism?

Metropolitan Kirill said: "We are not setting a deadline as to whether the reunification happens in a week, a month or a year, but in my opinion, the dialog is proceeding successfully." I am in complete agreement with this—the dialog is proceeding well, but one must not set deadlines.

For the Church Abroad, the convening of an All-Diaspora Council is needed to consider matters connected to the establishment of prayerful and administrative communion with the Moscow Patriarchate. We plan to convene one in late 2005 or early 2006, with the participation of clergy and laity from all dioceses of our Church. It is expected to comprehensively study questions relating to the establishment of liturgical and administrative relations. This Council, which will have an advisory function, will conclude with a Council of Bishops, which will adopt a decision.

Some in the Russian media have suggested that the Council of Bishops of the ROC, held recently in Moscow, would declare the reestablishment of liturgical communion with the Church Abroad, which would have allowed representatives of the two Churches to perform divine services and to commune together. Why did this not occur? Who is not prepared for such communion, the Moscow Patriarchate or the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia?

I don't know who could have spread irresponsible rumors of such plans. The Council of Bishops of the ROC was not preparing to make, nor could have made, such a deci-

sion unilaterally. Still, the Council of Bishops of the ROC/MP decreed that further work on the reunification of the two Churches be handed over to the Synod, which in my opinion eased the process. This means that further action is possible as soon as the Council of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia makes its decision.

Are there influences abroad hindering rapprochement? What arguments are they using in justifying their position? What, in your opinion, could neutralize these forces?

Without a doubt, such forces abroad do exist—incidentally, they are not small in number. They argue first of all that until now there has not been a sufficiently clear rejection by the Moscow Patriarchate of the "Declaration" of 1927, and also that the ROC to this day participates in the ecumenical movement and is in the World Council of Churches. The documents already adopted by us in the process of discussions can act against these arguments. But from the very beginning, we set the condition that these documents be published only after exhaustive ecclesiastical consideration. That is why we need an All-Diaspora Council—to decide these questions.

For many it is difficult to imagine concretely the status of the Church Abroad as a self-governing part of one Russian Church. A few clarifications are necessary in this regard.

There are also fears with regard to property. Russian President Vladimir Putin, during our meeting in May of this year, in the presence of Patriarch Alexy II and the First Hierarch of the ROCOR, Metropolitan Laurus, unequivocally spoke on this matter, stressing that neither the Russian government nor the ROC will make any claims on the property of the Church Abroad. Still, many people have little trust! Steps must be taken to ensure such trust.

January 2005

St. Xenia Orthodox Church

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil (19 Dec) SS Boniface & Aglais
2 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM Sunday of the Holy Fathers Divine Liturgy Tone 6	3 (21 Dec) VM Juliana	4 (22 Dec) GM Anastasia	5 (23 Dec) Holy 10 MM of Crete	6 6:30 PM Vigil of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ (24 Dec) Nun-martyr Eugenia of Rome	7 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ Divine Liturgy	8 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil (26 Dec) HM Euthymius
9 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM Pentecost 32 Divine Liturgy Tone 7	10 (28 Dec) 20,000 MM of Nicomedia	11 (26 Dec) 14,000 Holy Innocents	12 7:30 PM Bible Study (30 Dec) VM Anyisia	13 (31 Dec) St Melania the Younger of Rome	14 (1 Jan) Circumcision of Our Lord Jesus Christ	15 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil (2 Jan) St Sylvester of Rome
Fast Free Period						
16 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM Pentecost 33 Divine Liturgy Tone 8	17 (4 Jan) Synaxis of the Seventy Apostles Fast Free Period	18 6:30 PM Vigil of Theophany Wine & oil allowed	19 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM Holy Theophany Divine Liturgy Fast Free	20 (7 Jan) Synaxis of St. John the Forerunner	21 (8 Jan) St George the Chozebite	22 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil (9 Jan) M Polyeuctus
23 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM Sunday after Theophany Divine Liturgy Tone 1	24 (11 Jan) St Theodosius the Great	25 (12 Jan) M Tatiana of Rome	26 (13 Jan) MM Hermylus & Stratonicus	27 (14 Jan) St Sava I of Serbia, St Nina	28 (15 Jan) St Paul of Thebes	29 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil (16 Jan) Venention of the Chains of St Peter
30 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM Pentecost 35 Divine Liturgy Tone 2	31 (18 Jan) St Athanasius the Great					

February 2005

St. Xenia Orthodox Church

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 (19 Jan) St Macarius the Great	2 (20 Jan) St Euthymius the Great Wine & oil allowed	3 (21 Jan) St Maximus the Confessor	4 (22 Jan) Apostle Timothy	5 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil (23 Jan) HM Clement of Ancyra
6 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM Sunday of the New Martyrs & Confessors of Russia Divine Liturgy Tone 3	7 (25 Jan) St Gregory the Theologian	8 (26 Jan) St Xenophon & family	9 7:30 PM Bible Study (27 Feb) St John Chrysostom Wine & oil allowed	10 (28 Jan) St Ephraim the Syrian	11 (29 Jan) HN Ignatius the God-bearer	12 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil (30 Jan) Synaxis of the Three Hierarchs: St Basil the Great, St Gregory the Theologian & St John Chrysostom
13 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM Pentecost 37 Divine Liturgy Tone 4	14 6:30 PM Vigil of the Meeting (1 Feb) M Tryphon	15 8:30 AM Hours 9:00 AM Meeting of Our Lord Jesus Christ Divine Liturgy	16 (3 Feb) SS Symeon the God-receiver & Anna the Prophetess	17 (4 Feb) St Isadore of Pelusium	18 (5 Feb) HM Agatha of Palermo	19 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil (6 Feb) St Bucolis
20 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM Sunday of the Publican & Pharisee Divine Liturgy Tone 5	21 (8 Feb) GM Theodore Stratelates	22 (9 Feb) St Innocent of Irkutsk	23 (10 Feb) HM Charalampus	24 (11 Feb) HM Blaise of Sebaste	25 (12 Feb) St Meletius	26 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil (13 Feb) St Martinian of Caesarea
Fast Free Week						
27 9:30 AM Hours 10:00 AM Sunday of the Prodigal Son Divine Liturgy Tone 6	28 (15 Feb) Ap Onesimus of the Seventy					

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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.