



# St. Xenia Parish News

170 North Lowell Street, Methuen, MA 01844

November-December 2009

## American Thanksgiving Day

### A Short History

In the United States, Thanksgiving began with the Pilgrims who settled around Plymouth in 1621. During the winters of 1621 and 1622 they suffered many privations. Food and supplies were scarce and disease ran rampant in the region.

Nearly half the population died. The settlers at the time and historians both agree that there were two reasons for the problems of the Pilgrims. First, they were generally not experienced farmers. They were fortunate that some of the local Native Americans helped them learn to farm the local crops. Second, and perhaps more tellingly, they had originally been organized into a commune where the produce of all was brought into a common store and then distributed among the inhabitants based on need.

The Governor at the time, William Bradford, was quick to recognize the problem. This excerpt from his diary, written in the 1620s, explains all:

The failure of this experiment of communal service, which was tried...by good and honest men proves the emptiness of the theory of Plato and other ancients, applauded by some of later times—that the taking away of private property, and possession of it in community, by a commonwealth would make a state happy and flourishing...For in this instance, community of property (so far as it went) was found to breed much confusion and discontent, and retard much employment which would have been to the general benefit and comfort. So every family was assigned a parcel of land according to the proportion of their number...It made all hands very industrious, so that much more corn was planted than otherwise would have been...and gave far better satisfaction.

Thankful for the re-institution of private property and the plenty which it provided, the Pilgrims invited their benefactors in 1623 to a three-day celebration. More than 80 “Indians” came to enjoy the festivities. They brought venison, wild turkey and other victuals. There was much singing, rejoicing and even sermons.

Thanksgiving itself is reminiscent of other harvest-time celebrations in Europe. Its character there as well as in America is deeply religious. The idea is that we thank God for the plenty of the harvest. Of course, over the years the

holiday has been secularized somewhat. It is even commonly called “Turkey Day.”

The first Thanksgiving in Plymouth was not meant to be an annual event. Even so, it became a custom in many New England Colonies. During the Revolutionary war Thanksgiving Days were proclaimed to celebrate victory in battle or survival in the face of adversity. After the war and the founding of the government under the U.S. Constitution, George Washington, as President, proclaimed a day of thanks.

Proclaiming a day of thanks became popular. There was no official national day, but individual states, cities and towns began to pick out a particular day every year, usually in the autumn. The state of New York was the first to do this in 1830. By the time of the Civil War, thanksgiving had become a popular public event. In 1863 and 1864 President Lincoln proclaimed the last Thursday in November as a “day of thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father.”

It was at this point that the last Thursday in November became fixed in the minds of Americans as a day for giving thanks, at least until 1939, when President Roosevelt moved it up a week to make a longer Christmas season for the retail industry. Some people did not like the break with tradition, and various localities refused to comply. Finally, Congress intervened and changed the holiday permanently to the “4th Thursday in November.” It has been celebrated on this day ever since. (*from Holidaycook.com*)

### In Our Orthodox Life

This American holiday is of course not a Church feast for Orthodox Christians. However, since there is a relatively long-standing tradition in our country of remembering and giving thanks on this day, it is an excellent opportunity for us to take some time to remember the many gifts and benefits that God has provided for us in our lives over the past year.

With the proliferation of network news, radio talk programs, the internet and other forms of mass communication that we are bombarded with each day, it is easy for us to become cynical and forget God’s blessings upon us.

So let us each one, in our families, in the homes of our relatives or friends, wherever we find ourselves on this day give thanks to God for all things! And let us make the effort to continue this thanksgiving each and every day!

St. Xenia of Petersburg Orthodox Church is a parish of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, under the omophorion of Met. HILARION of Eastern America & New York. The parish newsletter is published bi-monthly under the direction of the Rev. Michael Crowley. In order to ensure timely delivery to our far-flung parish, please submit all notices by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month prior to publication to Margaret Lark at (603) 332-9613, e-mail: [woolfolk3@gmail.com](mailto:woolfolk3@gmail.com), or to Father Michael at [tcrowley@maine.rr.com](mailto:tcrowley@maine.rr.com). Thank you.

**Rector:**

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 (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: Dcn. 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: Rev. Michael Crowley, Natalie Pishenin, Peter Kasarda, Daniel McLellan, Maryann DiMatteo  
 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) 465-975

**Trapeza Schedule**

\* = strict fast

If you cannot be at church on your assigned Sunday, please call and switch with someone. If you are not on this list and would like to help, please add your name to the Pot Luck days and I will add you for the next round. If you have any questions, contact Karen Schidlovsky at (603) 868-6410. Trapeza can be whatever you would like to prepare. Some parishioners prefer to make a big lunch, but this isn't necessary. As long as there is enough food for about 75 people, anything is appreciated. Donuts, fruit and pastries are as acceptable as soup and sandwiches. Thank you in advance for your contribution.

**November**

- 1 Pam Reed, Carolyn Savage, Diane Mendez
- 8 Chaplin Family
- 15 Anna Mukhanov, Olga Medvedeva
- 22 Maria Kasarda, Tania Sciaudone, Nina Yakuboff
- \*29 Matushka Nancy, Megan Nettleton, Katia Fredette

**December**

- \*6 Karen Schidlovsky, Nancy Harris, Tanya Vlasenko
- \*13 Masha Harris, Kot Engalichev
- \*20 Pot-Luck
- \*27 Natalie Botchkov, Natalya Kirichok

**Sisterhood News:** The Sisterhood is busy with a number of projects. Alexandra Gonzalez is collecting donated items for an orphanage in Yemen, and for a charity in Lowell. There will be much to do for the St. Herman Conference. There are two meals being put on by the Sisterhood, after Vigil and after Liturgy for conference participants.

### **Thank You...**

... to all who helped prepare for both our altar feast, on September 11/24, and for the visit of the Icon of the Theotokos, "Softening of Evil Hearts." This event, shared in common, was a most awe-inspiring and blessed one, and the assistance of the entire parish, from welcoming guests to the preparation of food to the chanting of the choir, was greatly appreciated.

...all those who helped the "Suitcases for Kids" cause. Your help and donations, combined with those of others, helped to collect 1,072 pieces of luggage, and many more backpacks, for children in foster care. Wilmington High School's Club WHS and Katia Reilly extend their heartfelt thanks to our parishioners.

**Please remember in your prayers...** Archimandrite Joasaph, Nicholas, Lilly, Nina, Josephine, David, Lilly Anne, Margaret, John (Gil)

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

**Financial Update:** As of October 31, 2009, the balance on the church mortgage stands at \$25,335. If you have any questions, please see Deacon Constantine Desrosiers.

**Congratulations:** To Nicholas and Xenia Chaplin on the baptism of their son, Nicholas, which took place on Saturday, September 26.

**Cemetery News:** In September, Methuen Monuments cleaned several family monuments, as requested by the families. Additionally, the large monument of the Sts. Peter and Paul Cemetery Association was cleaned at the request of the cemetery. All the monuments look brand new with all the mold and lichen removed. Thank you to Methuen Memorials for their efforts in our cemetery!

### **Response at the Great Entry:**

Since our last article addressing this question we have a deacon serving in our altar. Our responses are now to be amended to reflect these changes:

**"And may the Lord God remember thy priesthood and diaconate in His Heavenly Kingdom always, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen."**

### **A Unique Opportunity among Orthodox**

**Youth:** Our parish's own Dimitry Doohovskoy is currently pursuing a year of travel. Before graduating from Harvard University this year, he received the John Huston Finley Fellowship, to pursue a year of meaningful travel, and "provide an interval of exploration and experience, which might not otherwise be possible." His project, with the blessing of our Metropolitan, is a trip to help bring Orthodox Youth Groups together, country to country, coast to coast. This will consist of year-long travel throughout Russia, Ukraine, Romania and Bulgaria to meet with Orthodox youth groups at universities and parishes.

More information on this project is available on Dimitry's blog:

<http://dimitrydoohovskoy.wordpress.com/>

**St. Herman's Youth Conference:** As we have known for many months now, our parish has been blessed with the honorable task of hosting the December 2009 St. Herman's Youth Conference. In anticipation of this event, we are including some articles about and by St. Herman in this issue of the newsletter. Please spread the word and encourage those members of your family who are in their mid- and late teens and early 20s to save the dates around December 25 for participation in what will be, for the first time, a locally accessible conference for our Orthodox youth. Please contact Fr. Michael or Matushka Nancy with any assistance you may be able to offer with planning, supplies, or other needs.

**Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel:** Written by a four-year-old boy.

Dear St. Michael, guard my room. Don't let anything eat me or kill me. Kill it with your sword! Kill it with your sword! Amen. (from "Glory to God for All Things," the blog of an Orthodox priest)

### **St. John of Damascus Church School Update:**

The preschool group is now taught by Alexandra Gonzalez who is continuing to work on introducing the children to church basics -- Great Feasts, Saints, conduct in church, etc.

The Elementary class has started off the year very well. We are focusing on the Liturgy and "Taking a Walk" through the church.

The Middle school group, now led by John Danas, has been working on understanding the Gospel and Epistle readings for the given Sunday.

We had a wonderful turnout for the St. John of Damascus retreat on October 3. The children made votive lights for their icon corners, mounted an icon of St. John, and created a frame to hold a copy of the Troparion and Kontakion to St. John. Ask your kids to tell you about the life of St. John of Damascus! Our retreat concluded with Small Vespers and a lovely potluck meal.

On the first Saturday of each month, Fr. Michael will serve Small Vespers. This is a wonderful opportunity for our young people to attend church on Saturday, receive the sacrament of confession, and enjoy some fellowship. A potluck dinner is served after the service.

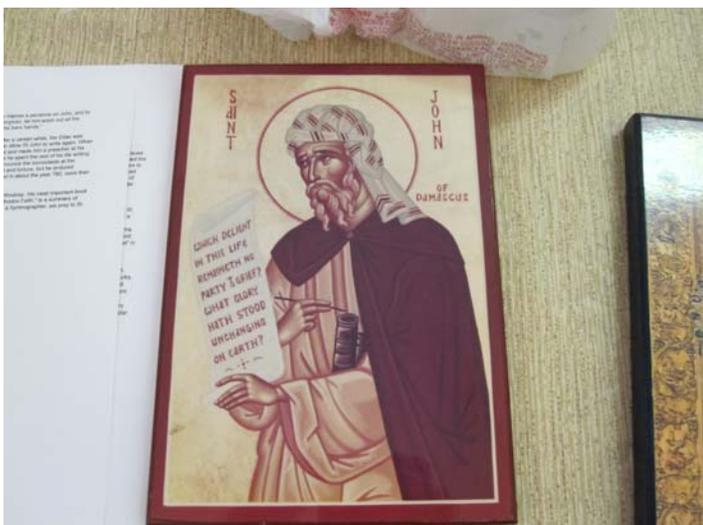
This year's yolka is scheduled for January 17. If you are interested in helping, please see Mireille Lang.

With the start of the new school year, now would be a great time to take another look at our curriculum. It is available on the church website under the church school section.

Also, please take some time - perhaps on the ride home from church - to discuss with your kids what they've learned in church school. Encourage their excitement about their newfound knowledge.

If you have any questions or suggestions regarding the church school, please feel free to contact Laryssa Doo-hovskoy at 978-841-5960 or at [LaryssaL@aol.com](mailto:LaryssaL@aol.com).

Images from our retreat:



## In Memoriam: Alice G. (Vasillisa) Taylor

1916 - 2009

Many of our current parishioners are not familiar with Alice Taylor, who reposed in the Lord on Sept. 11, 2009. Yet, we are surrounded by her contributions in the very parish we attend. Individually, and as a family member, she was instrumental in assisting the mission church of St. Xenia. Later, when the parish was able to build its own church building, her involvement and generosity continued.

Before moving here locally, and while living in Connecticut, she worked in psychiatric and private duty nursing. There she assisted the parish located in Willimantic. When she relocated to this area, she continued singing in the choir, in addition to her practice of generosity.

Alice, along with her sisters, had the three-bar cross which sits atop our church gold-leafed and installed on our church. After the church building was built and the process began for its beautification, she contributed the golden Gospel cover, the two large Icons (Mother of God and Jesus Christ) which flank either side of the Royal Doors on the Iconostasis, helped to purchase and have delivered from Russia the baptismal font which we currently use for children, and most recently, along with her family, contributed to the Resurrection fresco which we all see through the Royal Doors, on the back wall of the Altar.

Thanks to Alice, her pre-deceased husband Bart, her sisters Lilly and Nita, and all her family, we are blessed to have a beautiful House of the Lord in which we can gather as a spiritual family in prayer. Our gratitude and prayers are extended to Alice, and may she be granted Memory Eternal!



## Miraculous Icon of the “Softener of Evil Hearts”

On Thursday, September 24, 2009, St. Xenia’s Church was honored with the visit of the miraculous and myrrh-streaming Holy Icon of the Mother of our God “Softener of Evil Hearts.” Though the configuration of the arrows and Theotokos’ hands are different on several renditions of this style of Icon, it is also called the Icon of Seven Sorrows (икона Богоматерь семистрельная) and the Icon of the Prophecy of Simeon (икона СИМЕОНОВО проречение)

The seven swords (seven being a sacred number in Sacred Scripture) penetrating the Virgin Mary's heart, symbolize fullness and abundance; complete sadness, "grief and sickness of the heart", which she endured at the loss of her son. This is one of the few Orthodox icons of the Theotokos which do not depict the [infant Jesus](#).

The Seven Sorrows of Mary are:

1. The prophecy of Simeon\*.
2. The flight into Egypt.
3. The loss of the Child Jesus in the temple.
4. The meeting of Jesus and Mary on the Way of the Cross (*i.e. Mary seeing her Son beaten and brutalized*).
5. The Crucifixion.
6. The taking down of the Body of Jesus from the Cross.
7. The burial of Jesus

\*Simeon then prophesied to Mary: "Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against—yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also—that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (Luke 2:34-35).

\*«Се, лежит Сей на падение и на восстание многих в Израиле и в предмет пререканий, - и Тебе Самой оружие пойдет душу, - да откроются помышления многих сердец». (Лк 2, 34-35).

All those who turn to this Icon in prayer sense that with the softening of evil hearts comes easing of spiritual and physical suffering. People come to recognize that when they pray for their enemies before this Icon, their feelings of enmity are softened, and that strife and hatreds leave, giving way to kindness.

The story of the Icon which visited our church is that a girl in the family of Sergei’s wife (one of the men who accompanied the Icon) felt she wanted to purchase an icon. This was in 1998 and on the occasion of the canonization of St. Matrona of Moscow, a well known and loved saint of

Moscow, who was sightless from birth and crippled from her adolescence. The girl asked her family for money to buy an icon, and purchased the paper mounted icon of the Mother of God. She placed it on the reliquary of the newly canonized St. Matrona. On the occasion of the seating of the newly elected Patriarch Kyrill the Icon began to stream myrrh strongly in the family home, and was later brought to church.

## The Venerable St Herman Of Alaska, Wonderworker of All America

**December 12 / 25**

St. Herman of Alaska, wonderworker of all America.  
Born: ca. 1756-1760 (Serpukhov, Moscow Diocese, Russia)  
Died: December 13/25, 1837 (Spruce Island, Alaska)  
Glorification Date: August 9, 1970  
Commemoration Dates: August 9/22 (glorification); December 13/25 (repose)

SAINT HERMAN OF ALASKA, the first "American" saint, was the first to bring Orthodoxy to this continent. He came to America as a young monk in 1794 as part of the original Russian Orthodox mission to Alaska. He lived there until his repose, and for more than four decades taught the natives by word and example. With his own severe asceticism a secret, he ministered to both physical and spiritual needs of the people. And his memory is preserved, fresh and personal, among their descendants to this day. Ironically, however, he is unknown to so many other Americans. By his prayers may we, also, truly receive the Gospel he brought and follow the way that he taught.





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**NOVEMBER 2009**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 (Oct 19) 21st Sunday after Pentecost. Tone 4  9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy 12:30 Annual Meeting of Members	2 (Oct 20) GM Artemius at Antioch	3 (Oct 21) Ven. Hilarion the Great	4 (Oct 22) Kazan Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos  Fast: wine & oil	5 (Oct 23) Ap James the Brother of the Lord	6 (Oct 24) Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos "The Joy of All Who Sorrow"  Fast	7 (Oct 25) Demetrius Saturday  5:30 Pannyhida 6:30 All-Night Vigil
8 (Oct 26) 22nd Sunday after Pentecost. Tone 5  9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy	9 (Oct 27) M Nestor of Thessalonica	10 (Oct 28) GM Parasceva of Iconium	11 (Oct 29) VM Anastasia the Roman  Fast	12 (Oct 30) HM Zenobius and his sister Zenobia	13 (Oct 31) App Stachys, Amplias, Urban, Narcissus, Apelles, and Aristobulus of the 70  Fast	14 (Nov 1) Holy Unmercenaries Cosmas and Damian  4:00 Class 6:30 All-Night Vigil
15 (Nov 2) 23rd Sunday after Pentecost. Tone 6  9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy	16 (Nov 3) MM Aceptsimas the Bishop, Joseph the Presbyter, and Aeithalas the Deacon	17 (Nov 4) Ven Ioannicius the Great	18 (Nov 5) MM Galacteon and his wife Episteme  Fast	19 (Nov 6) St. Paul the Confessor	20 (Nov 7) Holy 33 Martyrs of Melitene  Fast	21 (Nov 8) Synaxis of the Archangel Michael  5:30 Molieben 6:30 All-Night Vigil
22 (Nov 9) 24th Sunday after Pentecost. Tone 7  9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy	23 (Nov 10) App Erastus, Olympas, Herodion, Sosipater, Quartus, and Tertius of the 70	24 (Nov 11) M Menas of Egypt	25 (Nov 12) St. John the Merciful  Fast: wine & oil	26 (Nov 13) St. John Chrysostom	27 (Nov 14) Holy and All-praised Ap Philip  Fast: wine & oil	28 (Nov 15) MM Gurias, Samonas, and Abibus  4:00 Class 6:30 All-Night Vigil  Fast: fish, wine & oil
29 (Nov 16)  25th Sunday after Pentecost. Tone 8 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy  Fast: fish, wine & oil	30 (Nov 17) St. Gregory the Wonderworker  Fast	Dec 1 (Nov 18) M Platon of Ancyra  Fast: wine & oil	Dec 2 (Nov 19) Pr Obadiah  Fast	Dec 3 (Nov 20) Ven Gregory Decapolites  7:00 Vigil  Fast: wine & oil	Dec 4 (Nov 21) ENTRANCE OF THE THEOTOKOS  9:30 Hours & Divine Liturgy  Fast: fish, wine, & oil	Dec 5 (Nov 22) App Philemon, Archippus, Apphia, and St. Onesimus  6:30 All-Night Vigil  Fast: fish, wine & oil



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**DECEMBER 2009**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>Nov 29 (Nov 16)</b> <b>25th Sunday after Pentecost. Tone 8</b> <b>9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy</b>  Fast: fish, wine & oil	<b>Nov 30 (Nov 17)</b> <b>St. Gregory the Wonderworker</b>  Fast	<b>1 (Nov 18)</b> <b>M Platon of Ancyra</b>  Fast: wine & oil	<b>2 (Nov 19)</b> <b>Pr Obadiah</b>  Fast	<b>3 (Nov 20)</b> <b>Ven Gregory Decapolites</b>  <b>7:00 Vigil</b> Fast: wine & oil	<b>4 (Nov 21)</b> <b>ENTRANCE OF THE THEOTOKOS</b>  <b>9:30 Hours &amp; Divine Liturgy</b> Fast: fish, wine, & oil	<b>5 (Nov 22)</b> <b>App Philemon, Archippus, Apphia, and St. Onesimus</b>  <b>6:30 All-Night Vigil</b> Fast: fish, wine & oil
<b>6 (Nov 23)</b> <b>26th Sunday after Pentecost. Tone 1</b>  <b>9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy</b>  Fast: fish, wine & oil	<b>7 (Nov 24)</b> <b>GM Mercurius of Caesarea</b>  Fast: wine & oil	<b>8 (Nov 25)</b> <b>HM Clement, pope of Rome</b>  Fast: fish, wine & oil	<b>9 (Nov 26)</b> <b>Ven Alypius the Stylite</b>  Fast	<b>10 (Nov 27)</b> <b>GM James the Persian</b>  Fast: wine & oil	<b>11 (Nov 28)</b> <b>M Stephen the New</b>  Fast	<b>12 (Nov 29)</b> <b>M Paramon and 370 Martyrs in Bithynia</b>  <b>4:00 Class</b> <b>6:30 All-Night Vigil</b> Fast: fish, wine & oil
<b>13 (Nov 30)</b> <b>27th Sunday after Pentecost. Tone 2</b>  <b>9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy</b>  Fast: fish, wine & oil	<b>14 (Dec 1)</b> <b>Prophet Nahum</b>  Fast	<b>15 (Dec 2)</b> <b>Prophet Habakkuk</b>  Fast: wine & oil	<b>16 (Dec 3)</b> <b>Prophet Zephaniah</b>  Fast	<b>17 (Dec 4)</b> <b>GM Barbara and M Juliana</b>  Fast: wine & oil	<b>18 (Dec 5)</b> <b>Ven Sabbas the Sanctified</b>  Fast: fish, wine & oil	<b>19 (Dec 6)</b> <b>St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, archbishop of Myra in Lycia</b>  <b>6:30 All-Night Vigil</b> Fast: fish, wine, & oil
<b>20 (Dec 7)</b> <b>28th Sunday after Pentecost. Tone 3</b>  <b>9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy</b>  Fast: wine & oil	<b>21 (Dec 8)</b> <b>Ven Patapius of Thebes</b>  Fast	<b>22 (Dec 9)</b> <b>Conception by St. Anna of the Most Holy Theotokos</b> <b>St. Herman Youth Conference</b>  Fast: fish, wine & oil	<b>23 (Dec 10)</b> <b>MM Menas the Melodius, Hermogenes, and Eugraphus</b> <b>St. Herman Youth Conference</b>  Fast	<b>24 (Dec 11)</b> <b>Ven Daniel the Stylite</b>  <b>St. Herman Youth Conference</b>  Fast: wine & oil	<b>25 (Dec 12)</b> <b>St. Spyridon</b> <b>St. Herman of Alaska</b> <b>9:30 Hours &amp; Divine Liturgy</b> <b>St. Herman Youth Conference</b>  Fast: fish, wine & oil	<b>26 (Dec 13)</b> <b>MM Eustratius, Auxentius, Eugene, Mardarius, and Orestes</b>  <b>6:30 All-Night Vigil</b> Fast: fish, wine & oil
<b>27 (Dec 14)</b> <b>29th Sunday after Pentecost. Tone 4</b>  <b>9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy</b>  Fast: fish, wine & oil	<b>28 (Dec 15)</b> <b>HM Eleutherius, bishop of Illyria</b>  Fast	<b>29 (Dec 16)</b> <b>Prophet Haggai</b>  Fast: wine & oil	<b>30 (Dec 17)</b> <b>Holy Prophet Daniel and the Three Holy Youths</b>  Fast: wine & oil	<b>31 (Dec 18)</b> <b>M Sebastian at Rome and comp</b>  Fast: wine & oil	<b>Jan 1 (Dec 19)</b>  Fast	<b>Jan 2 (Dec 20)</b>  <b>6:30 All-Night Vigil</b> Fast: wine & oil

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St. Xenia Orthodox Church  
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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.