



St. Xenia Parish News

170 North Lowell Street, Methuen, MA 01844

July-August 2007

Sermon on the Dormition of the Theotokos

by St. John Damascus

Lovers are wont to speak of what they love, and to let their fancy run on it by day and night. Let no one therefore blame me, if I add a third tribute to the Mother of God, on her triumphant departure. I am not profiting her, but myself and you who are here present, putting before you a spiritual seasoning and refreshment in keeping with this holy night. We are suffering, as you see, from scarcity of eatables. Therefore I am extemporizing a repast, which, if not very costly nor worthy of the occasion, will certainly be sufficient to still hunger. She does not need our praise. It is we who need her glory. How indeed can glory be glorified, or the source of light be enlightened? We are weaving a crown for ourselves in the doing. "I live," the Lord says, "and I will glorify those who glorify Me." Wine is truly pleasant to drink, and bread to eat. The one rejoices, the other strengthens the heart of man. But what is sweeter than the Mother of my God? She has taken my mind captive, and held my tongue in bondage. I think of her by day and night. She, the Mother of the Word, supplies my words. The fruit of sterility makes sterile minds fruitful. We keep today the feast of her blessed and divine transit from this world. Let us then climb up the mystical mountain, where beyond the reach of worldly things, passing through the obscurity of storm, we stand in the divine light and may give praise to Almighty power. How does He, who dwells in the splendour of His glory, descend into the Virgin's womb without leaving the bosom of the Father? How is He conceived in the flesh, and does He spontaneously suffer, and suffer unto death, in that material body, gaining immortality through corruptibility? And, again, ascending to the Father, He drew His Mother, according to the flesh, to His own Father, assuming into the heavenly country her who was heaven on earth.

Today the living ladder, through whom the Most High descended and was seen on earth, and conversed with men, was assumed into heaven by death. To-day the heavenly table, she, who contained the bread of life, the fire of the Godhead, without knowing man, was assumed from earth to heaven, and the gates of heaven opened wide to receive the gate of God from the East. To-day the living city of God is transferred from the earthly to the heavenly Jerusalem, and she, who, conceived her first-born and only Son, the first-born of all creation, the only begotten of the Father, rests in the Church of the first-born: the true and living Ark of the Lord is taken to the peace of her Son.

The gates of heaven are opened to receive the receptacle of God, who, bringing forth the tree of life, destroyed Eve's disobedience and Adam's penalty of death. And Christ, the cause of all life, receives the chosen mirror, the mountain from which the stone without hands filled the whole earth. She, who brought about the Word's divine Incarnation, rests in her glorious tomb as in a bridal-chamber, whence she goes to the heavenly bridals, to share in the kingdom of her Son and God, leaving her tomb as a place of rest for those on earth. Is her tomb indeed a resting-place? Yes, more famous than any other, not shining with gold, or silver, or precious stones, nor covered with silken, golden, or purple adornments, but with the divine radiance of the Holy Spirit. The angelic state is not for lovers of this world, but the wondrous life of the blessed is for the servants of the Spirit, and passing to God is better and sweeter than any other life. This tomb is fairer than Eden. And that I may not speak of the enemy's deceit, in the one; of his, so to say, clever counsel, his envy and covetousness, of Eve's weakness and pliability, the bait, sure and tempting, which cheated her and her husband, their disobedience, exile, and death, not to speak of these things so as not to turn our feast into sorrow, this grave gave up the mortal body it contained to the heavenly country. Eve became the mother of the human family, and is not man made after the divine image, convicted by her condemnation; "earth thou art, and unto earth thou shalt return." This tomb is more precious than the tabernacle of old, receiving the real and life-giving receptacle of the Lord, the heavenly table, not the loaves of proposition, but of heaven, not material fire, but her who contained the pure fire of the Godhead. This tomb is holier than the ark of Moses, blessed not with types and shadows, but the truth itself. It showed forth the pure and golden urn, containing the heavenly manna, the living tablet, receiving the Incarnate Word of God from the impress of the Holy Spirit, the golden censer of the super-substantial word. It showed forth her who conceived the divine fire embalming all creation.

Let demons take to flight, and the thrice miserable Nestorians perish as the Egyptians of old, and their ruler Pharaoh, the younger, a cruel devastator. They were swallowed up in the abyss of blasphemy. Let us who are saved with dry feet, crossing the bitter waters of impiety, raise our voices to the Mother of God at her departure. Let

Mary, personifying the Church, lead the joyful strain. Let the maidens of the spiritual Jerusalem go out in singing choirs. Let kings and judges, with rulers, youths, and virgins, young and old, proclaim the Mother of God, and all peoples and nations in their different ways and tongues, sing a new canticle. Let the air resound with praise and instrument, and the sun gladden this day of salvation. Rejoice, O heavens, and may the clouds rain justice. Be glad, O divine apostles, the chosen ones of God's flock, who seem to reach the highest visions, as lofty mountaintops. And you God's sheep, and His holy people, the flock of the Church, who look to the high mountains of perfection, be sad, for the fountain of life, God's Mother, is dead. It was necessary that what was made of earth should return to earth, and thus be assumed to heaven. It was fitting that the earthly tenement should be cast off, as gold is purified, so that the flesh in death might become pure and immortal, and rise in shining immortality from the tomb.

Today she begins her second life through Him who was the cause of her first being. She gave a beginning, I mean, the life of the body, to Him who had no beginning in time, although the Father was the cause of His divine existence. Rejoice holy and divine Mount Sion, in which reposes the living divine mountain, the new Bethel, with its grace, human nature united with the Godhead. From thee her Son ascended to heaven as from the olives. Let the world-embracing cloud be prepared and the winds gather the apostles to Mount Sion from the ends of the earth. Who are these who soar up as clouds and eagles to the cause of all resurrection, ministering to the Mother of God? Who is she who rises resplendent, all pure, and bright as the sun? Let the spiritual lyres sing to her, the apostolic tongues. Let grave theologians raise their voices in praise, Hierotheus, the vessel of election, in whom the Holy Spirit abides, knowing and teaching divine things by the divine indwelling. Let him be wrapt out of the body and join willingly in the joyful hymn. Let all nations clap their hands and praise the Mother of God. Let angels minister to her body. Follow your Queen, O daughters of Jerusalem, and, together with her virgins in the spirit, approach your Bridegroom in order to sit at His right hand. Make haste, Lord, to give Thy Mother the welcome which is her due. Stretch out Thy divine hands. Receive Thy Mother's soul into the Father's hands unto which Thou didst commend Thy spirit on the Cross. Speak sweet words to her: "Come, my beloved, whose purity is more dazzling than the sun, thou gavest me of thy own, receive now what is mine. Come, my Mother, to thy Son, reign with Him who was poor with thee." Depart, O Queen, depart, not as Moses did who went up to die. Die rather that thou mayest ascend. Give up thy soul into the hands of thy Son. Return earth to the earth, it will be no obstacle. Lift up your eyes, O people of God. See in Sion the Ark of the Lord God of powers, and the apostles standing by it, burying the life-giving body which received our Lord. Invisible angels are all around in lowly reverence doing homage to the Mother of their Lord. The Lord Himself is

there, who is present everywhere, and filling all things, the universal Being, not in place. He is the Author and Creator of all things. Behold the Virgin, the daughter of Adam and Mother of God; through Adam she gives her body to the earth, her soul to her Son above in the heavenly courts. Let the holy city be sanctified, and rejoice in eternal praise. Let angels precede the divine tabernacle on its passage, and prepare the tomb. Let the radiance of the spirit adorn it. Let sweet ointment be made ready and poured over the pure and undefiled body. Let a clear stream of grace flow from grace in its source. Let the earth be sanctified by contact with that body. Let the air rejoice at the Assumption. Let gentle breezes waft grace. Let all nature keep the feast of the Mother of God's Assumption. May youthful bands applaud and eloquent tongues acclaim her, and wise hearts ponder on the wonder, priests hoary with age gather strength at the sight. Let all creation emulate heaven, even so the true measure of rejoicing would not be reached.

Come, let us depart with her. Come, let us descend to that tomb with all our heart's desire. Let us draw round that most sacred bed and sing the sweet words, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Hail, predestined Mother of God. Hail, thou chosen one in the design of God from all eternity, most sacred hope of earth, resting-place of divine fire, holiest delight of the Spirit, fountain of living water, paradise of the tree of life, divine vine-branch, bringing forth soul-sustaining nectar and ambrosia. Full river of spiritual graces, fertile land of the divine pastures, rose of purity, with the sweet fragrance of grace, lily of the royal robe, pure Mother of the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, token of our redemption, handmaid and Mother, surpassing angelic powers." Come, let us stand round that pure tomb and draw grace to our hearts. Let us raise the ever-virginal body with spiritual arms, and go with her into the grave to die with her. Let us renounce our passions, and live with her in purity, listening to the divine canticles of angels in the heavenly courts. Let us go in adoring, and learn the wondrous mystery by which she is assumed to heaven, to be with her Son, higher than all the angelic choirs. No one stands between Son and Mother. This, O Mother of God, is my third sermon on thy departure, in lowly reverence to the Holy Trinity to whom thou didst minister, the goodness of the Father, the power of the Spirit, receiving the Uncreated Word, the Almighty Wisdom and Power of God. Accept, then, my good will, which is greater than my capacity, and give us salvation. Heal our passions, cure our diseases, help us out of our difficulties, make our lives peaceful, send us the illumination of the Spirit. In flame us with the desire of thy son. Render us pleasing to Him, so that we may enjoy happiness with Him, seeing thee resplendent with thy Son's glory, rejoicing forever, keeping feast in the Church with those who worthily celebrate Him who worked our salvation through thee, Christ the Son of God, and our God. To Him be glory and majesty, with the uncreated Father and the all-holy and life-giving Spirit, now and for ever, through the endless ages of eternity. Amen.

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 (978) 204-0428
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
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Roberto Gonzalez (978) 692-1229
Michael Johnson (603) 893-4593
John Kekis (978) 456-9865
Choir Director: Michael Lang (603) 465-9754

Trapeza Schedule

*** =Strict Fast (no meats, fish 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.

Trapeza during these summer months has become a potluck affair, and remember that anything cool and refreshing, such as pasta and fruit salads, is always welcome at this time of year. However, please also remember that the Dormition Fast falls during the latter half of August (August 1-15 – August 14-28, civil calendar), and this is a strict Fast; please plan accordingly.

Our thanks to all who provide a light meal for the parish during this time of year.

Sisterhood News:

The 2007 Lilac Nights/Boston Ball was a success! Attendees at this combined effort of the St. Xenia and Holy Epiphany parishes had a wonderful evening of dining and dancing. Enormous thanks to our own Matushka Nancy, and to all the other hardworking organizers who arranged this tremendous family evening.

Sisterhood dues are \$5 per year, and membership is open to all women of the parish. Our next meeting will take place in August.

Thank You... to all who helped in the preparation of Lilac Nights, especially to Matushka Nancy.

Please remember in your prayers...Nicholas, Lilly, Nina, Josephine, David, Vassilisa, Lilly Anne, Margaret, Matushka Irina Lukianov.

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

Financial Update: As of April 30, 2007 the balance on the church mortgage stands at \$55,335. If you have any questions, please see Subdeacon Constantine Desrosiers.

Congratulations:

... to Pamela and Peter Reed, on the newest member of the family, Luke Sarantakis Reed, born May 30

...to Carolyn and Brian Savage, on the newest member of their family, Owen Anthony, born June 7.

...to Anthony and Vera Sarantakis, who have been doubly blessed as grandparents to the two babies named above! Many years to all!

...to Bobby DiMatteo, who was graduated from Bowdoin College in May. Bobby is headed to China to work for Credit Suisse.

...to Mary DiMatteo, who was graduated from the University of Rochester in May, and who received many accolades, including her Phi Beta Kappa key. She has a job lined up in Boston.

...to Brigid Crowley, who was graduated from Pace University in May, and will stay on in New York to work.

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!

A Reminder about Pledges We are a little late this year in reminding our members to please come up to date with pledges. Even though we have increased our attendance at Sunday Divine Liturgy, it is still the pledges of individual members that make it possible for us to pay our bills and continue growing our parish. Please refer to the chart inside the door to the hall. It shows both our intended budget and our deficit.

Although it can sometimes seem like a burden upon our household budgets, pledging and giving to the Church is not only our Christian duty, but also a wonderful opportunity to express our love of God and of our fellow man. And again, though it can seem that we need this money in other areas of our lives, anything that we give to the Holy Church is returned to us ten-fold both here and in the life to come.

So make every effort to be generous—and please follow through on what you have already pledged. We are building this parish not only for ourselves and our children, but for our children's children and beyond.

St. Seraphim Camp: This year's St. Seraphim Camp will take place Sunday, July 29th through Sunday, August 5th. The cost will still be only \$175.00 per child. Applications for previous campers will be accepted immediately. After May 31st, new campers may apply. Applications and registration information are available at: www.orthodoxinfo.biz/camp.html. Please send registration forms and payment to:

Fr. Alexis Duncan
7848 Holyoke Road
Cumming, GA 30040

Exciting news about the Camp: With the blessings of Bishop Gabriel, we have begun to raise money to buy land for our youth. For 12 years we have rented, at a relatively high price, a Boy Scout camp in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania, but desire a place where we might extend the time of the retreat, build a Russian Orthodox chapel, and have a place for a variety of youth activities. After searching for land, we have an idea to purchase a farm, perhaps in the upstate New York area. We plan to begin modestly, improving the land as God gives us increase. We may not be able to afford this for quite a while, but we hope that the Lord blesses this project. If you are moved to assist us with this, we would be most grateful. If you could donate, please contact Fr. Alexis Duncan at the address above.

Orthodox Teaching on the Holy Angels

Nine orders of angels divided into three hierarchies

Hierarchies are divided into three orders

"Мы принимаем девять чинов ангельских, потому что из свидетельства слова Божия знаем об Ангелах, Архангелах, Силах, Властях, Началах, Господствах, Престолах, Херувимах и Серафимах"

The Apostle Paul was taken up to the third (highest) heaven (II Cor. 12:2) and saw the difference of the orders of the holy angels and explained them to Dionysius, as his disciple (St. Dionysius the Areopagite). All the heavenly orders are called by the common name "angels." The word "angel" is not a denomination of essence, but of service. Angels do, however, have different names according to their situation and grace given by God.

The first hierarchy, the highest and closest to the Holy Trinity, consists of the Seraphim, Cherubim, and Thrones. The six-winged Seraphim stand closer than all before their Creator and Maker and are fire-like. They are aflame with love for God. Next are the many-eyed Cherubim being themselves enlightened, they enlighten others sending wisdom and enlightenment of the spiritual eyes, given for the seeing of God and the knowledge of God. The Thrones are called "God-bearing" according to grace and given for their service which is to mystically and incomprehensibly bear God in themselves. Through them the justice of God is pre-eminently manifested.

The middle hierarchy consists of three angelic orders: the Dominions, the Virtues, and the Powers. The Dominions are themselves free and dominate over the rest of the angels which follow behind them, voluntarily and joyfully serving God and sending down power for the prudent governing and wise management to authorities on the earth. The Virtues are filled with Divine strength, work very great miracles and send the grace of miracle working to God's saints who are worthy of such grace. The Powers are so called because they have power over the devil, to restrain the power of the demons and to repulse the temptations brought upon by them.

The lowest hierarchy also has three orders: the Principalities, the Archangels and the Angels. The Principalities are named thus because they have command over the lower

angels, directing them to the fulfillment of divine orders. The Archangels are the great heralds of good news. The Angels are closest to man. They announce lesser mysteries and intentions of God and are appointed to guard each of us who believe.

Being in need of the help of the angels, the Orthodox Church celebrates the Assembly of the nine angelic orders with a special supplication on the eighth day of the month of November, i.e. the ninth month, since all these nine orders of angels will gather on the day of the Terrible Judgment of the Lord, which the divine teachers of the Church call the eighth day. The Synaxis of the Holy Archangel Michael and all the Heavenly Bodiless Powers is commemorated November 8/21.

From the Minea of St. Dimitry of Rostov

New Parish Web Site

We are very pleased to announce that we have a rejuvenated parish web site. Thanks to the help of Laryssa Doo-hovskoy, and the technical assistance of Orthodox Web Services, we have completely redesigned the site, added content and generally brought it up to date. The principal benefit is that we are now able to post current information, announcements, photos and other pertinent content much more easily. We will be able to continue to keep the site "fresh" and appealing to those seeking the Orthodox Church and particularly our parish.

The site has built in calendaring so that our Divine Services and activity schedule is readily accessible to anyone with an internet connection. Laryssa has also prepared an extensive section dealing with our Church School and its curriculum. This should be helpful to both parents and seekers.

We have also included a much needed page devoted to the Sts. Peter & Paul Cemetery. We will continue to add information here for the sake of those who have already purchased graves, and for those who are interested.

The site can be found as usual at <http://www.stxenia.org>. If you have information to share or ideas for further development please contact either Laryssa or Fr. Michael.

July 2007

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 (18 Jun) M Leontius 9:30 AM Pentecost 5 Hours & Divine Liturgy Fish, wine & oil allowed	2 (19 Jun) Ap. Jude	3 (20 Jun) HM Methodius	4 (21 Jun) M Julian of Tarsus	5 (22 Jun) HM Eusebius	6 (23 Jun) M Agrippa	7 (24 Jun) Nativity of St John the Baptist 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil
Apostle's Fast						
8 (25 Jun) M Febronia 9:30 AM Pentecost 6 Hours & Divine Liturgy	9 (26 Jun) St David of Thessalonica	10 (27 Jun) St Sampson the Hospitable Wine & oil allowed	11 (28 Jun) SS Sergius & Herman 6:30 PM Vigil of the Apostles	12 (29 Jun) 9:30 AM App. Peter & Paul Hours & Divine Liturgy	13 (30 Jun) Synaxis of the 12 Apostles Fish, wine & oil allowed	14 (1 Jul) MM Cosmas & Damian 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil
Apostle's Fast						
15 (2 Jul) Placing of the Tunic of the Theotokos 9:30 AM Pentecost 7 Hours & Divine Liturgy	16 (3 Jul) M Hyacinth	17 (4 Jul) St Andrew of Crete; Royal Martyrs of Russia	18 (5 Jul) St Athanasius of Athos; St Sergius of Radonezh; NMM Elizabeth & Barbara Wine & oil allowed	19 (6 Jul) St Sisoies the Great	20 (7 Jul) St Thomas	21 (8 Jul) GM Procopius 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil
22 (9 Jul) HM Pancratius 9:30 AM Pentecost 8 Hours & Divine Liturgy	23 (10 Jul) 45 MM at Nicopolis	24 (11 Jul) GM Euphemia; St Olga	25 (12 Jul) MM Proclus & Hilary	26 (13 Jul) Synaxis of Archangel Gabriel	27 (14 July) Ap Aquila; St Priscilla Wine & oil allowed	28 (15 Jul) St Vladimir the Enlightener 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil
29 (16 Jul) HM Athogenes 9:30 AM Pentecost 9 Hours & Divine Liturgy	30 (17 Jul) GM Marina	31 (18 Jul) M Emilian				

August 2007

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 (19 Jul) St Macrina; St Seraphim of Sarov	2 (20 Jul) Pr Elijah	3 (21 Jul) St Symeon of Emessa	4 (22 Jul) St Mary Magdalen 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil
5 (23 Jul) Pr Ezekiel 9:30 AM Pentecost 10 Hours & Divine Liturgy	6 (24 Jul) M Christina of Tyre	7 (25 Jul) Dormition of St Anna Wine & oil allowed	8 (26 Jul) HM Hermolaus Wine & oil allowed	9 (27 Jul) GM Panteleimon Fish, wine & oil allowed	10 (28 Jul) Ap Prochorus & comp	11 (29 Jul) M Callinicus of Gangra 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil Fish, wine & oil
12 (30 Jul) App Silas, Silvanus, Silvans 9:30 AM Pentecost 11 Hours & Divine Liturgy	13 (31 Jul) R Eudocius	14 (1 Aug) Procession of the Cross Wine & oil allowed	15 (2 Aug) Protomartyr Stephen	16 (3 Aug) St Isaacius & comp Wine & oil allowed	17 (4 Aug) 7 Youths of Ephesus	18 (5 Aug) M Eusygnius 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil Wine & oil allowed
		Dormition Fast				
19 (6 Aug) 9:30 AM Transfiguration Hours & Divine Liturgy	20 (7 Aug) M Dometius & comp	21 (8 Aug) St Emelian of Cyzicus Wine & oil allowed	22 (9 Aug) Ap Matthias Wine & oil allowed	23 (10 Aug) M Laurence	24 (11 Aug) M Euplus	25 (12 Aug) MM Photius & Anicetas 6:30 PM Sunday Vigil Wine & oil allowed
		Dormition Fast				
26 (13 Aug) St Maximos the Confessor 9:30 AM Pentecost 13 Hours & Divine Liturgy	27 (14 Aug) Pr Micah 6:30 PM Vigil of the Dormition Dormition Fast	28 (15 Aug) 9:30 AM Dormition of the Theotokos Hours & Divine Liturgy	29 (16 Aug) Holy Napkin Wine & oil allowed	30 (17 Aug) M Myron of Cyzicus Wine & oil allowed	31 (18 Aug) MM Florus & Laurus	

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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.