

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST ORTHODOX CHURCH

ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA

A PARISH OF THE DIOCESE OF NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY

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Department of
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION
ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA

A Homeless Wonderer Who Found the Kingdom

On January 24 the Church celebrates the memory of **Blessed Xenia of Petersburg**. She was born in the 18th century to a noble family, and married a colonel who was a member of the Imperial Chorus. But she is probably best known as a "Fool for Christ."

This term is based on Saint Paul's words in I Corinthians 4: 10: "We are fools for Christ's sake." The men and women who became "Fools for Christ" or "Holy Fools" gave up the normal life of family, job and home. They lived in complete dependence on God, and rejected the pursuit of security, status, or the respect of other people.

Xenia's early life followed the conventional path for a young woman of her time. But it changed dramatically when her husband Andrei died suddenly at a lively evening party with his soldier companions. She had loved him dearly and was concerned that there had not been time for him to make a final confession and to receive the Eucharist before he died. We don't know exactly how her concern influenced her next actions, but we do know that she sold her considerable possessions and gave away the proceeds, began wearing Andrei's military uniform, and called herself by his name. She gave her house to a friend, stipulating that it must be used to give shelter to those who could not afford to provide shelter for themselves. Her shocked family tried to have her declared mentally incompetent, but the court found her to be of sound mind.

Xenia left Petersburg and set out on an eight-year pilgrimage, going from one monastery to another and seeking spiritual guidance from the elders and holy people she met along the way.



January 22, 2017

31st Sunday After Pentecost

- 8:45am – Hours
- 9:00am – Divine Liturgy
Epistle: 1 Tim. 1:15-17
Gospel: Lk. 18:35-43
- Panikhida - in memory of **Volodimir Kseniuk**, on the 70th Anniversary of his Birth, offered by Fr. Igor and family; and **Anna Cereguas**, on the Anniversary of her Repose, offered by Patricia Galley.
- **Coffee Hour** – everyone is invited for a fellowship following the service.

Schedule of Services

SATURDAY, JANUARY 28

6:00pm - Great Vespers

SUNDAY, JANUARY 29

9:00am - Divine Liturgy

12:30pm - Great Vespers for the Feast of Three Hierarchs

Intercessory Prayers

We pray for all our fellow parishioners, and we pray especially for those who are incapable of being with us in church. Please keep in your prayers our Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Genevieve Bobenko, Mary Fechisin, Andrew Fabian, Edward Fedush, Mary Hadginske, Helen Kurnewitz, Margaret Lawler, Kathleen Lazorzcyk, Marian Nagel, MaryAnn Rabakozi, Helen Rahnefeld, Anna Rozanovich, Nadia Sojka, Maryann Stagen, Eva Stashitsky, Ann Velebir.

When she returned to Petersburg, she lived as an impoverished wanderer through the streets of the city's worst slum.

Out of fear and mistrust, some people treated this strange woman in a tattered military uniform with derision, shouting or spitting at her. But others were kind, offering her a bit of food or money out of the little they had. She would always give these gifts to needy people, and became recognized for her own charity as well as the good effect she seemed to have on those around her. They began to ask for her blessing, and welcome her presence.

Xenia, like other holy fools, was given the gift of doing miracles and seeing the future. She was able to save people from coming dangers, and once bluntly told a single woman who hoped to marry, "As you sit here drinking coffee, your future husband is burying his first wife." Some time later, the woman met and married the widower to whom Xenia was referring.

In her chapter on Saint Xenia in the book *Encountering Women of Faith*, Barbara Harris succinctly describes the gift holy fools give us: "With their eyes turned toward God and through extreme poverty and humility, fools offer us an extraordinary example of a voluntary kenotic [self-emptying] life."

Birthday Greetings

Happy Birthday to **Nicholas Alexander Silvestre**, who celebrates his birthday today, **Chris Baron**, tomorrow, and **Mary Hadginske**, who will be 96 this Thursday. May God grant all of you good health and happiness for Many Years! Mnohaya Lita!



Announcements

◆ The meeting of the **Board of Trustees** that was scheduled for last Sunday, was postponed to today, following coffee hour. All members please plan to attend the meeting. The "O" Club Annual Luncheon will follow at 2PM.

◆ Next Sunday, January 29, 2017 a **collection** will be taken to help the faithful of Bodružal, Slovakia to build a **new Orthodox church** in their village. The church they once had was claimed by the Eastern-Rite Catholics, and the local government ruled against the Orthodox Church in the quest to re-claim it. With donations from their own people and the hard work of their own men, the parish is trying to build a new temple. The goal of this Diocesan fundraiser is \$15,000. For more information regarding this charitable work and to see a picture of the proposed temple structure, please see a flyer at the bulletin board.

◆ **House blessings** are in progress. The schedule was posted in the last issue of "The Enlightener". If you would like to make changes, or if you are not included in the schedule but would like to have your house blessed this year, please call Fr. Igor to arrange or rearrange it.

◆ Save the date: the **New Jersey Deanery Appreciation Dinner** for the 2016 Distinguished Diocesan Benefactors of our Diocese will be held at the Holy Resurrection Church, 285 French Hill Road, Wayne, NJ 07470 on Sunday, February 19, at 5:00PM.