

# SOBORNOST

## St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

(301) 638-5035 Church

4419 Leonardtown Road

Waldorf, MD 20601

Rev. Father Joseph Edgington, Pastor

(703) 532-8017

[fredgington@gmail.com](mailto:fredgington@gmail.com)

[www.apostlethomas.org](http://www.apostlethomas.org)

*American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese*

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE  
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

## SERVICES

**Wed: Moleben to the Theotokos 6:00 AM**

**Friday: Moleben to the Cross 6:00 AM**

**Saturday: Great Vespers 5:00 PM**

**Sunday: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM**

**Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM**

**\*Please note that attendance is currently limited by restrictions dictated by local response to the COVID-19 pandemic; if you are currently not assigned to an attendance group, please contact [outreach@apostlethomas.org](mailto:outreach@apostlethomas.org) for information on when you may attend.**

**January 24, 2021 | 33<sup>rd</sup> Sunday After Pentecost**

## Venerable Xenia of Rome and Her Two Maidservants

Saint Xenia, the daughter of a Christian noble family of Rome, was born in the course of the fifth century and named Eusebia in holy Baptism. Although she had grown up with the desire of consecrating her virginity to the Lord Jesus Christ, her parents made preparations regardless for the marriage which they had arranged for her. So it was that, on her wedding night, she fled with two of her maidservants and embarked on a ship bound for Alexandria.

On reaching the island of Kos, she changed her name to Xenia or Xeni ("the Stranger") in order to not be known to anyone and, lifting up her hands to God, she prayed earnestly that, as He had sent the Apostle Paul to Saint Thekla, so He would send a second Paul to guide her also on the road to salvation. There then appeared to her a venerable Elder, who was indeed named Paul. He took her and her two



companions to the city of Mylassa in Caria (southwestern Turkey), where there was a monastery of which he was Abbot, and he offered them cells nearby.

For many years Saint Xenia led an altogether heavenly life in this place, and undertook mortifications which made the demons quail. She would take a little bread by way of food every two or three days and season it with her tears, pray through the night, and flee every occasion of vainglory by humbly putting herself at the service of the poor and of the disciples who gathered in increasing numbers around her. She saw to the building of a church near her cell, dedicated to Saint Stephen the Protomartyr, and the place soon became a well-organized convent.

Having sojourned truly as a stranger on earth, Saint Xenia fell asleep in peace as she prayed for her sisters, and her soul departed with joy for the heavenly homeland. The favor which she had won with God was evident at her funeral, when, in the full light of day, there appeared in the sky a luminous cross, brighter than the sun, encircled by a choir of seven stars, and all surrounded by a starry crown. This heavenly apparition accompanied her funeral procession and vanished only when the body of the holy woman was placed in the earth.

### **The Relics of Saint Xenia**

Following the repose of the Saint, her tomb became a place of pilgrimage for the pious faithful. Miracles were reported there as well, through her intercessions.

At some point in time, her sacred skull was transferred to the Cathedral in Selybria in Eastern Thrace. Following the exchange of the populations in 1922, the faithful brought the sacred skull of Saint Xenia with them from Selybria to Kavala in northern Greece, where it remains today in the Church of Saint John the Forerunner. The portions of her relics which remained in Mylassa were brought to Greece at the same time by the Greeks who lived there and came to settle in Nicaea of Piraeus. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

### **Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Colossians 3:4-11**

Brethren, when Christ *who is* our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new *man* who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave *nor* free, but Christ *is* all and in all.

### Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Luke 18:35-43

At that time, as Jesus was coming near Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the road begging. And hearing a multitude passing by, he asked what it meant. So they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And he cried out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Then those who went before warned him that he should be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be brought to Him. And when he had come near, He asked him, saying, "What do you want Me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, that I may receive my sight." Then Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw *it*, gave praise to God.



## A Word From the Holy Fathers

Let us render all glory to the God of glory; and let us sing to Him unto the ages. Amen. For glory does not belong to us, but is only proper to his Son and his Holy Spirit. God has let your love to our frailty in order that we may be of assistance to one another, in His desire also to fulfill the Scripture that says: "A brother that is helped by a brother is stronger than a fortified city" (Prv. 18:19). May our elder brother assist all of us, and I mean Jesus; for, He was well-pleased to make us all His brothers.

And so, we are His brothers and are praised by the angels for the kind of brother that we have, who is able to strengthen us, capable of dividing the spoils with us (Lk 11:22), a chief captain who can crush our enemies in war, a physician who can heal our passions, a general during time of peace in order to submit and set our inner man at peace with the outer man, an nurse who can nurture us with spiritual food, able to grant us life with His life, and mercy through His compassion, a king endowing us with royalty, and a God who deifies us.

Knowing, therefore, that everything lies in Him, pray to Him. "For He knows what we require even before we ask it of Him" (Mt. 6:8) and He will grant every request of your soul, if you do not stand as a hindrance. Always offer glory to Him; for to Him is due glory, to the ages. Amen.

– St. Barsanuphius the Great



## **A House Blessing Prayer**

*This year, due to the pandemic, priests in our Diocese are not permitted to enter houses in order to bless them. Instead, parishioners can bring home holy water from the church and say this lovely prayer of blessing in the house.*

Leader: Let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord have mercy.

Leader: O God our Savior, the True Light, Who was baptized in the Jordan by the Prophet John to renew all men by the waters of regeneration, and Who condescended to enter under the roof of Zacchaeus to bring salvation to him and to all his house, keep safe also from all harm those who dwell here; grant them Your blessing, purification and bodily health, and all their petitions that are unto salvation and life everlasting: For blessed are You, together with you eternal Father, and your all-holy, gracious, and life-giving Spirit, now and ever and forever.

Response: Amen.

Leader: This home is blessed by this sprinkling of holy water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Response: Amen.

## **Also Commemorated Today: Blessed Xenia of St. Petersburg**

The only record of "vital statistics" which has been left us concerning Blessed Xenia is the epitaph on her gravestone: "In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Here rests the body of the servant of God, Xenia Grigorievna, wife of the imperial Chorister, Colonel Andrei Theodorovich Petrov. Widowed at the age of 26, a pilgrim for 45 years, she lived a total of 71 years. She was known by the name Andrei Theodorovich. May whoever knew me pray for my soul that his own may be saved. Amen."

Who wrote it, no one knows, but this is all we know about the early life of Blessed Xenia: only that she lived during the reigns of the Empresses Elizabeth Petrovna and Catherine II and that she was married to the imperial chorister, Col. Andrei Theodorovich Petrov. From this latter fact we may assume that she was of the lesser nobility. Presumably, in her early years, she led an ordinary, though comfortable life, performing no services that merited recording or recognition. It would seem that she was happily married and completely devoted to her husband who was, perhaps, a bit worldly. He was still young and in good health when he died suddenly one night at a drinking party.

The unexpected death of her beloved husband completely shattered Xenia Grigorievna and her personal world. She was twenty-six years old, childless and her husband to whom she was passionately devoted had suddenly died without the benefit of the Holy Mysteries. The distraught widow looked around herself, at all her possessions, at her inane little world and suddenly began to realize the vanity and transitory nature of all earthly joys and treasures. She came to realize that there is true value only in heavenly treasures and real joy in Christ.

To the utter amazement of her friends and relatives, Xenia Grigorievna began to give away literally all that she possessed. Her money and personal belongings she gave to the poor and she even gave away her house to her dear friend Paraskeva Antonova. Finally, her relatives decided that she had taken complete leave of her senses and they petitioned the trustees of her late husband's estate to prevent Xenia from disposing of her wealth, on the grounds that she was mentally unbalanced due to her husband's death. The trustees called Xenia in and, after a long and careful examination, ruled that she was perfectly sound of mind and had every right to dispose of her property as she pleased.

People preoccupied with worldly matters would naturally assume that anyone who gave away his wealth must be insane. They were incapable of seeing that Xenia had undergone a complete rebirth; she was changed from a worldly woman into a spiritual being. Having realized that there can be no true happiness on earth and that worldly possessions are only a hindrance to the attaining of true joy in God.

Having, therefore, relieved herself of all such hindrances, Xenia suddenly vanished from St. Petersburg for eight years. It is said that during these years she lived at some hermitage with a sisterhood of holy ascetics, learning about prayer and the spiritual life from an elder. It was during this time that she was called to the highest feat of spiritual perfection, that of being a fool for Christ's sake. To this end, she returned to St. Petersburg, clothed herself in one of her late husband's old uniforms and linens and thereafter refused to respond the name of Xenia Grigorievna, answering instead only to the name of her late husband, Andrei Feodorovich. It was as if she, in her deep devotion to her husband, had hoped in some way to take upon herself the burden of his unrepented sins and of his unfortunate demise without the Holy Mysteries. Sorrowing for her own sins and for his, she left her home and began her long pilgrimage of wandering through the streets of the poorer district of St. Petersburg known as the Petersburg Borough. She was most often to be found in the vicinity of the parish of Saint Matthias where the poorest people lived in shabby huts.

At first, the people of the Borough thought that this strangely dressed, scarcely shod woman was merely a simple minded beggar, and evil people, especially the

street urchins, would often persecute and laugh at her. With complete meekness, however, she kept before her the image of the guiltless Great Sufferer, Christ Jesus, who, without a murmur, heard all accusations, bore all persecutions, suffered terrible torture and crucifixion. Because of His example, the Blessed One strove to bear her hardships meekly and in silence, forgiving offenses in accordance with the last earthly prayer of Jesus, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Only once did the people of the Petersburg Borough see her in anger. The street boys, seeing the ragged old woman, began as usual to laugh at and torment her. The Blessed One ordinarily bore all this without murmur. On this occasion, however, the boys did not content themselves with verbal abuse, but seeing that she did not take notice of their mocking, they began to throw mud and rocks at her. At last they exhausted even the patience of Blessed Xenia and she flew at them, waving her cane in the air. The residents of the Borough were so startled at seeing the Blessed One in such anger that they took immediate steps to prevent any further offenses toward her. As our Lord Jesus Christ had said, "A candle is not bought to be hidden under a basket... but to be placed on a candle stand."

So it was with God pleasing Xenia. Gradually, people began to realize that Xenia was no mere beggar but someone much more. They began to invite her into their homes and offer her warm clothing for the severe Petersburg winters as well as alms. She would never accept the clothing and took only the small copper pennies, which were called the king on horseback because there was a horseman (actually, St. George) struck on them. She would distribute these copper pennies to the poor, at times, apparently, with some prophecy. On one such occasion Xenia met a devout woman on the street. Handing her a five kopeck coin, she said, "Take this five piece, here is the king on horseback; it will be extinguished." The woman accepted the copper five piece and went on her way pondering the meaning of the Blessed One's words. No sooner had she entered the street where she lived than she saw that her house was on fire. Running toward her home, she arrived just as the flames were being quenched. Then she realized that the Blessed One had been foretelling this with her strange words.

On one occasion Paraskeva Antonova was sitting in the home which the Blessed One had given her, when Xenia arrived for a visit. Entering the house, she looked irritably at Antonova and said, "Here you are sitting and sewing buttons and you don't know that God has given you a son! Go at once to the Smolensk Cemetery!" Antonova, knowing Xenia to be truly saintly and knowing that no idle word came from her lips, did not even question this strange command but believed at once that something extraordinary was about to happen and she immediately hurried to the Smolensk Cemetery. On one of the streets of Vasiliev Island near the cemetery,

Antonova saw a large crowd of people. Being curious, she approached the crowd to see what was taking place. It seems that a coachman had knocked down a pregnant woman who then gave birth to a child right there on the street and died immediately afterwards. Filled with compassion for the child, Antonova took it to her own home. All the efforts of the St. Petersburg police to discover the identity of the mother or locate the father or relatives of the tiny orphan proved in vain and so the child remained with Paraskeva Antonova. She provided him with a good upbringing and a sound education, loving him as her own son. Eventually the boy became an eminent functionary and lovingly cared for his foster mother in her old age. He also revered, with sincere piety, the memory of the Servant of God, Xenia who had shown much kindness to his foster mother and who had taken such a hand in his own fate.

Among the friends of Blessed Xenia there was a widow, Mrs. Golubev, and her seventeen-year-old daughter who was noted for her beauty. Xenia liked this girl very much because of her meek, quiet character and her kind heart. Once Xenia came to visit them and the girl began to make coffee. "My beauty, -- said Xenia, turning to the girl, -- here you are making coffee and your husband is burying his wife in Okhta. Run there quickly!"

The girl was shocked. "My what?! I don't have a husband... and burying his wife!". "Go!" -- Xenia answered sternly, not liking any kind of objection. The Golubevs, knowing well that the Blessed One never said anything without a reason, immediately obeyed her command and set out for Okhta. Here they saw that a funeral procession was headed for the cemetery and they joined in with the crowd of mourners. A young woman, the wife of a doctor, had died in childbirth and was being buried. The Liturgy was celebrated, then the funeral service, after which the Golubevs followed as the coffin was carried to the grave. The funeral had ended and the people began to leave; however, they chanced upon the sobbing young widower who, at the sight of the grave mound over the remains of his beloved wife, lost consciousness and fell to the ground near the Golubevs. Both mother and daughter strove to bring him back to consciousness and to comfort him. They became acquainted and, eventually, the young Golubeva became the wife of the doctor.

God's gift of clairvoyance does not always deliver good news. Sometimes it is used to hint at the approaching illness or death of someone in order that they might prepare themselves for their fate. Such was the case when the God-pleasing ascetic arrived to other guests in the Krapivin home at the time and they all stood and greeted the Blessed One warmly. Xenia conversed with them for a while and then rose to leave, thanking the hostess for her hospitality. As she was departing,

however, she turned to Krapivina saying: "Here is green krapiva (nettle) but soon it will be wilted."

Whether or not Mrs. Krapivina understood these words is not known for certain, but other guests did not attach any special significance to them. Much to everyone's amazement, though, Mrs. Krapivina, who was still young and in good health, suddenly became ill and died. Only then did the guests understand that the words, "Here is green krapiva (nettle) but soon it will be wilted," foretold the death of Mrs. Krapivina. Seeing in Xenia this gift of clairvoyance and her meek and humble way of life, people began to realize that she was a true fool for Christ's sake. Many residents of the Borough were sincerely happy to receive her in their homes and it was noticed that some sort of blessed peace and happiness always settled over any home that received her with sincerity. Mothers found that if the Blessed One fondled or rocked an ill child in its cradle, the child would always become well. So parents would hurry to Blessed Xenia with their children whenever she approached, convinced that if she blessed them, or even patted them on the head, they would remain healthy.

People gradually began to accept her strange behavior as some sort of sign from God and often, her behavior would be strange indeed. Two days before the Feast of the Nativity of Christ, in 1761, for example, Blessed Xenia ran anxiously along the cold and snow filled streets of the Petersburg Borough, loudly crying out: "Bake bliny (pancakes), bake bliny, soon all of Russia will be baking bliny!" As usual, no one could figure out the meaning of these strange words of the Blessed One, but on the day of the Feast, the Empress Elisabeth Petrovna reposed suddenly. When the terrible news spread through the city, it became clear to all that the Servant of God had been foretelling the death of the Empress. Occasionally, Xenia would drop in to visit some friend or acquaintance, converse for a while, and then suddenly fall silent, as if listening to something. All at once, she would leap up and leave quickly. If the hostess asked why she was leaving and where she was going, the Blessed One would only wave her stick in the air and say, "I must hurry, I am needed there." She possessed absolutely nothing except the rags on her back and often, upon arriving at the home of a friend, she would cheerfully announce, "Here is all of me." For a long time no one knew where the Blessed One spent her nights. The residents of the Borough were not the only ones to wonder about this, for the local police were also curious about the matter. Upon investigating they discovered that the elderly little woman spent her nights in an open field, praying and making prostrations in all four directions, and she did this no matter what the season or weather. It was a miracle of God that the Blessed One survived the severe St. Petersburg winters in this way. It happened at times that her nights would be spent in some other task. On one occasion in 1794, toward the end of Xenia's long life, a

new church was being built in the Smolensk Cemetery. Workers began to notice that, during the night, someone would haul mounds of brick to the top of the building where they were needed. The workers were amazed by this and resolved to find out who this tireless worker could be. By posting a watchman they were able to discover that it was the Servant of God, Xenia.

"It was necessary, -- says one writer, -- for her to possess either some super human power or to carry within herself such a strong spiritual fire, such a deep, undoubting faith with which the impossible becomes possible. When one considers God's great saints, however, who performed such wondrous miracles by their faith, wonders incomprehensible to the human mind, we cannot consider the Blessed One's ascetic feats as unprecedented or impossible for a person in the flesh. Xenia truly bore that faith with which all things are possible. While still living in her body, her soul always soared above this world, dwelling in a living, direct communion with God." The Blessed One was always ready to help anyone in anyway possible. During the day she would wander about the streets, her face reflecting her internal spirit of meekness, humility and kindness by its warm, friendly glow. At night, in all seasons, she would go into a field and enter into conversation with God Himself. Finally the time came when Xenia was no longer to be found in the streets of the Petersburg Borough nor in the field; her radiant face shone no more amidst the rude shacks of the St. Matthias parish. God called His servant to rest from all her struggles and took her to Himself. Xenia was one of those candles which God lights on earth from time to time in order to light up the path of salvation for the faithful, as the Savior Himself had said, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father Which is in Heaven" and "If, therefore, your entire body is full of light, no part of it being in darkness, then the whole of it shall be full of radiance as when the bright shining of a candle gives off its light." (from [johnsanidopoulos.com](http://johnsanidopoulos.com))

**Assembly of Bishops Communication on COVID-19**  
*Christ "came not to heal the healthy, but the sick; not to save the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2:17)*

As the world continues to battle COVID-19, we are ever grateful to the frontline workers – including medical professionals, emergency responders, and scientists – for their unwavering dedication to making the world a better place.

In light of the same, given our clergy and lay faithful are seeking archpastoral guidance regarding developments in medicine, such as COVID-19 vaccines and immunizations, we offer the following guidance:

Scripture encourages us to respect and protect the body as the temple of God (1 Cor. 6:19). At the same time, it discourages us from either tempting or testing the

Lord (Matt. 4:7). And as your spiritual shepherds, we affirm and assure you that it is neither wrong nor sinful to seek medical attention and advice. In fact, we welcome interventions that provide us more time for spiritual renewal and repentance.

We therefore encourage all of you – the clergy and lay faithful of our Church – to consult your physicians in order to determine the appropriate course of action for you, just as you do for surgeries, medications, and vaccinations, in cancer treatments and other ailments. Indeed, while your own bishop, priest, or spiritual father remains prepared to assist you with spiritual matters, your personal doctor will guide your individual medical decisions.

We trust that whatever course of action you and your doctor decide upon will also benefit the rest of the community. If we work together – in a spirit of sincere compassion and care for one another – we will soon be able to gather together as a *full* community in our churches once again. We miss you very much and eagerly await the day when we can *all* exchange the kiss of peace in the Divine Liturgy!

### **Follow Our Diocese On-Line**

**Diocesan Website:** <http://www.acrod.org>

**Camp Nazareth:** <http://www.campnazareth.org>

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/acroddiocese>

**Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/acrodnews>

**You Tube:** <https://youtube.com/acroddiocese>

***In Your Prayers – Please Remember...*** His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Eminence Metropolitan GREGORY, Fr. Joseph & Family, Greek Orthodox Archbishop Paul Yazigi of Aleppo, Syriac Orthodox Archbishop Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri & Mt. Kenya, Fr. John & Pani Betty Jean Baranik, Presbytera Katie Baker & family, Santiago Alzugaray, Patty Blaydoe, Jeffrey Carey, Tatyana & Slava Chumak & family, Xenia Chilkowich, Jon Church, Ramius Connour, Luke & Marlana Cooper, Tina Crull, Mary Diane David, Ron Dominiecki, Linda A. Georgiev, Heather Himler, John Homick, Howl family, Helen Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Tucker Karl & family, Robert & Pam Karpin, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Brian, Helen, Luke & Mia Mahony, Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, Anna Meinhold, Dn. Henry Middleton, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & Family, Henry & Lisa Osborne, Nicholas Pavlik, Westin Perry & Parents, John Reece, Mary Reed, Chris & Kaitlin Rixey, Jerry Von Ronne, Anne Rosario, James, Theodore & Christina Ristas, Robinson Family, Samson Family, Sharon Sheptak, Bernie Takabayashi & family, Dawn & Faith Ulmschneider, Joe & Darlene Waters, Christine, Jo, Marshall, Nathaniel, Dcn. Nectarios & Ia, the Syrian Christians displaced by war, Mother Virginia Marie & the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, and those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)