

We would like to welcome all parish visitors and invite you to join us after the Liturgy for Coffee hour.

Orthodox Church of the Mother of God OCA – Diocese of New York-New Jersey

V. Rev. Dr. Matthew Searfoorce, Rector

Sub-Deacon Edward Dawson Sub-Deacon Vlashi

Parish Council President: Trudy Ellmore Parish Council Vice President: Holly Dawson



Sunday, January 24, 2016

Gospel: Luke 18:35-43

Tone 1

Epistle: Colossians 3:4-11

34th Sunday after Pentecost: Venerable Xenia of Rome, and her two female servants

**Glory to
Jesus Christ!**



*Venerable Xenia of
Rome, and her two
female servants*

**Glory
Forever!**

Living the life of a stranger in the world, you estranged yourself from every sin; you abandoned comforts and fleeting honors and betrothed yourself to your Immortal Bridegroom. Glorious Xenia, entreat Christ our God to grant us His great mercy.

Today's Commemorated Feasts and Saints

34th Sunday After Pentecost — Tone 1. Ven. Xenia of Rome and her two female servants (5th c.). St. Gerásim, Bishop of Perm (1441). Martyr John of Kazan' (1529). Martyrs Babylas (Vavíla) of Sicily, and his two disciples: Timothy and Agapius (3rd c.). St. Macedonius, Hermit, of Syria (ca. 420). Translation of the relics of St. Anastasius the Persian (7th c.). Ven. Dionysius of Olympus (16th c.). Ven. Philotheus, founder of Philotheou Monastery (Mt. Athos—10th c.). Bl. Xenia of St. Petersburg (19th c.).

Prayer Requests

For Health of:

Holly Dawson, on her birthday, offered by her family.

Juliana and Sub-Deacon Mark Federoff on the birth of their first child,

John Mark Federoff, born Monday, January 18th, offered by the Diocese of NY/NJ.

For Memory of:

Eugene, beloved father of **Archpriest Daniel Degyansky** and his family, who fell asleep in the Lord, Friday morning, offered by the Diocese of NY/NJ.

Liturgical Schedule:

Saturday, January 30th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, January 31st

9:30 am: Sunday School

9:40 am: Hours

10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

12:15 pm: Council Meeting

Monday, February 1st

6:30 pm: Meeting of Christ in the Temple

Saturday, February 6th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, February 7th

9:30 am: No School

9:40 am: Hours

9:45 am: General Confession

10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

Saturday, February 13th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, February 14th

9:30 am: Sunday School

9:40 am: Hours

9:45 am: General Confession

10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

Saturday, February 20th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Bulletin Sponsors:

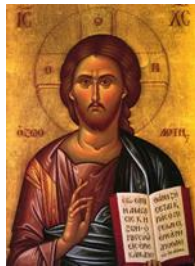
The3 Dawson Family

Readings:



Epistle: Colossians 3:4-11

Brethren, when Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience. In these you once walked, when you lived in them. But now put them all away; anger, wrath, malice, slander, and foul talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature with its practices and have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.



Gospel: Luke 18:35-43

At that time, as he drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging; and hearing a multitude going by, he inquired what this meant. They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." And he cried, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" And Jesus stopped, and commanded him to be brought to him; and when he came near, he asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, let me receive my sight." And 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.



Venerable Xenia of Rome, and her two female servants

Saint Xenia of Rome, in the world Eusebia, was the only daughter of an eminent Roman senator. From her youth she loved God, and wished to avoid the marriage arranged for her. She secretly left her parental home with two servants devoted to her, and set sail upon a ship. Through the Providence of God she met the head of the monastery of the holy Apostle Andrew in Milassa, a town of Caria (Asia Minor). She besought him to take her and her companions to Milassa. She also changed her name, calling herself Xenia [which means "stranger" or foreigner" in Greek].



Bulletin Sponsors/Prayer Requests: Use the sign-up sheet at the candle stand for the health of, eternal memory of or a Pannikhida for a loved one or friend, for a donation of \$10. Bulletin Sponsors/Prayer Requests will be remembered during Divine Liturgy for the day/week that you signed up for.

Candles/Memorial Candles: Candles may be purchased at the candle stand, suggested donation of \$10 for a large one and \$2 for a small one.

Private Confessions: Can be heard a half hour before any service. See Father Matthew for other times and **General Confession:** Will be at 9:45 am on the first Sunday of the month.

Pannikhida Service: The third Sunday of each month there will be a Pannikhida after Divine Liturgy. If you would like your loved ones to be remembered please give a list of names to Father Matthew before that Sunday for those to be remembered in the month.

Special Announcements for the bulletin can be submitted by E-Mail:
ChurchMotherOfGod@outlook.com

The Living Clean Group of Narcotics Anonymous meets every Friday from 8-9:15 pm downstairs in the community room.

The Grey Book Step Meeting Group of Narcotics Anonymous meets every Tuesday from 7-8:00 pm downstairs in the community room.



Orthodox Church of the Mother of God: Parish News

Next Council meeting will be January 31, 2016 at 12:15 pm

The Annual Parish Meeting will be held Sunday, February 14, 2016 at 12:15 pm. Please attend. Your voice counts!



NY/NJ Diocese News

PRINCETON NJ: Opening of a New Church! - 01/23/16

The parish of the Mother of God, "Joy of All Who Sorrow," in Princeton NJ will observe a very special event on Saturday, 30 January 2016, as their newly constructed church building will be blessed and officially opened for worship. The celebrations will be led by Archbishop Michael and offer prayerful tribute to the sacrifices and labors of love exhibited by the community as they arrive at this important moment of grace. Many faithful from throughout the diocese who participated with diligence during "OPERATION PRINCETON" will rejoice with them. An invitation is extended all who wish to join in this joyous event.



Orthodox Church in America (OCA) News

Strong Orthodox presence at DC March for Life—despite the weather!

Despite the brutal weather and the threat of the worst snowfall in the US capital in some 90 years, His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon, clergy and seminarians, and faithful from across the country took part in the annual March for Life here on Friday, January 22, 2016.

Metropolitan Tikhon was accompanied by His Eminence, Archbishop Melchisedek of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania, and His Eminence, Archbishop Michael of New York and New Jersey. Also participating were His Eminence, Metropolitan Evangelos of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of New Jersey and His Grace, Bishop John of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Diocese of Worcester.

The March marked the 43rd anniversary of the Roe v. Wade decision that legalized abortion in the United States.

During the pre-March rally, Metropolitan Tikhon was among the hierarchs on the stage as Metropolitan Evangelos offered the opening invocation. Marchers representing the pan-Orthodox community braved the cold, carrying icons and “Orthodox Christians for Life” banners and signs. At the conclusion of the rally, marchers made their way to the US Supreme Court while Metropolitan Tikhon offered prayers for those who have fallen victim to abortion.

A photo gallery can be viewed on the OCA [web site](#) and [Facebook page](#).



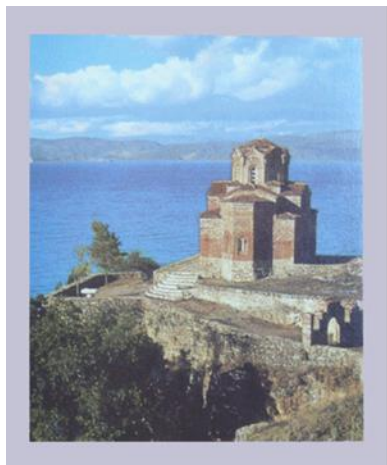
Ms. Anastasia Pamela M Barksdale Serving in Albania



Anastasia Pamela Barksdale, M.Div., is a 1986 graduate of Hellenic College and a 1989 graduate of Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology. While at Holy Cross, Anastasia became active in the leadership of the campus Missions Committee, developing a commitment to share the love of Christ with others. Her commitment was fueled by participating in Orthodox Mission teams to Africa, the Ukraine, and Albania. She has remained fervent in actively supporting the life of the Church in areas of administration, women's ministry, Christian Education and missions.

Anastasia has been serving for the past six years in Tirana, Albania. She is the Christian Education and Field Work Instructor at the Resurrection of Christ Theological Academy at Shen Vlash Monastery and continues to work at the Archdiocese of Tirana with Archbishop Anastasios, and to lead campus ministry Bible studies, as well as teacher training and other seminars.

Anastasia counts on your prayers and financial support in order to serve in Albania as a long term missionary.



Prayers by the Lake, St. Nikolai Velimirovich, XLI:

With fasting I gladden my hope in You, my Lord, Who are to come again.

Fasting hastens my preparation for Your coming, the sole expectation of my days and nights.

Fasting makes my body thinner, so that what remains can more easily shine with the spirit.

While waiting for You, I wish neither to nourish myself with blood nor to take life--so that the animals may sense the joy of my expectation.

But truly, abstaining from food will not save me. Even if I were to eat only the sand from the lake, You would not come to me, unless the

fasting penetrated deeper into my soul.

I have come to know through my prayer, that bodily fasting is more a symbol of true fasting, very beneficial for someone who has only just begun to hope in You, and nevertheless very difficult for someone who merely practices it.

Therefore I have brought fasting into my soul to purge her of many impudent fiancé's and to prepare her for You like a virgin.

And I have brought fasting into my mind, to expel from it all daydreams about worldly matters and to demolish all the air castles, fabricated from those daydreams.

I have brought fasting into my mind, so that it might jettison the world and prepare to receive Your Wisdom.

And I have brought fasting into my heart, so that by means of it my heart might quell all passions and worldly selfishness.

I have brought fasting into my heart, so that heavenly peace might ineffably reign over my heart, when Your stormy Spirit encounters it.

I prescribe fasting for my tongue, to break itself of the habit of idle chatter and to speak reservedly only those words that clear the way for You to come.

And I have imposed fasting on my worries so that it may blow them all away before itself like the wind that blows away the mist, lest they stand like dense fog between me and You, and lest they turn my gaze back to the world.

And fasting has brought into my soul tranquility in the face of uncreated and created realms, and humility towards men and creatures. And it has instilled in me courage, the likes of which I never knew when I was armed with every sort of worldly weapon.

What was my hope before I began to fast except merely another story told by others, which passed from mouth to mouth?

The story told by others about salvation through prayer and fasting became my own.

False fasting accompanies false hope, just as no fasting accompanies hopelessness.

But just as a wheel follows behind a wheel, so true fasting follows true hope.

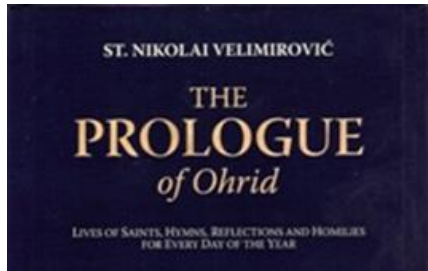
Help me to fast joyfully and to hope joyously, for You, my Most Joyful Feast, are drawing near to me with Your radiant smile

Sayings of the Ascetics of the Orthodox Church, XL:

II. The Realities of the Spiritual World Sin and Evil

Food is not evil, but gluttony is. Childbearing is not evil, but fornication is. Money is not evil, but avarice is. Glory is not evil, but vainglory is. Indeed, there is no evil in existing things, but only in their misuse.

St. Maximus the Confessor, Chapters on Love, 3.4



1. The Venerable Female Xenia [Ksenia]

Xenia was born in Rome, the only daughter of a prominent senator. Drawn by love for Christ, she refused to enter into marriage as her parents wished, but rather, to avoid this, she secretly fled from her home with two of her slaves and arrived at the Island of Cos to a place called Mylassa. There she founded a convent for virgins where she lived an ascetical life until her death. Even though she

was a frail woman, she possessed a steadfast endurance in fasting, prayer and all-night vigils. She often stood all night in prayer; she was dressed more poorly than all the other sisters; and the bread which she ate, she often sprinkled with ashes from the censer [thurible]. At the time of her death (450 A.D.), a wonderful sign appeared over the virgin's convent: a wreath of stars with a cross in the center, brighter than the sun. Many, who were sick, received healing from her relics. Her female slaves [tonsured nuns] continued in the example of their abbess and when they died, and according to their wishes, were buried at the feet of Blessed Xenia [Ksenia].

2. The Holy-Priest Martyr Babylas

Babylas was a priest in Sicily. He suffered for Christ with two of his disciples in the third century.

3. The Venerable Macedonius

Macedonius was a Syrian hermit. Only in his old age did he feed on baked bread, but before that he ate only grains of barley softened with water. He ended his earthy life in the year 418 A.D.

4. Venerable Philon, Bishop of Cyprus

When St. Epiphanius was summoned to Rome to assist the sister of the Emperor Honorius by his prayer, he consecrated Philon a bishop. Philon exegeted the Pentateuch and the Song of Songs. He died peacefully in the fifth century.

5. The Venerable Dionysius of Olympus

Dionysius was a miracle-worker. He lived an ascetical life on Mt. Olympus. He was tonsured a monk on Mt. Athos [The Holy Mountain] where he was the abbot of the Monastery Philotheou. Toward the end of his life, he withdrew into solitude on Mt. Olympus where he died in the sixteenth century.

Hymn of Praise
Saint Xenia [Ksenia]

The virgin Xenia, as well as Agnes
Or the all-glorious Thecla or Anastasia,
Did not want to be tied to a physical man
But found a Bridegroom in the Immortal Christ.
With all her soul, she loved His beauty
And mercy and tenderness and radiant purity.
And even the senator's house and wealth, she left
When the Sun of Righteousness shown in her soul.
Soul! Soul! Soul! is the true bride;
And the body is miserable like the transient grass.
And the bride [her soul] Xenia began to adorn
And by many prayers to wash and nourish it
That the bride [her soul], to be a heavenly apparition,
Pleasant and worthy of the Heavenly Bridegroom.
The labors of Holy Xenia were pleasing to the Bridegroom,
And many wondrous gifts, upon her, He bestowed.
When her pure soul, the flesh, overcame,
Peaceful as a king over a vanquished city,
With the wreath of immortality, the Lord crowned her,
Into the mansion of eternal joy, led her.
There, where the angels hymn the Creator in song,
There, the Lord receives His bride.

Reflection

In our day, you usually hear these words from parents: "We want to secure the life of our child." That is why they work very hard to amass wealth, often unjustly, to educate their child in the calling [vocation] which brings the greatest physical security and material benefit. This is done by so-called Christians! They do this because their concept of a real life and the real security of life is erroneous. See, how a true Christian mother prepares her son for a real life. At the time of her death, Blessed Euphrosyne spoke to her son Clement of Ancyra: "Do me the honor, O my son, and bravely stand up for Christ and confess Him strongly and without hesitation! I hope, in my heart, that the crown of martyrdom will blossom on you in my honor and for the salvation of many. Do not be afraid of threats, nor swords, nor pains, nor wounds, nor fire. Let nothing separate you from Christ, but look up to heaven and from there await your great, eternal and rich reward from God. Fear God's majesty; be afraid of His awesome judgment, tremble at His all-seeing Eye, for all those who deny Him will receive the punishment of unquenchable fire and eternally vigilant worm. Let this be my reward from you, my sweet son, for my pain in child-bearing and effort surrounding your education that I may be called a mother of a martyr. The blood that you received from me, do not spare but shed it that, from that, I can also receive honor. Submit your body to torture that I, too, may rejoice at that before our Lord as though I myself had suffered for Him."

Contemplation

To contemplate the Lord Jesus as Teacher:

1. As a Teacher Who teaches how man should think in order to be saved;
2. As a Teacher Who teaches how man should talk in order to be saved;
3. As a Teacher Who teaches how a man should act in order to be saved.

Homily:
About the most all-discerning Prophet [Jesus]

"Why do you harbor evil thoughts in your hearts" (St. Matthew 9:4).

When our Lord deigned to direct a rebuke to the Pharisees and Scribes, at that time, they had not killed anyone, nor had they deceived anyone, nor had they looted anyone and, not only that, at that time, they had not even offended anyone by their words. Why then, did our Lord admonish them when they had not committed any sin neither in works nor in words? Why? Because, at that time, their thoughts were evil.

An evil thought is sin! That is the great news which Christ brought into the world. In truth, an evil thought is the sinful source of all sin because, before a man says something or does something sinful, he thinks sinfully. Thought is the causative sin. All other sins are only subsequent sins. Whoever wishes to annihilate those evil actions must uproot those evil thoughts first. Whoever desires to stem the flow of water must first dry up the source. Therefore, let no one justify himself: I am not a sinner, for I have not killed anyone nor looted from anyone nor profaned anyone nor lied to anyone! Behold, we are full of deadly looting, profaning and deceiving thoughts! If we have not committed sin by our own deeds, that is simply a matter of the mercy of God and external circumstances. But, if God had yielded and if the circumstances were favorable, we would have committed all those sins that we had thought. The serpent is not only venomous when it bites but also when it does not bite, because it carries the venom in itself.

Therefore, not only is thought a sin, but also it is the source of sin: the beginning of sin and the seed and root of sin. That is why the All-seeing and All-knowing Lord rebuked those who had evil thoughts. "Why do you harbor evil thoughts in your hearts."

O Lord, All-seeing and All-knowing, help us to cleanse our hearts and minds from evil thoughts so that our words and deeds may be pure.

To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.



The Morning Offering – Daily Inspiration with Abbott Tryphon

The Seal of Confession

The importance of confidentiality between the confessor and penitent

The Seal of Confession is a hard and fast rule throughout the history of the Orthodox Church. Since the priest, in Orthodox theology, is but a witness to the confession, since the confession is made to Christ Himself, confidentiality is an absolute must. The secrecy of this Mystery of Penance is vital, for one could not expect a sincere and open confession if the penitent was doubtful of the confidentiality of his confession. Breaking the Seal of Confession is so serious, in fact, that betrayal of this secrecy can lead to the canonical punishment of the priest, including the possibility of his being deposed from the holy priesthood, as suggested in *The Rudder*.

It is also imperative that the spiritual direction given by a priest in confession be for the penitents ears only. If the priest is not permitted to divulge what the penitent says in confession, then the penitent should not divulge what his confessor says. This does not mean sharing what was said by the priest during your confession is anywhere near as reprehensible as having your sins revealed by the priest, but sharing anything said by either the priest, or the penitent, opens the door to the breaking of the Seal of Confession, for this could easily lead to a friend sharing your confidentially shared words with another person, and having it passed on as gossip to any number of people.

I remember hearing members of a parish accuse their priest of having broken the Seal, only to find out later that the penitent was the one who'd revealed the content of the confession, thus betraying the priest

and the congregation. This one slip of the confidentiality of the confession led a whole congregation to believing they could not trust their priest!

Another good reason to always refrain from sharing what was said in confession is that your spouse will feel they have a right to ask what was said, fearing they might look bad in the eyes of the priest. Confession must be the one place where the penitent can always be upfront, if spiritual therapy is to result in healing. Honesty has to be central to the confession.

As a final note, an Orthodox priest should NEVER pronounce absolution in the case of murder, rape, pedophilia, or any other serious crime, unless the person agrees to turn themselves into the police. An important element in confession for any person who is truly sorry for their sins, must be their willingness to accept the consequences of justice rendered.

With love in Christ,
Abbot Tryphon



Daily Reflection

Serving Him Without Fear

*"Thus he has shown the mercy
promised to our ancestors, and
has remembered his holy*

covenant, the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days..." (Lk 1: 72-75)



This prophecy, spoken by Zacharia after the birth of his son, St. John the Baptist, mentions us serving God *"without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him."* What kind of "fear" is Zacharia talking about? The kind that is an obstacle to *"holiness and righteousness before Him,"* before God.

The non-holy and non-righteous kind of fear usually involves: 1. Fear of people and their opinions, and/or 2. Fear of economic insecurity. If I pay attention, I find that most "sins," most misdirections of my will, are somehow connected to these fears and related ones, like fear of rejection, failure, or even of success. So my cross-carrying journey to "holiness" and "righteousness," – that is to say, my "salvation," consists largely of letting go of these bad kinds of fear, and replacing them with faith.

Today let me renew my prayerful contact with Him, Who came and served without fear, even unto death, a death on the Cross, that we *"might serve Him without fear."* Let me let His grace remove any crippling, un-holy and un-righteous fears today, and move forward with Him and in Him. *"The Lord is my light and my Saviour,"* I say today, as so many have said before, *"whom then shall I fear?"* (Ps 26/27: 1)

Daily Readings with Early Church Fathers and Mothers

"God Knows Us" by St. Augustine

You, Lord, are the one who judges me. For, although no "man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him," there is something in a person that "the spirit of man which is in him" doesn't know about itself. But You, Lord, who made us, know us completely. Although I despise who I am in

Your sight and consider myself but "dust and ashes," I undeniably know something about You that I don't know about myself. To be sure, "now we see through a glass darkly" and not yet "face to face." So, as long as I am "absent" from You, I am more "present" with my body than with You. I know that You can't sin, but I don't know what temptations I can resist and which ones I can't. But there is hope because you are faithful. You won't allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to endure, but will always make a way to escape temptation so that we can bear it. Therefore, I will confess what I know about myself. I will also confess what I don't know about myself. What I do know about myself, I know by Your enlightenment. And what I don't about myself, I won't know until the time when You will see my "darkness as the noonday."

From Hudson, CD, Sharrer, JA, and Vanker, L. Day by Day with the Early Church Fathers. Hendrickson: MA, 1999. Pg. 7.

The Philokalia: Daily Readings

Some of those pursuing the spiritual way only repel impassioned thoughts; other cut off the passions themselves. Such thoughts are repelled by psalmody, or by prayer, or by raising one's mind to God, or by occupying one's attention in some similar way. The passions are cut off through appropriate detachment from those things by which they are roused.

- St Maximus the Confessor, 400 Chapters on Love

Praying while we work (St. Paisios)

Is it possible to pray while we are working? On the surface it seems that this will distract us from our work. The reality is that it will enhance our concentration and our ability to do quality work unhindered by distractions and anxiety.

Elder Paisios says,

When someone is doing work that needs concentration, i.e. he is driving a car, or he is operating on a patient, he should also say the Jesus prayer so God can help him and enlighten him; however, he should pray with his heart, and use his mind to concentrate on his work and thus avoid doing any mistakes. Prayer can help us concentrate and gain greater insight into our work.

The Elder says,

The more the mind concentrates on praying, and is being humbled, the more it is enlightened by the grace of God. However, the more it gets dispersed and confused due to its haughtiness, the more it becomes troubled; therefore the our mind, which is clean by nature, fills up with dirty thoughts.

It is through prayer that we act with a "clean" mind. Without prayer we are left with our own often confused thoughts. We play over and over in our minds negative thoughts about this or that person. We play over again and again scenarios about what might befall us in the future. With continuous prayer our mind become still, clean from distracting thoughts, only filled with God and the work that is in front of us as this moment. We are held in the vision of His will for us.

Source: Elder Paisios of the Holy Mountain, p 80

January – 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 8:00-9:15pm – Living Clean NA Group Mtg.	2 6:30 Vespers
3 9:30 No School 9:40 Hours 9:45 Gen'l Confession 10:00 Divine Liturgy / Social	4	5 6:30 Theophany 7:00-8:00pm – The Grey Book Step Mtg. NA Grp	6	7	8 8:00-9:15pm – Living Clean NA Group Mtg.	9 6:30 Vespers
10 9:30 Sunday School 9:40 Hours 10:00 Divine Liturgy / Social	11	12 7:00-8:00pm – The Grey Book Step Mtg. NA Grp	13	14	15 8:00-9:15pm – Living Clean NA Group Mtg.	16 6:30 Vespers
17 9:30 Sunday School 9:40 Hours 10:00 Divine Liturgy / Social	18	19 7:00-8:00pm – The Grey Book Step Mtg. NA Grp	20	21	22 8:00-9:15pm – Living Clean NA Group Mtg.	23 6:30 Vespers
24 9:30 Sunday School 9:40 Hours 10:00 Divine Liturgy/ Social	25	26 7:00-8:00pm – The Grey Book Step Mtg. NA Grp	27	28	29 8:00-9:15pm – Living Clean NA Group Mtg.	30 6:30 Vespers
31 9:30 Sunday School 9:40 Hours 10:00 Divine Liturgy/ Social 12:15 Council Mtg.						