



SAINT INNOCENT ORTHODOX CHURCH

7301 Rivoli Road, Macon, GA 31210

Fr. Theophan #478-538-8161, email fr.theophan@st-innocent.org

www.st-innocent.org

February 2016 Newsletter

You are your record *By Gary Cox*

With “Super Sunday” upon us, it is perhaps an apt moment to borrow from the world of football to discuss decidedly non-football things. There are certainly “athletic” aspects of Christianity that lend themselves to comparisons to the gridiron. Take, for example, one of the many sayings attributed to pro football coach Bill Parcells: “you are your record.” This assessment was usually meant as a way to cut through all the baloney---the excuses and the euphemisms offered to avoid saying hard truths. Bad teams can all too-often become good teams that were plagued by too many injuries, unfavorable scheduling, travel difficulties, off-field issues, front office controversies---the reasons explaining away failure can be endless. Parcells’s rejoinder dismisses all such efforts to avoid responsibility, to avoid “owning” failure. A team that finishes the season 6-10 (six wins and ten losses, for you non-NFL fans: the season consists of 16 games) is first and foremost a bad



team, not a good team plagued by any and all the problems listed above. Until an organization takes ownership of its performance, it stands little chance of analyzing and improving it.

It is a commonplace in contemporary society to speak of the “plight of Christianity,” to borrow from contemporary sports, to see Christianity as a “declining franchise.” Both overseas and in the “good ‘ole USA” the Faith seems in trouble.

February 2016

In many parts of the world, Christians are actively, savagely persecuted. Christians are being martyred; ancient centers of the Faith---the recent news of an ancient Syrian Church monastery in Iraq, fourteen hundred years old, destroyed by barbarians---are pillaged and desecrated. Inside our own country changing social norms, a seemingly ever-more elastic morality, and bizarre oxymorons revolving around an exclusionary tolerance and limits to free speech have little room for the Decalogue or the Beatitudes as "first principles" on which to anchor a civilization.

Why should this be so? Why do so many people increasingly speak of a "post-Christian" age?

In one sense, this situation can be seen as normal, natural, perhaps even healthy. Christianity has always been counter-cultural, and thus we shouldn't be surprised when the Faith clashes with the world around it. On the other hand, so many of the practices of modern Christianity, and of the people who exercise them, seem weak, flabby, and culturally-compliant. As a result, our contemporary western culture doesn't so much despise the Faith as it pities it as the dying delusion of simpletons. As for the simpletons (believers) themselves, popular culture alternatively patronizes (with each year's obligatory new entertainment spectacle designed to part the bubbas from their money) or simply ignores those of profess the Faith. To return to "Parcells-speak," believers ought to conclude that Christianity has had a series of "losing seasons," and desperately needs to analyze its failures.

"Blaming contemporary Christianity is, however, just another exercise in shifting responsibility. Any such diatribe usually omits the fact that I am a member of the "team"; Christianity's failure is my failure."

By now you can envision what's coming: a jeremiad designed to skewer modern Christianity along with an appeal to return to the "ancient ways." Such a critique would be easy to write. Doubtless you have seen the essential 'stats" that proclaim in ways great and small that modern believers are in so many ways indistinguishable from their non-believing neighbors. Christians, if the surveys are correct, apparently, divorce, cohabit, conceive children out of wedlock and abort them in roughly the same percentages as the world we frequently term pagan. Apart from a few appalling attempts to appropriate God's powers to claim a faith-based prosperity or proclaim a faith-based judgment (think

Hillsborough's "God hates fags" here) Christians seem carbon-copies of their culture: in general there doesn't seem to be a dime's worth of difference in how "we" and "they" actually live out our lives.

Blaming contemporary Christianity is, however, just another exercise in shifting responsibility. Any such diatribe usually omits the fact that I am a member of the

"team"; Christianity's failure is my failure. I am, and I own, its record. If the Faith is to win the culture wars, then each one of us, as team members, have to do pick up his game. To borrow another football axiom (this time from Bill Belichick and his New England Patriots), victory depends on "doing one's job."

By "doing one's job," the coach means "playing within oneself." Too often, in sports or in life, we fail because we try to do things that are beyond our abilities, while we don't do those regular, routine, essential things that are the real building blocks of success. If I spend my time

February 2016

trying to perform miracles, or evangelize nations, or rebuke the heathen, or exercise global leadership, I will most probably fail. Moreover, my failures will take time from things that---with the Lord's help---I might be able to accomplish. Imagine what might happen if I asked God to help me pray more, to practice the ascetic disciplines with greater rigor, and to receive every person I meet during the day as if he were Our Lord? Imagine the reaction if a billion Christians suddenly prayed, fasted, and interacted with others as the Lord has commanded them to do!

One of the big mistakes we have made as Christians is to diminish the faith's difficulty. Compared to trying to live a Christian life each day, belief in the Virgin birth or the Resurrection or the ever-virginity of Mary is fairly easy. Sadly, most of us give testimony every day that what we claim to believe doesn't really matter, because if it did, we wouldn't act the way we do.

None of this is written to argue that theology isn't important; in fact, I would argue that bad theology is partly responsible for our failure to live the "Way." But Christianity isn't losing the culture wars because of its theology; it's losing because we who claim to be the Lord's followers are indistinguishable from the rest. We talk a good game, especially in exhorting others, but our own lives render us invisible to our neighbors. In the spiritual life, as in football, honesty---"owning one's record,"---and effort---"doing one's job" are critical components of success.

As to the game itself: Go Broncos!



Announcements

- Fr. Theophan will be out of town for the DOS pastoral conference February 8-12th.
- The Parish Council is scheduled to meet on Thursday, February 18th at 6pm.
- On Sunday February 28, 2015 Fr. Theophan is encouraging the faithful of St. Innocent to attend Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church in downtown.
- Confessions are heard every Saturday from 5-6pm, before Sunday Liturgy if there is a need, and by appointment.

Many Years!

<i>Birthdays</i>	2	Loukas Wilcox
	12	Gary Cox
	19	Sondra Franceil

Anniversaries

<i>February</i>	9	Eric and Lee Olson
	10	Jerome and Diana Gratigny

Mount Athos Trip

Fr. Theophan will be flying to Greece on the evening of Sunday, February 21, 2016 and will be returning to Macon on Saturday, March 5th. Please keep him in your prayers. On Sunday February 28, 2015 Fr. Theophan is encouraging the faithful of St. Innocent to attend Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church in downtown. If there is a pastoral emergency when Fr. Theophan is out please call or email Fr. John Stephero, he has agreed to help if needed. Fr. John's email is : jwstefero50@hotmail.com. 678-298-8298. A big thank you to all those who contributed and made this trip possible for me.

Book Club

On Tuesday, March 29th 2015 at 6:30pm we will meet at the Kehaye's house for the Book Club. The book we will be discussing is *Being Bread* by Dn. Stephen Muse. Copies are available in our

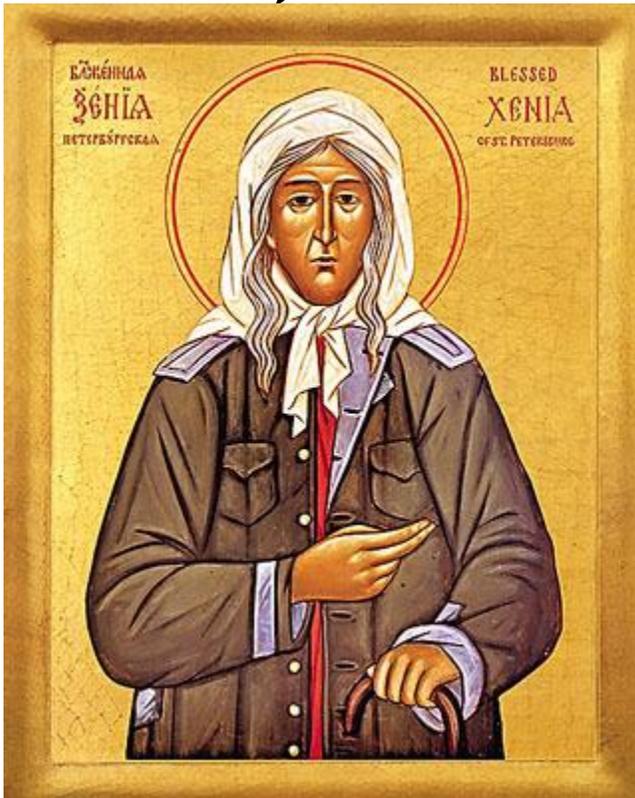
February 2016

bookstore for \$18. Light refreshments will be provided by the host. All are welcome.

Social Media Update

We are attempting to increase our media presence. Please like and follow us on the various social outlets. Please consider writing a review and rating our church on Google. We will be rolling out a new blog in the near future. We are also beginning to work on more video content. The weekly homilies and some of the classes that we offer will be available as a podcast on iTunes and can be found under the name "[Sparks among the Stubble](#)"

Saint of the Month



Blessed Xenia of St. Petersburg

No other saint is more revered in the city of St. Petersburg, Russia than Xenia Grigorievan Petrova, and it is easy to see why. She was born around 1731, but not much is known about her

early years except that she later married a colonel in the Russian army who served as the chorister (choir director) at one of the large churches. They have been described as socialites, attending many military functions, but he died suddenly at a party one night when Xenia was only 26 years old. She was devastated, so much that she began to give away her riches to the poor and even her house to a friend. Xenia then disappeared to a convent for about 8 years, returning to St. Petersburg wearing her husband's old uniform, wandering the streets, and becoming to many a simple beggar. That's when Xenia's fame began to take shape. She called herself by her husband's name, Andrei Petrov, expressing to many her concern that he died without the benefit of confession or Holy Communion. Friends and relatives tried to help her, but any money she was given was quickly given to the poor. Xenia became known for her ability to predict the future and numerous stories of this talent are written, one where she predicted the death of Catherine II, and another where she sent a friend to Smolensk Cemetery exclaiming that God had given her friend a son. The woman arrived only to find a pregnant woman who had died shortly after giving birth to a baby boy. The woman adopted the baby and raised him as her real son. The most famous story of Xenia relates to a church which was being built in Smolensk cemetery. She would come to the grounds during the night and move bricks for the bricklayers up the scaffolding and closer to the top of the church for them. The church still stands today. Xenia, often called a Fool-for-Christ, died around 1803 at the age of 71. Her relics are in a small chapel on the grounds of Smolensk cemetery and visited by hundreds and even thousands of Russian Orthodox people every day. Her feast day is January 24th, along with another saint with the same name, St. Xenia the Righteous of Rome.

Blessed mother Xenia pray to God for us!

February 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 6pm Great Vespers with Litya for the feast of the Entry into the Temple	2 9am Divine Liturgy 7pm Bolingbroke Community Club	3 6pm Vespers	4 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	5 6pm Kursk Root Icon arrives!	6 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
7 9:10 Church School 9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape	8 <i>Fr Theophan traveling to DOS Conference</i>	9 <i>Diocese of the South Pastoral Conference in Birmingham AL</i>	10 <i>Diocese of the South Pastoral Conference in Birmingham AL</i> 6pm Readers Vespers	11 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry <i>Diocese of the South Pastoral Conference in Birmingham AL</i>	12	13 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
14 Zaccheaus Sunday 9:10 Church School 9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape	15 Presidents' Day	16	17	18 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	19	20 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
21 Publican & Pharisee 9:10 Church School 9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape <i>Fr. Theophan leaves for Greece</i>	22 <i>Fr. Theophan on pilgrimage in Greece until March 4th</i>	23 <i>Fr. Theophan in Greece</i>	24 No Fast <i>Fr. Theophan in Greece</i> 6pm Readers Vespers	25 <i>Fr. Theophan in Greece</i> 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	26 No Fast <i>Fr. Theophan in Greece</i>	27 <i>Fr. Theophan in Greece</i> 6pm Readers Vespers
28 Prodigal 9:30am Orthros 10:30am Divine Liturgy @ Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church	29 <i>Fr. Theophan in Greece</i>					

Tentative March 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 <i>Fr. Theophan in Greece</i>	2 <i>Fr. Theophan in Greece</i> 6pm Readers Vespers	3 <i>Fr. Theophan in Greece</i> 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	4 <i>Fr. Theophan in Greece</i>	5 <i>Fr. Theophan returns from Greece</i> 6pm Readers Vespers
6 Last Judgment 9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape	7 Meat Fast	8 Meat Fast	9 Meat Fast 6pm Vespers	10 Meat Fast 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	11 Meat Fast	12 Meat Fast 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
13 Forgiveness Sunday 9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy Followed by Forgiveness Vespers 12:45pm Agape	14 Great Lent Begins 6:30pm Compline with the Great Canon	15 6:30pm Compline with the Great Canon	16 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy	17 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry 6:30pm Compline with the Great Canon	18 6:30pm Akathist to the Theotokos	19 Memorial Saturday 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
20 Sunday of Orthodoxy 9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape 12:30 Know Thyself	21	22	23 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy	24 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry 6:30pm Vigil for the Annunciation of the Most-Holy Theotokos	25 Annunciation To be announced	26 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
27 St. Gregory Palamas 9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape 12:30 Know Thyself	28	29	30	31 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry Repose of St. Innocent – parish feast day 6:30 Presanctified Liturgy		