

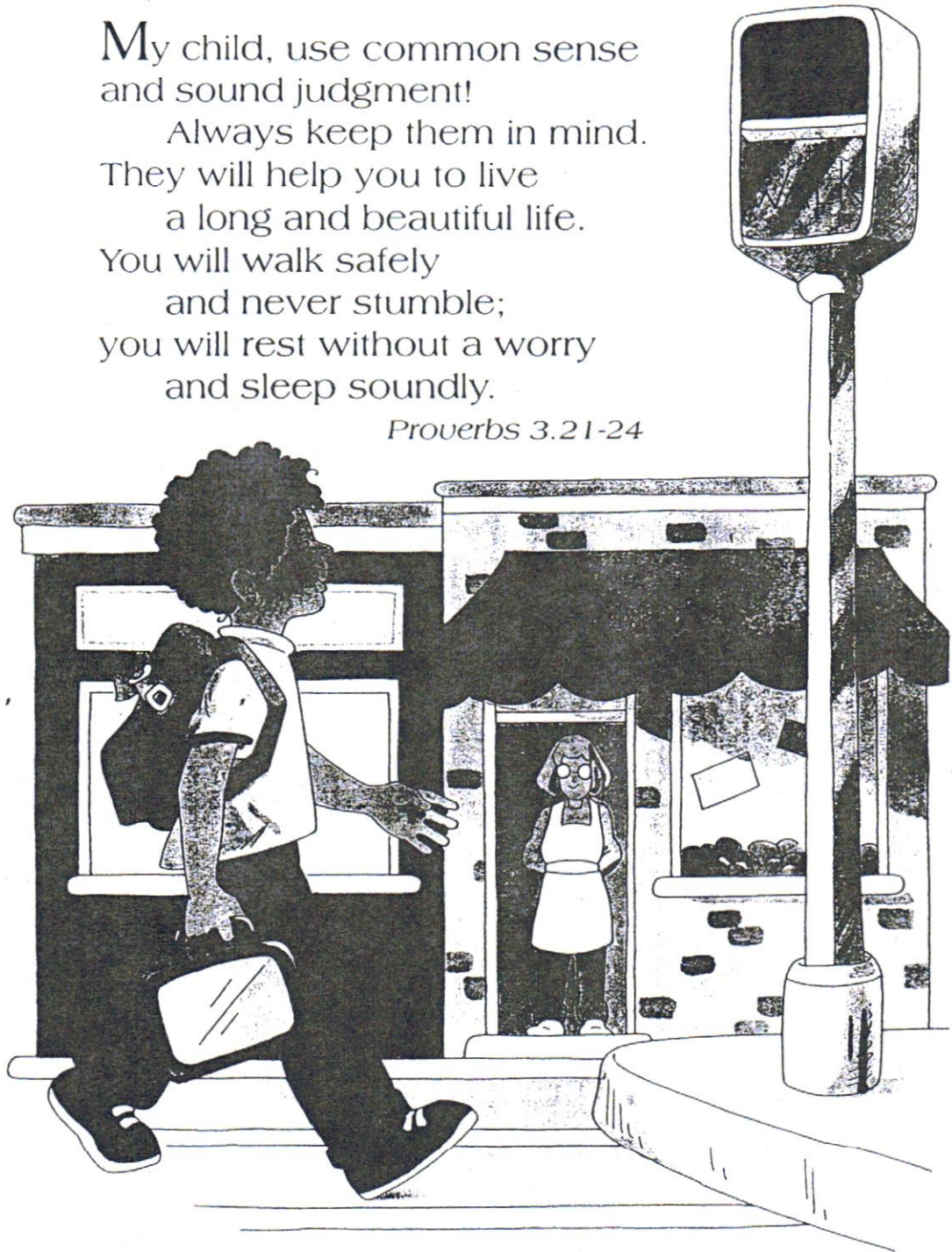


ST. XENIA
OF ROME

My child, use common sense
and sound judgment!

Always keep them in mind.
They will help you to live
a long and beautiful life.
You will walk safely
and never stumble;
you will rest without a worry
and sleep soundly.

Proverbs 3.21-24



+++ Thursday is the simple feast of the Three Hierarchs. In anticipation, the Divine Liturgy will be celebrated Wednesday evening at 7: 30 PM. Please come and join us in prayer and praise.

+++ Pirohi Schedule for the New Year: February 1 and March 15.

+++ Please keep the intentions of these members of our parish intercession community in your daily prayers: Anna, Ryan, Barbara, Betty, James and Michael.

+++ The sign-up sheet for both the Web Site and Bulletin sponsors is on the bulletin board in the kitchen. Please sign up as soon as possible. Do NOT make payment until your sign-up month has arrived. This will make it easier for Father to keep track of payments. Thanks in advance to all who support the parish in this way.

+++ We offer thanks to the Blessed Trinity for inspiring generosity in the souls of our faithful and the blessing of abundant grace in our midst with the offering received last Sunday: Tithe Offering, \$356.00; Candles, \$9.00; Holyday, \$27.00; Parish Dues, \$100.00; Food Coupons, \$120.00; Kitchen, \$42.00, for a total of 654.00. We express our profound gratitude to the parishioner communicants who offer their God-given treasure and labored for the sake of the Lord and the good of our parish. God bless and reward you good and faithful souls! The attendance was 44 adults and 13 children last Sunday.

+++ As faithful believers, we intercede and associate ourselves in prayer with the following who have prayed and offered seven day lights for their intentions: Father Lucas, Anna Zacharyczuk, Eleanor Korba, Robert Gorbich, Marilyn Korba and Pani Buletza.

+++ We make a **PENNIES FROM HEAVEN** Canister available for our faithful to bring in pennies for our altar and its appointments. We are already in receipt of **\$1715.00** from this apostolate. Even your pennies can help and are a blessing to our parish.

+++ Please be certain to see a member of the Parish Council if you would like to help our parish by using **Shop Rite Food Coupons** available in \$20.00 denominations. We invite **ALL** to be caring and supportive and use Grocery Coupons for food shopping as we have gratefully realized \$5600 on this project to date!

+++ The Clothing Drive is a permanent on-going project in our parish. Please bring any type of clothing and fabrics along with stuffed animals and shoes for the benefit of our parish. The bags can be left in the vestibule or on the front porch of the rectory. Please invite your friends and neighbors to assist us in disposing of unwanted clothing, shoes and fabrics.

+++ Please pray the Lord our God grants us an enrichment of our spiritual lives for his glory.

+++ May all glory, adoration and worship be accorded our God in the Holy Trinity by all the faithful of our parish with one mind, one soul and one heart each day of the week!



PARENTS

"If it does not please you to serve the Lord, decide today whom you will serve, the gods your fathers served beyond the river or the gods of the Amorites in whose country you are dwelling. As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." Joshua 24:15

And fathers, do not nag your children lest they lose heart. Colossians 3:21

Take to heart these words which I enjoin on you today. Drill them into your children. Speak of them at home and abroad, whether you are busy or at rest. Bind them on your wrist as a sign and let them be as a pendant on your forehead. Write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates. Deuteronomy 6:6-9

Train a boy in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it. Proverbs 22:6

Indeed, I have singled him out that he may direct his sons and his posterity to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord may carry into effect for Abraham the promises he made about him. Genesis 18:19

"Honor your father and your mother, that you may have long life in the land which the Lord, your God is giving you." Exodus 20:12

Happy are you who fear the Lord, who walk in his ways! For you shall eat the fruit of your handiwork; happy shall you be, and favored. Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the recesses of your home; your children like olive plants around your table. Behold, thus is the man blessed who fears the Lord. The Lord bless you from Sion; may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life. May you see your children's children! Psalm 128

May the Lord bless you more and more, both you and your children. Psalm 115:14

WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE!

Your abundant tears made the wilderness sprout and bloom in spirituality. Your sufferings made your labors fruitful a hundredfold: you became a shining torch over the world. O Holy Father Theodosius, pray to Christ God that He may save our souls! Troparion, Feast of St. Theodosius the Great, founder of the Caves monastery in Kiev.

You were planted in the court of your Lord and blossomed forth with beautiful and admirable virtues, O master of God's holy sheepfold! You multiplied your children in the wilderness and gave them to drink with your abundant tears. Wherefore we cry out to you: "Joy to you, O Father Theodosius!" Kontakion, Feast of St. Theodosius the Great, founder of the Caves monastery in Kiev.

Father Antony, you equaled Elias in his zeal and followed John the Baptist in his holy way of life: you peopled the wilderness and established the world on the firm foundation of your prayers. Intercede with Christ God that He may save our souls. Troparion, Feast of St. Antony the Great, founder of monasticism in the Eastern Church.

Antony, most venerable, you rejected the troubles of this world and spent your life in peace by imitating John the Baptist. With him, we exalt your name, for you are a perfect example of noble action. Kontakion, Feast of St. Antony the Great, founder of monasticism in the Eastern Church.

The sweet melody of your theological teachings has overcome the noisy blasts of orators, for God has granted you the power of penetrating spiritual depths, and the gift of brilliant literary talent. Gregory, our Father, intercede with Christ God that He may save our souls. Troparion, Feast of St. Gregory Nazianzen, Byzantine Doctor of the Church.

Glorious Gregory, your theological knowledge has solved the problems raised by rhetoricians: you have robed the Church with true theology inspired from on high. The Church puts on this robe and cries out with us your children: "Joy to you, O Father whose theological intelligence is so great." Kontakion, Feast of St. Gregory Nazianzen, Byzantine Doctor of the Church.

The grace that shines forth from your mouth like a torch has enlightened the universe, bestowed treasures of generosity upon the world and shown us the depth of your humility. While you teach us by your words, Father John Chrysostom, pray to the Word, Christ our God, that He may save our souls. Troparion, Feast of St. John Chrysostom, Byzantine Doctor of the Church.

THE SANCTIFICATION OF ALL CREATION BY OUR GOD

This is a genuinely joyous season in our liturgical year, as we relive once again the mysteries of our precious faith. *"Let all creation rejoice exceedingly,"* (Forefeast of the Nativity of our Lord, Canon at Complines, Ode 9) we sang as we prepared to celebrate the Birth of our Saviour in the flesh. The joy of all creation is the theme that permeates the feasts of the Lord's Nativity and Theophany. We know that the coming in the flesh of the Son of God and His Baptism are necessary for our salvation. The salutary power of these events, however, reaching as they do beyond the race of man, brought about the healing and renewal of the whole of creation.

In the very first book of God's revelation to us, *Genesis*, we read that not only is man subject to death because of the fall, but also that the whole of remaining creation was made subject to decay and death, not on its own account, but due to man's sin: *"To Adam (God) said,...cursed is the ground because of you...thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you...."* (Genesis 3:17) *Through the serpent, death was implanted in creation.* (Theophany Matins, Canon 2, Ode 3) Creation is *"in bondage to decay," "subjected to futility,"* and *"groaning in travail"* as it awaits *"with eager longing for the revelation of the sons of God,"* (Romans 8:19-22) for creation itself will not be redeemed apart from the redemption of the human race.

This redemption has already been given in the coming in the flesh of Jesus Christ. We sing, *"Let creation rejoice exceedingly: for the Creator now makes Himself created...."* (Forefeast of the Nativity of our Lord, Canon at Complines, Ode 9). Our God takes to Himself His damaged creation: *"The Word Who before was wholly outside the bounds of matter, in these last times has assumed the material substance of flesh,"* (Nativity of our Lord Matins, Canon 2, Ode 3) and in assuming material creation, He elevates it, He heals it, He renews it and He restores it! *"Let creation now cast off all things old, beholding You the Creator made a Child. For through Your Nativity You reshaped all things afresh, making them new once more and leading them back again to their original beauty."* (Nativity of our Lord Matins, Canon 2, Ode 3)

Just as Christ's redemptive work of renewal is not limited to His assuming human flesh, but continues in His accepting Baptism, so the Church joins feast to feast and continues her joyous celebration with Theophany. In these two feasts we see the entire creation made holy and restored by Christ. *"The earth has been sanctified, O Word, by Your holy Nativity, and the heavens and stars declare Your glory; and now the nature of water is blessed by Your Baptism in the flesh...."* (Forefeast of Theophany, Canon at Complines, Ode 9) *"Christ is baptized. He comes up out of the*

water and with Him He carries the world....Today creation is enlightened. Today all nature is glad, things of heaven and things upon the earth. " (Vespers for Theophany)

The second Canon at Matins of the Feast of Theophany elaborates in a particularly beautiful way on the themes of the Saviour Who *"gently heals the disease of the world"* (Ode 5) through His Nativity and Baptism. *"He who once assumed the appearance of a malignant serpent and implanted death in creation, is now cast into darkness by Christ's coming in the flesh."* (Ode 3) *"He makes a prisoner of him who bruised all mankind in the heel, and so He saves creation."* (Ode 4) *"Creation finds itself set free, and those in darkness are now the sons of light. Alone the prince of darkness groans. Let all of earthly creation clothe itself in white, for this day it is raised up from its fall from heaven. The Word Who preserves all things has cleansed it in the flowing waters: washed and resplendent, it has escaped its former sins."* (Ode 8)

In the feast of Theophany, we see that Christ not only sets creation free from bondage to decay, but He goes a step further. He renews material creation and He dignifies it spiritually. He takes ordinary matter, common matter, in this case, water, although the same occurs in other instances with bread, wine, oil, and makes it a vehicle for spiritual blessing. At His Theophany, not only is creation healed, but it also becomes a source of healing: *"Today, the waters of the Jordan are transformed into healing by the coming of the Lord. Today, the whole of creation is watered by mystical streams. Today, the transgressions of men are washed away by the waters of the Jordan."* (Prayer at the blessing of water.)

This blessing is bestowed not for one time only, but for all eternity. This is why we say, "today" and it is why we ask, *"that the Lord send down the blessing of the Jordan and sanctify these waters...."* (Litany at the blessing of water) When we bless this water, we do not repeat an event which happened long ago, but we participate once again in the eternal reality, the reality of the sanctification of all creation. We enter into the eternal dimension, the dimension of timelessness and actually participate in the Baptism of Christ and are witnesses to it! We then benefit from the effects of His Baptism in our personal lives and in the world in which we now live!

Because we are free beings, we can choose now, how we will participate in this eternal reality. Will we continue to inflict death and decay on all of God's creation, through our sins of negligence and selfishness, polluting the world, exploiting it to satisfy our selfish desires, not respecting its created integrity and purpose in the sight of our Creator? Or will we exercise the insights our royal priesthood imparts to us, (1 Peter 2:9) lifting the world up to God once again, over and again, thanking and blessing Him for it, beautifying it, and making it fruitful?

We were intended from the very beginning to tend this creation into which we have been placed by a loving God, to keep the earth alive and beautiful. Our existence in it is to be in harmony with it, enjoying it and reading in its signs the presence and tender creative energy of our Heavenly Father. But, instead we sinned, possessively taking what we desired, and the earth fell under the curse we brought upon it and on ourselves. Healing and redemption have been given to us and to the whole of creation through Jesus Christ. We are now called upon to live as genuinely redeemed people, freed from the tyranny of death, freed from the tyranny of our sins and selfish desires, so that we can spiritually and physically see the results of Christ's salutary labor among us because "*truly creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.*" (Romans 8: 19)

MYSTICISM

Recognizing that our great God is incomparably greater than anything we can say or conceive of Him, we find it necessary refer to Him not just through direct statements, but through meaningful images as well. Orthodox Christian theology is therefore largely symbolic and mystical. All we can affirm of our God, however correct, still falls short of the living and eternal truth. Nothing we know of Him can be understood by our human standards or measured by them simply because they are inadequate. This is precisely what differentiates us from Western Christianity which tries to comprehend God by better understanding humanity and imputing to our God our own human qualities and values. So it is that we reach out, beyond all statements, positive or negative, beyond all language and thought, towards and immediate experience of God. The word "mystery" itself implies much more to us than to others. In the proper religious sense of the term, "mystery" signifies not only hiddenness, but more importantly, disclosure. The Greek noun, "*mysterion*," is lined with the verb, "*myein*" meaning "to close the eyes or the mouth." The candidate for initiation into certain of pagan mystery religions was first blindfolded and led through a maze of passages; then suddenly, his eyes were uncovered and he saw, displayed all about him, the secret emblems and symbols of the cult. So, in the Christian context, we do not mean by a "mystery," merely that which is baffling and mysterious, an enigma or insoluble problem. A mystery is, on the contrary, something which is revealed for our understanding, but which we can never understand exhaustively, totally or completely, because it leads into the very depth and even darkness of our God. The eyes of the soul are closed, but inevitably, they are also with the gift of faith opened, widely opened!

Thus in speaking of our God as mystery, we are brought to our second "pole." God is in fact hidden from us, but He is also revealed to us, at least as much as human limited comprehension and understanding can absorb. What He has revealed to us about Himself is that he is LOVE; that He created us out of this love, and continues through this love to redeem us in spite of our sinfulness. Even though He has plainly revealed Himself to us, inevitably, there are still many many things about Him which we cannot possibly understand because we are created beings and His is our God!

MEASURING UP

People sometimes feel they have failed the Lord and they don't measure up to what is expected of them as children of God. They feel they just have not done quite enough to really please Him. This feeling of inadequacy may be one of the most common but less talked about spiritual problems of many people.

The individuals who struggle with this problem share some common traits with others. They unquestionably have a strong desire to be pleasing in the sight of our God. This is certainly good because they do love the Lord and would like to do as much as possible to lead a Christian life. They wish to cooperate with the grace He offers them, but many times do not know how to respond. This desire may actually be the Lord's way of inspiring them to greater perfection which is possible for them to achieve if they but persist in the right direction.

To measure up to what we conceive to be what our God expects of us is no easy task. We live in a culture and world that is materialistic. Our precious faith, on the other hand, is spiritual and its values run counter to the values of the sinful world. Yet, we are exposed to many temptations and worldly influences. With God's help we can rise above the pressures and remain loyal to Him. This is the problem encountered by all the saints: remaining faithful to their baptismal vocation while being overwhelmingly assaulted by the values of man and the world.

We must be very careful in pursuing our spiritual life that we not become discouraged when we see others who seemingly are more "blessed" than us, even though we judge their loyalty and commitment to our God is fragile or non-existent. Herein lies the danger of comparison with others. If we judge ourselves to come out unfavorably, it does not inspire us to new spiritual heights. We lose faith with the Lord and give up making any effort in our spiritual life. On the other hand, if we come out favorably in our view in this comparison, it can lead us to spiritual pride which presents myriad other problems. We then become distracted and bogged down instead of pursuing honest holiness for ourselves. We then feel we have achieved a spiritual height above others and look down upon their efforts. We place ourselves in a very precarious position, devoid of any spirituality. We ought always to recognize our unique and special relationship with the Lord and how He utilizes our own personal circumstances to advance us in faith commitment. The spiritual road we travel is unique to us. We can safely venture to guess no one precisely travels the same path as we do. Therefore, our Lord must relate to us in this distinctly different and special way. Because of our uniqueness, the Lord is approaching us as He may not approach any other. He may be leading us in a different direction, given our personality, our talents, our gifts, our temperament, the spiritual capacity of our soul. We must realize salvation is the goal and by His grace, the Holy Spirit will guide us in our rightful direction. We should not provide hurdles for the grace of the Lord to overcome.

There is no question, we can, by His grace, "measure up" to His expectations, but we must avoid all comparison with others. We only deceive ourselves when we indulge them.

SCRIPTURE

TRIVIA

QUIZ



1. What would happen to Ezekiel if he refused to warn the wicked when God told him to do it?
2. With what did Noah seal the ark to make it water proof?
3. Who was the second wife of Abraham?
4. What does the name "Moses" mean and why was it given to him?
5. What bird in the book of Job is said to have no true motherly love?
6. What three kinds of fruit did the spies bring back from Canaan?
7. Who came first, Noah or Abraham?
8. What took Solomon thirteen years to build?
9. What happened to the people of Israel when they looked at the bronze snake that Moses attached to a pole?
10. How old was Lamech when Noah was born?
11. Who wrote the Ten Commandments on the tablets of stone?
12. Which prophet's wife committed adultery?
13. In Genesis, whose funeral procession had a great number of chariots, cavalry, and people?

ANSWERS TO TRIVIA QUIZ

1. He would die. (Ezekiel 3:18) 2. Tar. (Genesis 6:14) 3. Keturah. (Genesis 25:1) 4. "To draw out." Because Pharaoh's daughter drew him out of the water." (Exodus 2:10) 5. The ostrich. (Job 39:13) 6. Grapes, pomegranates, and figs. (Numbers 13:23) 7. Noah. 8. His own palace. (1 Kings 7:1) 9. They recovered from snake bites. (Numbers 21:9) 10. 182 years old. (Genesis 5:28) 11. God Himself. (Exodus 34:28) 12. The wife of Hosea. (Hosea 2:5) 13. The funeral of Jacob. (Genesis 50:6-9)

Did You Know That ...

...perhaps we really have not lost faith, just transferred it from God to Whom it belongs to the medical profession?

...even our God cannot alter the past, but man makes a sincere attempt anyway?

...a clear conscience begins with a clear memory?

...some use statistics like a drunken man uses a lamp post, for support rather than illumination?

...some get the facts first, then distort them as they please?

...pity is for the living and envy really for the dead?

...life is like playing the violin solo in public and learning the instrument as one goes on?

...the worst cliques are those that consist of one man?

...when some men grow virtuous in their old age, they are merely making a sacrifice to God of the devil's leavings?

...there is no man so friendless but what he can find a friend sincere enough to tell him disagreeable truths?

...the strength of man's virtues should not be measured by his special exertions, but by his habitual acts?

...the reason crime does not pay is because when it does it is given a more respectable name?

...every man of genius is considerably helped by being dead?

...a perpetual holiday is a good working definition of hell?

...the highest virtue is always against the law of the land?

...when two men in business always agree, one of them is unnecessary?



THE SINGERS



X J X Z X N E N S S W T P D V R G M
T N P L S V Z M C P K U P H Z D I Q
X L V S N E Q H M D R N F H L V H W
R G I H T S R B A M I A A A K L R I
D M E P J O I Y E U Q S H H B E G R
O E F C U O L N L J T J X S T G Q S
G E M U N P J F G C R P Y S W I G R
F L T R N A D J O E Y B A D B N E Y
O A K X O C D I L T R M N G O L Z S
E Z Q Y I F T I V A S S B S S P H Q
S P X H T Q R I U A C A M A O M I I
U W A I C B G E O G D I C F L S N U
O T G Z E M W M P N E S G W E S V S
H E U W R A R S V R S R O R P Z K M
H X M J I C D H G G A R V I U N A I
C G L V D O E X M N M I R C B T Z I
A I L O Q F R P L Z C E S A Z A I K
A C C O M P A N I E D I F E T G K L

DAVID	LYRES	PRAISE	SERVICE
SINGERS	CYMBALS	FUNCTIONS	GUIDANCE
INSPIRED	HARPS	CAST OF LOTS	MASTER
SONGS	ACCOMPANIED	HOUSE OF GOD	PUPIL
PERFORMED	THANKS	LITURGICAL	DIRECTION

Singing Changes Your Brain

Group singing has been scientifically proven to lower stress,

relieve anxiety, and elevate endorphins

We reprint a study from an internet website, "Ideas."

When you sing, musical vibrations move through you, altering your physical and emotional landscape. Group singing, for those who have done it, is the most exhilarating and transformative of all. It takes something incredibly intimate, a sound that begins inside you, shares it with a roomful of people and it comes back as something even more thrilling: harmony. So it is not surprising that group singing is on the rise. According to Chorus America, 32.5 million adults sing in choirs, up by almost ten million over the past six years. Many people think of church music when you bring up group singing, but there are over 270,000 choruses across the country and they include gospel groups to show choirs like the ones depicted in *Glee* to strictly amateur groups like Choir! Choir! Choir! singing David Bowie's *The Man Who Sold The World*.

As the popularity of group singing grows, science has been hard at work trying to explain why it has such a calming yet energizing effect on people. What researchers are beginning to discover is that singing is like an infusion of the perfect tranquilizer, the kind that both soothes your nerves and elevates your spirits.

The elation may come from endorphins, a hormone released by singing, which is associated with feelings of pleasure. Or it might come from oxytocin, another hormone released during singing, which has been found to alleviate anxiety and stress. Oxytocin also enhances feelings of trust and bonding, which may explain why still more studies have found that singing lessens feelings of depression and loneliness. A very recent study even attempts to make the case that "music evolved as a tool of social living," and that the pleasure that comes from singing together is our evolutionary reward for

coming together cooperatively, instead of hiding alone, every cave-dweller for him or herself!

The benefits of singing regularly seem to be cumulative. In one study, singers were found to have lower levels of cortisol, indicating lower stress. A very preliminary investigation suggesting that our heart rates may sync up during group; singing could also explain why singing together sometimes feels like guided group meditation. Study after study has found that singing relieves anxiety and contributes to quality of life. Dr. Julene K. Johnson, a researcher who has focused on older singers, recently began a five year study to examine group singing as an affordable method to improve the health and well-being of older adults.

It turns out you do not even have to be a good singer to reap the rewards. According to one 2005 study, group singing "can produce satisfying and therapeutic sensations even when the sound produced by the vocal instrument is of mediocre quality." Singing groups vary from casual affairs where no audition is necessary to serious, committed professional or avocational choirs like the Los Angeles Master Chorale or a simple chorus in New York City, which I joined when I was 20 and depressed, all based on a single memory of singing in a choir at Christmas time, an experience so euphoric I have never forgotten it.

If you want to find a singing group to join, Choir Place and Choral Net are good places to begin or more local sites like the New York Choral Consortium which has links to the Vocal Area Network and other sites, or the greater Boston Choral Consortium. But if you cannot find any of these sites, you can always google "choir" or "Choral society" and your city or town to find more. Group singing is cheaper than therapy, healthier than drinking and certainly more fun than working out. It is the one thing in life where feeling better is pretty much guaranteed. Even you walked into rehearsal exhausted and depressed, by the end of the night you will walk out high as a kite on endorphins and good will.

LOVING THE LORD FOR A LIFETIME

There are many different roads that bring men and women to the lofty spiritual destination of "sainthood." Some find Christ in the twilight of their years; others seem to have followed the Lord with the first step they ever took! Our HOLY MOTHER XENIA fits into this latter category.

Xenia was born in Rome in the early part of the fifth century. She was from an upper class family and her parents, although themselves Christians, placed more emphasis on social training than on spiritual guidance. From an early age, however, Xenia showed no interest in the society of the day with its worldly temptations. Instead, her life was focused on how she could best serve Jesus.

At the tender age of 17, Xenia was forced to make a decision that would determine the course of the rest of her life. As was the custom of the times, Xenia's parents arranged a marriage for her with a wealthy young man, guaranteeing her a life of comfort and ease. Sensing a greater calling, Xenia ran away from home, settling on the Aegean island of Kos, where she started a monastic community for women. Here she remained for the rest of her life.

Xenia's act of piety and asceticism are well-documented. She would often spend entire nights standing in prayer. She dressed in the humblest of clothing. Her fasting practices were very severe. It is said that she often sprinkled ashes on the bread she ate, so that partaking of it would not give her too much pleasure!

Mother Xenia fell asleep in the Lord in the year 450 A.D. At the time of her death, a brilliant wreath of stars encircled the cross of her beloved monastery, which was viewed as a sign her blessed soul was taken to a place of eternal light: the Kingdom of Heaven.

Icon by Nataliya Zharsky

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