



## *Fire & Light*

### **St. Symeon Orthodox Church**

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Visit [stsymeon.com](http://stsymeon.com)

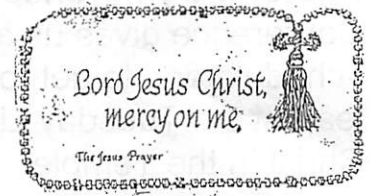
✠ **January 24, 2016** ✠

**St. Xenia of St. Petersburg (18<sup>th</sup> C)**

**St. Xenia of Rome (5<sup>th</sup> C)**

When you pray to God in time of temptation do not say, 'Take this or that away from me', but pray like this: 'O Jesus Christ, sovereign Master, help me and do not let me sin against Thee. . .'

~ Abba Isaiah the Solitary



✠ **Note: Tomorrow, January 25: Inquirer's Class - 6:30pm**

➤ *House Blessings continue! No dinner necessary, just a blessing!*

**Looking Ahead: Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple,  
Tuesday, February 2 ✠ 6:00am Divine Liturgy**

**Archpastoral Visitation by His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon  
Saturday & Sunday, February 6 and 7**

**Diocesan Clergy Pastoral Conference – February 9-11**

**Daily Vespers and Matins / Divine Liturgy with His Beatitude, Tuesday,  
February 9 (See schedule on back)**

February 12-13 – Fr. John Behr, Dean of St. Vladimir's Seminary, will give 3 talks at Samford University, titled "What Protestants Need to Know about Orthodoxy." Tickets are \$10 in advance, \$20 at the door.

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## **The Names of Our Savior**

In the Holy Scriptures there are many names and titles which are applied to our Lord and Savior. He is said to be the Word; He called Wisdom, Light and Power; right hand, arm and Angel; Man lamb, sheep and Priest. He is the Way, the Truth, the Life; a Vine, Justice and Redemption; Bread, a stone and physician; a Fount of Living Water; Peace and Judge and Door. Yet, for all these name - which are to help us grasp the nature and range of His power - there is but one and the same Son of God Who is our God.

But what are the meanings of these names? He is called the Word, first, to imply that He was begotten of the Father with no more passivity or substantial diminution in the Father than there is in a person who utters a spoke word; second, for the obvious reason that God the Father has always spoken through Him both to .... (Go to p. 3)

# **The Week of February 8-11, St. Symeon's will host the clergy of the Diocese of the South for the annual Diocesan Pastoral Conference (and Diocesan Council Meeting on Monday)**

**Volunteers are needed to help out with hospitality during the Conference days. All meals will be catered. If you're working you are welcome to eat with the clergy.**

**Pastoral Conference Schedule – Note liturgical service times in bold –** The Conference gives us an opportunity for additional worship services outside the usual schedule and to get to meet our Diocesan clergy. Metropolitan Tikhon may attend to lead at the Tuesday Liturgy for the Leavetaking of the Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple.

## **Monday, February 8**

11:00am Diocesan Council Meeting at St. Symeon Church

1:00pm - Lunch

2:00pm - Diocesan Council Meeting

**5:30pm - Vespers**

6:30pm – Dean's Meeting / Dinner out

## **Tuesday, February 9**

**7:30am - Divine Liturgy – Leavetaking of the Presentation of Christ ~ His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon presiding**

9:30am – Breakfast

10:30am - First Session with Dr. Stephen Muse

1:00pm - Lunch at St. Symeon's

2:30pm - Second Session

**5:00pm - Vespers**

6:00pm - Dinner at St. Symeon's

7:30pm – Administrator and Clergy Gathering

## **Wednesday, February 10**

**8:00am - Matins**

9:30am - Breakfast

10:30am – Third Session with Dr. Stephen Muse

12Noon - Lunch at St. Symeon's

1:30pm – Fourth Session

**5:00pm - Vespers**

6:00pm - Dinner at St. Symeon's

## **Thursday, February 11**

**8:00am – Matins**

9:30am – Breakfast



men and angels. The name Wisdom tells us that in the beginning all things, through Him, were ordered wisely. He is the Light, because it was He who brought light into the primordial darkness of the world and who, by His coming among men, dissipated the darkness of their minds. Power is one of His names, since no created thing can ever overcome Him. He is a right hand and arm, for through Him all things were made and by Him they are all sustained. He is called an angel of great counsel, because He is the announcer of His Father's will. He is said to be the Son of Man, because on account of us men He deigned to be born a man. He is called a lamb, because of His perfect innocence; a sheep, to symbolize His Passion. For two reasons he is called a priest: first, because He offered up His body as an oblation and victim to God the Father for us; second, because through us, He condescends day after day to be offered up. He is the Way along which we journey to our salvation; the Truth because He rejects what is false; the Life, because He destroys death. He is a vine, because He spread out the branches of His arms that the world might pluck clusters of grapes of consolation from the Cross. He is called Justice, because through faith in His name sinners are made just; and Redemption because He paid the price in His blood to buy us back--we who had been so long lost. He is called bread, because with His Gospel he feeds the hunger of our ignorance; and a stone, both because on Him the serpent left no trace and because He affords us protection. He is the doctor who came to visit us and cured our weaknesses and our wounds; the fount of living water, because by the "bath of regeneration" He cleanses sinners and gives them life. He is peace, because He brings together those who live apart, and reconciles us to God the Father. He is the Resurrection, because He will raise all bodies from their graves; and the judge, because it is He who will judge both the living and the dead. He is the door, because it is by Him that those who believe enter the kingdom of Heaven.

These many names and titles belong to one Lord. Take courage, therefore, O man of faith, and plant your hope firmly in Him. If you would learn of the Father, listen to this Word. If you would be wise, ask Him Who is Wisdom. When it is too dark for you to see, seek Christ, for He is the Light. Are you sick? Have recourse to Him who is both doctor and health. Would you know by whom the world was made and all things are sustained? Believe in Him, for He is the arm and right hand. Are you afraid of this or that? remember that on all occasions He will stand by your side like an angel. If you find it hard to meet face-to-face the high majesty of the Only-begotten, do not lose hope. Remember, he was made man to make it easy for men to approach Him. If you are innocent, like a lamb He will join your company. If you are saddened by pagan persecution, take courage. Remember that He Himself went like a lamb to the slaughter, and, Priest that He is, He will offer you up as a victim to the Father. If you do not know the way of salvation, look for Christ, for He is the road for souls. If it is truth that you want, listen to Him, for He is the Truth. Have no fear whatever of death, for Christ is the life of those who believe. Do the pleasures of the world seduce you? Turn all the more to the Cross of Christ to find solace in the sweetness of the

vine that clustered there. Are you a lost sinner? Then you must hunger for justice and thirst for the Redeemer, for that is what Christ is. Because He is bread, he takes away all hunger. If you are stumbling, fix your foot firmly on Him, for He is a Rock; and like a wall He will protect you. Are you weak and sick? Ask for a medicine from Him, because He is a doctor...If you are still unbaptized, then hurry to the well of life to put out the flame of the passions and gain for your soul eternal life. If anger is tormenting you and you are torn by dissension, appeal to Christ, Who is peace, and you will be reconciled to the Father and will love everyone as you would like to be loved yourself. If you are afraid that your body is failing and have a dread of death, remember that He is the Resurrection, and can raise up what has fallen. When sinful pleasure tempts you and the flesh is weak, recall that you are in the presence of a just judge, severe in weighing the evidence and one who is making ready everlasting fire. Then, sinner as you are, you will lose your taste for sin. In your hour of death, brother, should you lose hope of obtaining a just reward in heavenly glory, be bold in faith to remember that He is the door, and through Him, once you are raised from the dead, you will enter the mysteries of Heaven, join the company of angels, and hear the longed-for words: "Well done, good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord...inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Mt. 25: 21-34).

- Saint Nikitas of Remesiana (+420)

[St. Nikitas was a friend of Saint Paulinos of Nola and visited Saint Ambrose of Milan. He was bishop of Remesiana, a city on the imperial highway connecting East and West, and evangelized the people of Illyria. He is commemorated by the Church on June 24.]

#### FOR CONSIDERATION...

The various trials and temptations in our life, that is, "involuntary causes" also are a supplement to repentance. The virus of evil is great and requires the purifying fire of repentance through tears. For we are cleansed from the defilements of sin either through voluntary sufferings of asceticism or through involuntary trials. When the voluntary sufferings of repentance precede, then involuntary one, that is, great trials do not follow. God has arranged so that if voluntary asceticism does not effect purification, then, as Saint Nicetas Stethatos says, "involuntary causes more sharply activate our restoration towards the original beauty." This means that many trials which come into our life are there because we have not willingly repented. Taking up the cross of repentance voluntarily and willingly results in our avoiding the involuntary and unwilled cross of temptations and trials.

- Bishop Hierotheos Vlachos

# The Life of Saint Xenia of Petersburg

Commemorated January 24

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*St. Xenia, who lived in St. Petersburg, Russia, was glorified as a saint by the Russian Orthodox Church in 1989.*

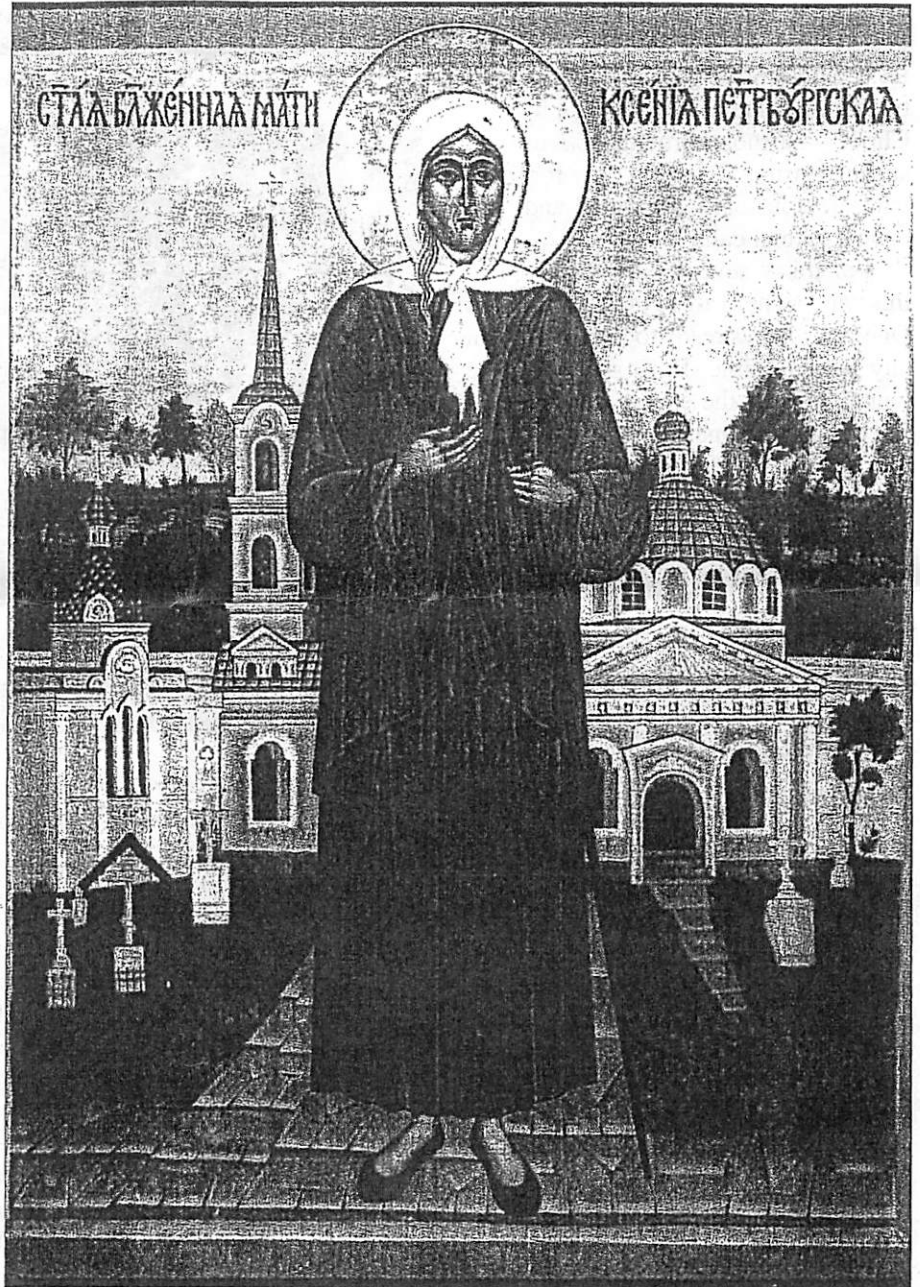
**X**enia Grigorievna was born around 1730 into a good family, probably of the lower aristocracy. She married at around the age of twenty. She and her husband, an imperial chorister named Col. Andrei Theodorovich, enjoyed several years of marriage together, living a comfortable, happy, and presumably uneventful life in the capital city of Russia, Saint Petersburg.

Then one night, at a drinking party, Xenia's husband, young and in good health, suddenly died. Her whole world caved in upon her. Not only was she so unexpectedly bereft of her beloved husband, but there was the real danger that he had died without repenting for his sins. For the young couple had been rather worldly, not particularly interested in the life of the Church. And he had died without the benefit of partaking of the holy mysteries of Confession and the Eucharist.

To the amazement of her friends and relatives, Xenia began to give away all her possessions. Her money and personal belongings she gave to the poor, and her house she gave to her close friend, Paraskeva Antonova.

Her relatives decided that she must have lost her senses from the shock of losing her husband. They petitioned the trustees of his estate, which had been left to her, to investigate whether or not Xenia was mentally competent to dispose of her property in a sensible way. The trustees did call her in, and found her to be of perfectly sound mind, with every right to do with her property as she wished.

Her *Life* then states, "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, and having, therefore, relieved herself of all such hindrances, Xenia suddenly vanished from Saint 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."<sup>1</sup>

Then she returned to Saint Petersburg to begin her long pilgrimage towards the Kingdom of Heaven by walking the streets of the poorest part of the city, the

1. *The Life and Miracles of Blessed Xenia of St. Petersburg* (Jordanville, N. Y.: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1986), p. 9.



Storona district, and sleeping in a field under the open sky. She clothed herself in one of her husband's old uniforms, and from that time on, she took his name, Andrei Theodorovich, as her own, refusing any longer to answer to the name of Xenia. "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."<sup>2</sup> So at this time, she was called to the very unusual role of being a fool for Christ — a most difficult *podvig* (i.e., spiritual struggle), meant only for those who are spiritually advanced and who have a special calling.

For thirty-seven years she lived in this way. As her Life says, "The Blessed One was always ready to help anyone in any way possible. During the day she would wander 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."<sup>3</sup>

Honoring her complete devotion to Him, God granted her the gift of clairvoyance, by which she helped many of the residents of the Storona. And it was truly miraculous how she survived so many winters, living in the outdoors as she did.

She had a particular attachment to the Smolensk Cemetery, which can be seen in the following incident. "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."<sup>4</sup>

God's special pilgrim on earth finally departed to her heavenly home, around the year 1800. Her humility, and her un-failing devotion to her husband, are seen in the epitaph on her gravestone in the Smolensk Cemetery: "In the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Here lies 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."<sup>5</sup>

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Blessed Xenia has never stopped helping those who ask for her prayers. Countless miracles have been attributed to her intercession before the throne of

**Blessed Xenia has never stopped helping those who ask for her prayers. Countless miracles have been attributed to her intercession before the throne of God.**

God.<sup>6</sup> We will relate only one such story here — one that involves the healing of a marriage:

"Mr. Kl—, who had been a very peaceful person and in love with life during the first years of his marriage, now began to be irritable and to express greater and greater dissatisfaction with his position and with the conditions of his life. He began to be away from home often, sneaking off after work and no one knew where he spent his nights. He refused to reply when his wife enquired concerning this, and he began to treat the children coldly, becoming a stranger in his own home.

"This worsening relationship with her husband added to her already strenuous toils, and worries about the children began to strain the wife's health, and her chest began to weaken. Then a new sorrow befell the family: the husband was fired from his job. This last event finally

broke the poor woman and she took to her bed. Doctors were consulted and they diagnosed tuberculosis. It was very painful for the unhappy mother to face the possibility of leaving her large brood of children in the hands of her jobless husband.

"With tears she begged God to grant guidance to her husband and to save him, and also to allow her to live long enough to raise her children. At the same time she induced her husband to write a letter for her to a close friend in Saint Petersburg, Maria P., requesting that the friend go to the Smolensk Cemetery, to the grave of Blessed Xenia, and have a *panikhida* offered for the Blessed One, praying for the health of the ill wife and for her husband.

"Upon receiving the letter, Maria hurried to Xenia, had the memorial service offered for her, prayed, took some sand from the grave and oil from the votive lamp, and sent these to her ill friend.

"The dying mother placed the soil under her pillow, and the oil she smeared on her chest several times. From that time on Mrs. Kl—'s illness began to subside. Within a month's time she was completely well and her husband had received a new position in Kovno with an even better salary. The family has lived there in peace and well-being to this day."<sup>7</sup>

#### *Troparion, Tone 4*

Having renounced the vanity of the earthly world, you took up the cross of a homeless life of wandering. You did not fear grief, privation, and the mockery of men, and you knew the love of Christ. Now taking sweet delight in this love in Heaven, O Xenia, blessed and divinely-wise one, pray for the salvation of our souls.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

*From Marriage As a Path to Holiness: Lives of Married Saints, by David and Mary Ford (S. Canaan, Pa.: St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 1994). The book, which recounts the lives of over 130 married saints of our Church, also has a 35-page introduction describing various aspects of the Orthodox understanding of marriage, including its relationship with monasticism. This book is available from the St. Tikhon's Bookstore.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> Many testimonies of her miraculous aid are given in *The Life and Miracles of Blessed Xenia of St. Petersburg*, pp. 18-74.

## St Anthony the Great: Thirty-Eight Sayings (Part 2)

25. Abba Anthony said that the time is coming when men will go mad, and when they see someone who is not mad, they will rise up against him, saying that you are mad, because you are not like them.

26. Brothers came to Abba Anthony and said to him a saying from Leviticus. So the elder went out into the desert, and Abba Ammonas followed him secretly, knowing his usual practice. The elder went very far, standing for prayer, and cried out in a loud voice, O God, send Moses, and he will teach me this saying. And a voice came to him, speaking with him. So Abba Ammonas said that though he heard the voice speaking with him, he could not learn the word from it.

27. Three of the Fathers had a custom to visit the blessed Anthony annually. And two of them would ask about distracting thoughts (λογισμῶν) and the salvation of souls. But the one was always silent, never asking. Now after a long time, Abba Anthony said to him, Behold, so long a time have you been coming thus, and you don't ask me anything. And he answered, saying to him, It is enough for me only to see you, Father.

28. They say that one of the elders asked God to see the Fathers, and he saw them except Abba Anthony. So he said to the one showing these things to him, Where is Abba Anthony? And he said to him that in the place where God is, there he is.

29. A brother in a monastery was falsely accused of fornication, and he got up and went to Abba Anthony. And the brothers came from the monastery to heal him and take him back, and they started to charge that he did so. But he defended himself that he did no such thing. Now Abba Paphnutius happened to be there, and he said this parable: I have seen a man on the bank of the river stuck in the mud up to his knees, and some men came to give him a hand, plunging him in up to his neck. And Abba Anthony said this to them about Abba Paphnutius, Behold a genuine man, able to heal and save souls. So they were pierced by remorse at the word of the elders, and they offered repentance to the brother. And, encouraged by the elders, they took the brother to the monastery.

30. Some say about Abba Anthony that he was a Spiritbearer (Πνευματοφορῶς), but he would not speak about it with men. For he revealed things happening in the world, and things yet to come to happen.

31. Once Abba Anthony received a letter from Emperor Constantine, in order to come to Constantinople, and he considered whether to do it. So he said to Abba Paul, his disciple, Ought I to go? And he said to him, If you go, you may say [your name is] Anthony, but if you do not go, [it remains] Abba Anthony.

32. Abba Anthony said, I no longer fear God, but I love Him. For love casts out fear.

33. He said, Always have the fear of God before your eyes. Remember Him who gives death and who gives life. Hate the world and all the things that are in it. Hate all fleshly recreation. Renounce this life, so you may live for God. Remember what you have promised to God, for it will be required of you in the Day of Judgment. Suffer hunger, suffer thirst, suffer nakedness, keep vigil, mourn, weep, lament in your heart. Test yourselves, to see if you are worthy of God. Disdain the flesh, so that you may save your souls.

34. Abba Anthony once travelled to Abba Amoun, to Mount Nitria, and after meeting one another, Abba Amoun said to him, Because of your prayers, now the brothers are more numerous, and some of them want to build cells further away in order to have quiet. How much do you suggest is a far enough distance for the cells to be built from here? And he said, Let us eat at the ninth hour, and we will go out and we will investigate the desert, and look at the place. And so they travelled the desert until the sun came to set, and Abba Anthony said to him, We will make prayers and erect the cross here, so that those wanting to build will build here. So also those there, whenever they will visit these, having eaten their little bit of bread at the ninth hour, they may visit thus. And those leaving here, doing the same, may remain unworried when visiting one another. And the distance is twelve [mile] signs.

35. Abba Anthony said, Whoever strikes a lump of iron, first considers the thought of what he intends to make, a scythe, a sword, an axe. So also we ought to consider what kind of excellence we should pursue, so that we do not toil in vain.

36. Further, he said that submission with self-control subdues beasts.

37. Further, he said, I know monks that have fallen after many toils, and came to an ecstasy of pride, because they put their hope in their works, and were deceived about the commandment which says, Ask your father, and he will tell you.

38. Further, he said, If he is able, a monk ought to be confident in telling the elders how many steps he takes, or how many drops of drink in his cell, so that he will not stumble in them. ✕ ✕ ✕

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### St. John of Kronstadt:

“The object of our life is union with God: in this life by faith, hope and love and in the future one by all-perfect love. But see how the enemy and we ourselves here distort this object. We unite ourselves in our hearts with various things in accordance with the diversity of our passionate attachments. Sometimes, O horror! Our love is fixed upon silver, upon food, drink, dress, dwelling, furniture, upon men like unto ourselves, until we forget God. Sometimes we are proud, we envy, hate, lie, and then we unite ourselves directly with the Devil himself, who is malice, falsehood, pride, envy personified—and we thus insult our Master, Who created us after His own image and likeness; how we distort this divinely drawn image, drawn from God Himself! But we think of this too little, are too ignorant of that which is the most essential matter to us—our union with God.”

“You gaze on the icon of the Savior and see that He looks at you from it with the brightest eyes; this look is the image of how He actually looks upon you with His eyes, that are brighter than the sun, and sees all your thoughts, hears all your heartfelt distress and sighs.”

“Believe as undoubtingly that God sees you, as you believe that your father, or anyone else standing face to face with you, sees you, only with this difference, that the Heavenly Father sees everything that is in you, entirely what you are. A lively sense of God’s presence is a source of peace and joy for the soul. Doubt in His presence produces distress, affliction and oppression. Heartfelt prayer is the source of peace of heart, whilst insincere, superficial, inattentive prayer wounds the heart.”