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Akathist Hymn

to Saint Xenia the Holy Fool and Saint Theodore of Sanaxar

Kontakion 1

Almighty and Immortal God, we praise Your wondrous works and submit in reverence to Your mysterious ways, for you sanctify your people and teach future generations through the stories of saintly lives. Let us learn of two saints who came forth from the old capital of Russia, the city of St. Petersburg, in the days of Empress Elizabeth and Empress Catherine II. These splendid servants are Saint Xenia the Holy Fool and Saint Theodore the Elder, whom we venerate with zeal and thanksgiving. Bless us and keep us, Holy God, as we sing in unity:

Rejoice, Saint Xenia, builder of the Church and blessed intercessor for our souls.

Rejoice, Saint Theodore, holy elder and sufferer of persecution for the sake of Christ.

Rejoice, blessed saints who followed Christ and sowed the word of God.

Ikos 1

Our Heavenly Father does not withhold provision or nourishment from His children, but bestows upon us much more than we deserve due to our disobedience and waywardness. He responds to those who truly love and glorify Him, making them saints and letting their stories be told among the faithful. Now and then, the lives of saints intersect with one another in God's divine plan of salvation. Such was the case with Saint Xenia and Saint Theodore as they suffered for Christ while accomplishing feats of piety. We therefore praise their obedience and request their aid:

Rejoice, saints who shared a time and place on God's earth.

Rejoice, saints who were of one heart and mind though living apart.

Rejoice, saints who proved the indestructible unity of Christians.

Rejoice, saints who confirmed the Church as desirous of souls.

Rejoice, for you detached from earthly comfort to plant the Faith.

Rejoice, for you harvest souls from many towns and cities.

Rejoice, for your icons sanctify the cells of monks and nuns.

Rejoice, for your intercession invisibly leads the faithful forward.

Rejoice, trusted stewards.

Rejoice, beloved benefactors.

Rejoice, treasured patrons.

Rejoice, consecrated caretakers.

Rejoice, blessed saints who followed Christ and sowed the word of God.

Kontakion 2

You were known as Xenia Grigorievna in your worldly life, married to the army major Andrew Feodorovich Petrov. It was during a typical party among the upper class that your beloved husband, who imbibed too much alcohol, suddenly keeled over and died in an unrepentant state. Saint Xenia, you were overcome with concern for his

soul, and distressed by the emptiness of worldly ways and the brevity of life on earth. At age twenty-six, you entered widowhood and, at the same time, you reached a turning point in your attitude toward the purpose of life. You then looked to the all-knowing and all-seeing God for meaning and salvation, saying: Alleluia.

Ikos 2

Like the Apostle Paul, your transformation was swift and complete. You sold and gave away your home and possessions, much to the objection of your relatives. You wore your husband's army jacket and walked the streets of St. Petersburg as a vagrant, enduring insults in the name of humility and praying unceasingly. Saint Xenia, you were thought to be insane, but you resolved to know only Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Unfettered by the standards and customs of society, you dedicated yourself totally to the concerns of the Church through your holy prayers. We therefore hasten to you in repentance and bring these praises:

Rejoice, for your soul belongs neither to Russia nor to America, but to the Eternal Kingdom.

Rejoice, for your soul belongs neither to the city nor to the wilderness, but to the living God.

Rejoice, for God is everywhere and hears every prayer throughout the day and night.

Rejoice, for His Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Rejoice, for all Christians are irrational in the opinion of the world, but we have heard the truth of the Gospels.

Rejoice, for faith is foolish and the world is wise, but we have understood the Crucifixion of Christ.

Rejoice, for we are strangers and friendless, but you greet us at the church door and you give us your blessings.

Rejoice, for we are homeless and wanderers, but you guide us on the straight path to Eternity.

Rejoice, for we lack the skills to debate the world, but you tell us to put on the armor of God.

Rejoice, for we are surrounded by noise and pollution, but you tell us to pray to God for a clean heart.

Rejoice, for your love makes us glad to live in these latter times.

Rejoice, for your prayers bring peace and silence to our turmoil.

Rejoice, Saint Xenia, builder of the Church and blessed intercessor for our souls.

Kontakion 3

Saint Theodore, you were born John Ushakov and you became a sergeant in the guard regiment, stationed in the city of St. Petersburg. One night, you attended a party in which there was excessive drinking. Everyone was shocked when one of your intoxicated companions suddenly fell to floor and died. In your profound sorrow, you realized that the life of merrymaking was senseless and ruinous. At the age of twenty, in the springtime of manhood, you turned away from the temptations of prestige and extravagance and, like Saint John the Baptist, you found refuge with God in the wilderness of nature, saying: Alleluia.

Ikos 3

You discarded your military uniform and put on the tattered clothing of a common laborer. Then, Saint Theodore, you wandered the forests as a solitary penitent, praying unceasingly and conquering the crafty strategies of the devil. As time went by and with changes in circumstances, you joined a monastery back in St. Petersburg. You were given the name of Theodore at your tonsuring, after Saint Theodore of Yaroslav.

We therefore honor your spiritual ascent and ask your blessings upon us:

Rejoice, for your soul belongs neither in the military nor in the monastery, but in the company of All Saints.

Rejoice, for your soul belongs neither in the wilderness nor among the demons, but in a mansion in Heaven.

Rejoice, for you renounced rank and popularity, and sought acceptance in the Kingdom of God.

Rejoice, for you avoided alcohol and unsuitable places, and quenched your thirst for true gladness in Christ.

Rejoice, for you put on the rags of a laborer and put off the old self.

Rejoice, for you put on the robe of a monk and died to your former ways.

Rejoice and visit us in our changing conditions, even as the Virgin Mary greeted Elizabeth with goodwill.

Rejoice and strengthen us in our service to the Church, even as the one leper turned back to say “thank you.”

Rejoice, for you shared the city of St. Petersburg with Saint Xenia, and God directed your lives to all fruitfulness.

Rejoice, for you thought it not a tragedy to devote your young adulthood to prayer and repentance, and God guided your journey to Heaven.

Rejoice, for you labored for imperishable wealth.

Rejoice, for you chose life.

Rejoice, Saint Theodore, holy elder and sufferer of persecution for the sake of Christ.

Kontakion 4

Saint Xenia, not only did you wear your departed husband's jacket, but you told everyone to call you by his name, Andrew Feodorovich — so tender was your love for your husband and so deep was your renunciation of the pride and pretenses of society. In this state of meekness, you wandered throughout the slums of St. Petersburg. You endured the snowy winters and lived off whatever sustenance you could obtain, always remembering the suffering of Christ, saying: Alleluia.

Ikos 4

In pursuit of spiritual guidance, you left St. Petersburg for an eight-year period. Saint Xenia,

you visited the monasteries, learning from the abbots and abbesses and all the holy monks and nuns. Among the elders of that time was Saint Theodore whose holiness had drawn many people to him. Whether or not you talked together, or were present at the same party when your husband died, you both renounced the lusts and corruption of this world with the same dedication. For this cause, Blessed Xenia, we sing heartfelt praises to you:

Rejoice, for you accepted all hardship as divine chastisement.

Rejoice, for you did not despise God's correction.

Rejoice, for your lamp thereby shone brightly and was never shattered.

Rejoice, for you were never idle but worked and prayed by day and night.

Rejoice, for the devil would have led you astray, but you were humble and not vainglorious.

Rejoice, for your confidence was in Jesus Christ, and not in your status or worldly prosperity.

Rejoice, for you acquired a spiritual foundation from the elders.

Rejoice, for you then chose the path of holy foolishness.

Rejoice, for you were unaffected by the shallowness of society.

Rejoice, for you were awakened to the righteousness of Christ and the sanctity of the Church.

Rejoice, for you found profit in regeneration.

Rejoice, for you received amazing grace.

Rejoice, Saint Xenia, builder of the Church and blessed intercessor for our souls.

Kontakion 5

You became a Holy Fool, Saint Xenia, for the sake of Christ. You intentionally renounced the ways of the world and the expectations of society, so that your dedication would remain intact and unhindered by any praise from the faithful. Just as your military jacket and raggedy clothing camouflaged your femininity, your foolishness disguised your profound intimacy with the Almighty and Immortal God, and you said: Alleluia.

Ikos 5

There have been only a handful of Holy Fools throughout the history of the Church, for it is a rare calling and blessing. The Apostle Paul said, “For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” Although the Holy Fools avoided praise on earth, let us praise some of them today, as they continue to intercede for mankind in their heavenly abode:

Rejoice, Saint Andrew of Constantinople, and help us to take up our cross and die to the ways of the world.

Rejoice, Saint Anthony of Zadonsk, and help us to become indisputable temples of the Holy Spirit.

Rejoice, Saint Basil of Moscow, and help us to glorify the Virgin Mother of God who is blessed among women.

Rejoice, Saint Cyprian of Suzdal, and help us to honor all the holy saints and martyrs by preserving their stories.

Rejoice, Saint Isidora of Tabenna, and help us to be worthy though unworthy of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Rejoice, Saint Lawrence of Kaluga, and help us to say our morning and evening prayers with heartfelt conviction.

Rejoice, Saint Maximus of Moscow, and help us to follow Jesus Christ until the end of our time and to meet you in Heaven.

Rejoice, Saint Nicholas of Novgorod, and help us to be pure in heart and strong in mind.

Rejoice, Saint Parasceva of the Diveyevo Convent, and help us to banish temptations and impure thoughts.

Rejoice, Saint Thomas of Syria, and help us to bear the inevitable trials and tribulations of our fallen life.

Rejoice, for your victories have blessed all Christians in all places.

Rejoice, for you lived only for Christ and did everything to His glory.

Rejoice, blessed saints who followed Christ and sowed the word of God.

Kontakion 6

Saint Theodore, while you were in the monastery in St. Petersburg, many people from the region were

attracted to your blessed humility and kindheartedness. They came to you for guidance, even though you were young and uneducated. You then began to study the holy fathers and to pray to God for divine understanding of the Scriptures and theology. The older monks became jealous of you because of your love for the people and your theological enlightenment. Nonetheless, you continued to serve God in this way, because this was His will for you, and you said: Alleluia.

Ikos 6

You endured distress from the older monks for a ten-year period, and then your path eventually led you to the Sanaxar Monastery. You became a priest and abbot, although reluctantly. Saint Theodore, you then began fulfilling your duties by constructing a new chapel and other buildings, and by establishing a rule of prayer for the increasing number of monks. In all situations, holy Father Theodore, you kept your eyes on Jesus Christ and not on the raging seas around you. You steered a steady course, and we therefore sing praises to you:

Rejoice, for you were self-taught: dignified but not conceited.

Rejoice, for you were divinely enlightened:
awakened and not delusional.

Rejoice, for you could not deny the guiding hand of
the Heavenly Father.

Rejoice, for He strengthened your mind and
sanctified your activities.

Rejoice, for the piety of your pursuit was brighter
than the façade of your monastic superiors.

Rejoice, for you relished the teachings of Saint
John Chrysostom.

Rejoice, for you helped the people uphold the Faith
amid the obstacles of the world.

Rejoice, for you regarded it immoral to turn them
away in their need.

Rejoice, for you desired to develop a community of
prayer and hospitality.

Rejoice, for you withstood the complications of
hierarchy and government.

Rejoice, for you gave thanks to God for letting you
serve Him.

Rejoice, for you unceasingly pray for the people to
this day.

Rejoice, Saint Theodore, holy elder and sufferer of persecution for the sake of Christ.

Kontakion 7

During your days at Sanaxar, there was a monk, Herman, who later went to America. Also during this time, Saint Theodore, you visited Saint Tikhon who resided at the Zadonsk Monastery. Yes, there are always lights in the darkness. In the same manner, let us recall the words of the Apostle Paul, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares," and may we all say: Alleluia.

Ikos 7

This is the way of God, holy Father Theodore, to bless us with His tender mercies and to light the way forward and upward, despite our sinful disfigurement. Let us have the humility and gratitude to embrace that incomprehensible love and to be transformed into true children of the Heavenly Father. Not to do so would be to dishonor the Crucifixion of Christ. Let us now praise a few of the holy elders who have gone before us, guiding all seekers on the road to the Kingdom:

Rejoice, Saint Anthony the Roman, Abbot of Novgorod, and show us the path of unceasing prayer that leads to God.

Rejoice, Saint Athanasia, Abbess of Aegina, and guide us with sure steps to the Cross of Christ wherein salvation rests.

Rejoice, Saint Benedict of Nursia, Abbot of Monte Cassino, and strengthen us in our quest to do good in this distracted and hostile world.

Rejoice, Saint Bridgid, Abbess of Kildare, and fulfill our desire to do the will of God and serve the Holy Church.

Rejoice, Saint Elfleda, Abbess of Whitby, and teach us not to lose our faith amid our troubles and suffering.

Rejoice, Saint Savva, Abbot of Storozhev, and remind us that it was the innocent Christ Who suffered for our sins.

Rejoice, Saint Sergius, Abbot of Radonezh, and fortify us in earnest prayer, like the righteous Joachim and Anna.

Rejoice, Saint Sylvester, Abbot of Obnora, and bring us closer in our love for one another, like the Theologian John.

Rejoice, Saint Theodosius, Abbot of the Korsun Monastery, and make us sons and daughters of the Heavenly Father so that we fear not and sin not.

Rejoice, Saint Werburga, Abbess of Canterbury, and deliver us from the stains of our sins into purity of heart and clarity of mind.

Rejoice and ring the Church bells in this world of revulsion for Christians.

Rejoice and proclaim “Christ is Risen” to all the believers and unbelievers.

Rejoice, blessed saints who followed Christ and sowed the word of God.

Kontakion 8

Saint Xenia, you wandered the streets of St. Petersburg for forty-five years. Many people began to recognize your holiness, for you gave forth from your gifts of clairvoyance and healing. Although you gladly served those in need, you chose to remain a vagrant. You hid your life in Christ, praying unceasingly and often serving others in obscurity. Such was the will of God for you, and in this way you worked out your own salvation. Since God is merciful, you showed mercy to others, saying: Alleluia.

Ikos 8

Brethren, we cannot know the number of times God has forgiven our sins, protected us from danger, and shielded us from a downfall. Likewise, we do not know who may have tolerated our feeble spirituality and prayed for our growth in Christ. Even if we find ourselves forlorn and unwanted, it is very likely that someone, somewhere, remembers us with compassion and prays in anonymity for our salvation. Let us praise God for this unity, and let us run to our holy mother, Saint Xenia, with rightful praises:

Rejoice, for all the saints of Heaven rejoice with you.

Rejoice, for we mortals on earth rejoice because of you.

Rejoice, for the proud hate salvation, but you yearned for the sacred.

Rejoice, for the corrupt despise redemption, but you longed for the divine.

Rejoice, for the world admires its own novelties, but you received the wisdom of God.

Rejoice, for society worships its own possessions, but you gained the peace of Christ.

Rejoice, for partners in sin openly defy the Gospels, but you followed the Commandments of God.

Rejoice, for Satan delights in spreading discord, but you prayed for all the people.

Rejoice, for you rejected the maneuverings of evil.

Rejoice, for you preferred the manifestations of goodness.

Rejoice, for you gave yourself over to prayer.

Rejoice, for God was pleased with your holiness.

Rejoice, Saint Xenia, builder of the Church and blessed intercessor for our souls.

Kontakion 9

We see that the lives of saints are sometimes interwoven, if not in actuality then in spirituality. They also touch the lives of the people, some of whom are also saints, unknown to us but known to God. We see the importance of monasteries in gathering people together and keeping them on the straight path, reaching to Heaven with prayers and instilling the desire for holiness. It is evident that Christ does not discriminate against the young who want to follow Him, for both Saint Xenia and Saint Theodore

came to the Lord when their steps were spry,
saying: Alleluia.

Ikos 9

Let us also appreciate how the saints did the will of God and balanced their lives accordingly. Saint Theodore performed his administrative tasks, followed the monastic rule of prayer, counseled the monks and visitors, and endured ongoing persecution from his superiors. Saint Xenia suffered mockery, prophesied future happenings, did good deeds for the people, and prayed all through the night. Come, then, rejoice with the powerful assembly of saints and believe in the Beatitudes of Jesus Christ:

Rejoice, Virgin Mother of God, for the poor in spirit shall receive the Kingdom of Heaven.

Rejoice, Archangel Michael, for those who mourn shall be comforted.

Rejoice, Archangel Gabriel, for the meek shall inherit the earth.

Rejoice, Saint John the Baptist, for those who hunger and thirst for righteousness shall be filled.

Rejoice, Apostle Peter, for the merciful shall obtain mercy.

Rejoice, Apostle Paul, for the pure in heart shall see God.

Rejoice, Saint John the Theologian, for the peacemakers shall be called the sons of God.

Rejoice, Mary Magdalene, for the persecuted shall receive the Kingdom of Heaven.

Rejoice, Lazarus, raised from the dead, for the falsely accused shall be rewarded.

Rejoice, Martha and Mary, for you let your light shine before the world.

Rejoice, rejoice, all you holy saints of whom we are not worthy.

Rejoice, rejoice, all you inhabitants of Heaven who intercede for us.

Rejoice and be glad, and hear us when we say, "Christ is Risen."

Kontakion 10

Even in your old age, Saint Xenia, you continued to do acts of charity. We know of one certain occasion in which workers were constructing a new church in the Smolensk Cemetery. During the night, you carried bricks to the church, helping the workers while they slept and, at the same time,

you helped to build the Church of Christ. When you departed this life, holy mother, you were buried in that very cemetery, that all the faithful might say: Alleluia.

Ikos 10

Saint Xenia, you lived a lowly life which was far beneath the stature of your greatness. You thought it not robbery to immerse yourself in poverty for Christ, or repulsive to subjugate yourself to dereliction in the ghetto, or flattering when mothers brought their children to you for a blessing. Your holy foolishness made you available to everyone, since you had no concerns except for the Church. We therefore gratefully bring praises to you for your sacrifices:

Rejoice, unmercenary who accepted no fee for healing the infirm.

Rejoice, Holy Fool who blessed children and advised their parents.

Rejoice, old woman who carried bricks for the sake of the Kingdom.

Rejoice, holy mother who cared for others even as they slept in comfort.

Rejoice, clairvoyant ascetic who prophesied both gladness and peril.

Rejoice, wandering Christian who sanctified the city with constant prayer.

Rejoice, humble penitent who prayed throughout the night.

Rejoice, firm believer who saw the image of God in others.

Rejoice, builder of the Faith who received wisdom from God the Creator.

Rejoice, servant of the Church who graciously helps those in need.

Rejoice, beloved of mankind who uplifts those in desperation.

Rejoice, helper of people who turn to the saints for guidance.

Rejoice, Saint Xenia, builder of the Church and blessed intercessor for our souls.

Kontakion 11

Saint Theodore, you patiently suffered persecution throughout your monastic endeavors. Yet, the Almighty and Immortal God sent the

Archimandrite Theophanes onto your path as a kindly advocate. Saint Theodore, you were slandered as an instigator, a heretic, and even an atheist. Consequently, you were stripped of your standing as abbot and sent into exile for nine years at the Solovki Monastery. Nonetheless, through the benevolent intervention of Father Theophanes, you were permitted to return to Sanaxar where the monks and common people greeted you with loving arms, and you said: Alleluia.

Ikos 11

You had hardly settled into the Sanaxar Monastery when the persecutions began again. The Superior was jealous that so many visitors were coming to you for spiritual guidance, and he complained that you were upsetting the routine of the monastery. Therefore, Saint Theodore, it was prohibited for you to receive the troubled and suffering people. Father Theophanes again vouched for you, and then the bishop said you could receive letters from those seeking your help. In awe of your devotion and perseverance, we sing these praises to you:

Rejoice, dedicated brother who had joyfully cast off his military rank.

Rejoice, humble monk who continued living the life of prayer after losing his rank of abbot.

Rejoice, man of virtue who refused to retaliate against the offenders who tarnished his reputation.

Rejoice, servant of God who toiled in contentment in whatever capacity he found himself.

Rejoice, wise counselor who was loved by the simple monks and the everyday people.

Rejoice, spirit-filled leader who incurred the wrath of envious superiors.

Rejoice, true teacher of the True Faith who was falsely accused of heresy.

Rejoice, upholder of the monastic rule who was branded an atheist.

Rejoice, compassionate caretaker of a bounty of monks and nuns.

Rejoice, uplifter of the people despite the blazing inferno of jealousy.

Rejoice, friend of everyone who accepted you.

Rejoice, forgiver of those who rejected you.

Rejoice, Saint Theodore, holy elder and sufferer of persecution for the sake of Christ.

Kontakion 12

Envious and resentful people refuse to forgive the targets of their transgressions, and this is a grievous condition. Saint Theodore, when you asked forgiveness of the Superior who had persecuted you, he turned his back to you and remained silent. He died shortly thereafter, apparently in an unrepentant state. Therefore, brothers and sisters, let us ask God to show us our sins that we may repent now and prepare for the hour of death, saying: Alleluia.

Ikos 12

It was winter and you became ill and weak, Saint Theodore. In the holy confines of your cell, you began to weep again for the indiscretions of your youth. Then, you lay down and prayed unto death. In this prayerful state, God received you into the heavenly gathering of saints, and today we praise your holy life with thanksgiving:

Rejoice, sensitive soul who sang hymns like the angels in Heaven.

Rejoice, valiant warrior who vanquished all pride and vanity.

Rejoice, holy elder who was transformed through truth and love.

Rejoice, blessed father who asked forgiveness from an oppressor.

Rejoice, honorable Christian who understood the bitterness of human wickedness.

Rejoice, repentant sinner who never judged others.

Rejoice, for you treated everyone with fairness, like the rays of the sun.

Rejoice, for you nourished all those who came to you, like the rain upon the wildflowers.

Rejoice, for you walked the straight path with confidence in its destination.

Rejoice, for you carried your cross until you rose to the Kingdom.

Rejoice, for you cherished the words of Jesus Christ.

Rejoice, for God rewards those who keep His Commandments.

Rejoice, Saint Theodore, holy elder and sufferer of persecution for the sake of Christ.

Kontakion 13

“Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows

God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and His love is perfected in us.” Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.

(Repeat Kontakion 13 three times.)

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