



Fire & Light

St. Symeon Orthodox Church

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✠ **July 5, 2015** ✠

St. Sergius of Radonezh,

Patron Saint of Russia (1392/ Uncovering of Relics, 1422)

St. Athanasios, Founder of Coenobitic Monasticism on Mt. Athos (1003)

Have great care of your children. We live at a time when much freedom is given to the expression of thought, but little care is taken that thoughts should be founded on truth. Teach them to love truth.

—St. Macarius of Optina

➤ **Inquirer's Class Tomorrow - 6:30pm / Wednesday – Choir Rehearsal – 6:30pm**

18th All-American Council – July 19-25, Hilton Downtown Atlanta

– **See oca.org.** You can attend for a day or two at any time of the week. There will be morning and evening services each day and all kinds of Orthodox stores and exhibits. It's an extraordinary experience as well to be together with so many Orthodox clergy and faithful.

New Iconography Donations are welcome ! We have \$25,000 given and will need closer to \$35,000, with the costs of scaffolding, travel, etc. But please don't give if doing so cuts into your current Building Fund support. Please only consider it if it's something extra. *May it be blessed!*

"What a Man of Prayer We Had!"

by + Bishop Sava of Edmonton (*Orthodox Russia, 1967, no. 7*)

While VLADIKA JOHN was still alive, a woman in San Francisco (C. Baranova-Popova) told me much that was interesting about him. I asked her to write down some of what she had said. Here is some of what she sent:

"The Chinese Communists did not allow my husband, Gregory Popov, out of China when he was going to come to me three years ago [about 1958]. They gave him injections for tetanus instead of smallpox, and he died of blood poisoning in Tientsin. I wept bitterly and fell into despondency. At this time Vladika John was in San Francisco. After the All-night Vigil he came up to me and said: 'I have heard of your sorrow.' I bunt into bitter tears. Viadika went, took a candle, prayed, and placed it on the table of remembrance, and then came up to me and firmly made the sign of the Cross over me. At that moment I felt as though an enormous weight had been removed from my head and my whole body, and it became so easy for me, and I completely stopped weeping and even forgot my sorrow.

"Another incident, in San Francisco: Mrs. Pribylovskaya was very upset and wept over her husband, who was to be operated on. The night before the operation she came to Vladika. He immediately went with her to the hospital and prayed for a long time over her husband. In the morning the doctor ordered the patient to be brought into the operating room. Here the surgeon examined the patient and said that he was well, the tumor had disappeared, and no operation was necessary. The doctors said it was God Who had healed him.

"A doctor told me the following: In the Russian Hospital in Shanghai, there was a critically ill woman and she begged everyone to call Vladika John so that he would give her Holy Communion and pray for her. The doctor told the nurses not to disturb Vladika, since the sick woman was dying. The next day, to the astonishment of all, Vladika came to the hospital and went right to the ward where the sick woman was. Why are you preventing me from praying?' he said to her. 'Right now I have to serve the Liturgy.' He gave her the Holy Mysteries, blessed her, and left. She fell asleep and after this began quickly to recover."

What can one say to all this? The impression is striking, and therefore with great sadness I say: Oh, what a great righteous one and man of prayer we had, and did not know how to value him!

This and That

* **It is necessary to *relativize* the State and politics because they exalt themselves to the place of God. And they are not.** The rhetoric of the Modern Project (which is ultimately Utopian in its goals) are geared to make them seem increasingly important and worth our deepest loyalties. They are not at all worth that. As Stanley Hauerwas noted, the Modern State abolished religious wars, Catholics and Protestants killing each other. Their improvement was the ability to get Protestants to kill both Catholics and Protestants and vice versa. All in the name of the State. – Fr. Stephen Freeman

* **The issue is not homosexuality, but rather the (false) gospel of self-fulfillment** which is fundamentally opposed to the scriptural path of self-renunciation. To the extent that living morally is connected to salvation (and salvation is of the Lord, not of our doing) what is basic is not homosexuality, but renouncing our very selves, picking up our crosses, and going humbly with God.
– Internet comment

* ...Traditional sexual ethics are the thing that go against natural sexual desires in darn near everybody. Nobody's natural sexual appetite coincides with Matthew 5:28: "But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.") which doesn't prove Christianity is true but that traditional sexual ethics fit nobody's private biases.
- Internet comment

* Shifts in the world's major religions will see Islam growing faster than any other faith, with the number of Muslims nearly equaling that of Christians by 2050. A new Pew Research Center study finds that with the exception of Buddhists, the world's major religions will all see an increase in numbers by 2050, although some will make up a smaller percentage from today. Muslims are the only major religious group projected to increase faster than the world's population as a whole... If current trends continue, Muslims will outnumber Christians worldwide around 2070.

In a democratic age, demography is destiny. The more Muslim the world's population gets, the more Muslim its cultural, political and social character will be - which, absent any countervailing pressures, will be bad news for Christians, Jews, women, gays, artists, scientists, economic innovators and people with a quaint attachment to free speech.
– Mark Steyn

Dorothy Sayers (in the 1960's):

"The brutal fact is that in this Christian country not one person in a hundred has the faintest notion what the Church teaches about God or man or society or the person of Jesus Christ. ... Theologically this country is at present in a state of utter chaos established in the name of religious toleration and rapidly degenerating into flight from reason and the death of hope."

* **A new intolerance is spreading**, that is quite obvious. There are well-established standards of thinking that are supposed to be imposed on everyone. These are then announced in terms of so-called "negative tolerance". For instance, when people say that for the sake of negative tolerance [i.e. "not offending anyone"] there must be no crucifix in public buildings. With that we are basically experiencing the abolition of tolerance, for it means, after all, that religion, that the Christian faith is no longer allowed to express itself visibly.

In the name of tolerance, tolerance is being abolished; this is a real threat we face. The danger is that reason – so-called Western reason – claims that it has now really recognized what is right and thus makes a claim to totality that is inimical to freedom. I believe that we must very emphatically delineate this danger. No one is forced to be a Christian. But no one should be forced to live according to the "new religion" as though it alone were definitive and obligatory for all mankind. But that's where we are, and that's where we are headed. Indiana shows this quite clearly, for those with eyes to see.
~ Rod Dreher

Miracles of...

St. John the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Shanghai and San Francisco

A chapter from a book- More Saints of the 20th Century published in England by AS Mowbray and Ca, Ltd., 1982, and reprinted in Orthodox Word, 1982.)

'Holiness is not simply righteousness.. .but rather such a height of righteousness that men are filled with the grace of God'.

The man who wrote that was born in Russia, in a little village called Adamovka in the Southern Province of Kharkov. He was baptized Michael, but received the name of John when he was ordained a hierodeacon (*monastic deacon*) in 1925. After the revolution in Russia his family had fled to Yugoslavia, where young Michael and his brother enrolled for further studies at Belgrade University.

After ordination and for the next ten years John was a teacher, and it did not take long for his colleagues and students to notice the extraordinary devotion of their priest. Already he was spending as little time as he could asleep; he preferred to pray. Years later he admitted that since taking the vows of an Orthodox monk, he had not slept in a bed, sleeping either sitting or crouching on the floor.

One day in 1934, a friend of his met John on a tram in Belgrade. Naturally he asked about him and wondered where he was going. He assured him that the Church authorities intended to consecrate a monk John as bishop next day, but had sent him by mistake. There was no mistake and on May 28th, John was consecrated and sent to shepherd the Russian Orthodox Church in Shanghai, China. Most of his flock were

refugees from the Soviet Union and soon Bishop John had established an orphanage, which began with eight and, when it came to be evacuated, had risen to a hundred children.

Countless are the stories about his life and work in China. His clothes were of the cheapest local cloth. He wore no socks, and on one occasion at least, was without sandals; he had given them away to a poor man. He lived in the constant fear of God, but that to all intents and purposes made him fearless. A Mrs. Menshikova had been bitten by a mad dog and collapsed with rabies. Dying, she called the Bishop to her that she might receive Holy Communion for the last time. At that very moment she began to foam at the mouth and spat out the Holy Bread. Calmly Vladika John picked it up and to the horror of those around him, put it in his own mouth. 'What are you doing?' cried the nurses. "She's got rabies!" 'Nothing will happen; these are Holy Gifts', replied the Bishop.

Through his prayers a woman in Shanghai who had hit her head on a stone when she was thrown from her horse, recovered. Her friend who first told the story, describes what happened.

"She was brought to the hospital unconscious. A group of doctors agreed that her condition was hopeless and it was not likely that she would live until morning. The pulse was almost gone; the skull was fractured in places so that small pieces of the skull were pressing on the brain. In such a condition she would die on the operating table. Even if her heart would tolerate surgery and the result were successful she would still remain deaf, dumb and blind." "Her sister, after hearing all this, rushed to Bishop John in despair and begged him to save her. He agreed, came to the hospital, asked everyone to leave the room, and prayed there for about two hours. Then he called the chief doctor and asked him to examine her again. How surprised the doctor

was to discover that her pulse was normal! The Doctor agreed to perform the operation immediately, but only in the presence of Bishop John. The operation was successful, and the doctors were amazed when, after the operation, the patient regained consciousness and asked for a drink. She can see and hear perfectly. She is still living and can talk, see and hear. I have known her for thirty years.”

In 1971, a Maria Prigorovskaya, then living in Australia, who had herself been one of the exiles from Shanghai, recorded this story:

“Unfortunately I do not remember the year, month, or day when in the orphanage of St. Tikhon of Zadonsk, which was founded by Bishop John, a six or seven year old girl suddenly became ill; towards night she had a very high temperature and she cried out from pain. About midnight she was sent to the hospital of the Russian Orthodox Brotherhood. The doctor, Kazakov, found in the girl a twisting of the intestines. Other doctors, as well as the mother of the girl, were also called. After an examination and consultation the doctors told the mother that the condition of her daughter was hopeless, even an operation might be fatal. The mother nonetheless asked them to save the girl and perform the operation while she herself went immediately to Bishop John, who lived in a house near the Cathedral, not far from the Hospital.”

Maria Prigorovskaya described how both the bishop and the mother prayed in front of the cathedral altar until dawn, and when the mother returned to the hospital she was told that the operation had been successful. These are but two of many similar stories told about this holy Bishop.

When Communists took over in China, the Russian exiles again fled, and in 1949, nearly five thousand of them were living in a refugee camp in the island of Tubatao in the Philippines. Bishop John, having seen them settled safely, went on to the United States

to persuade the American authorities to allow them to find a home there.

Just before he left Shanghai, Bishop John had been appointed Archbishop of the Russians in China — that is, of those Russians Orthodox Christians who were quite unable to accept the final authority of the Patriarch of Moscow. The split between Russian Orthodox Christians really goes back to the early days of the revolutionary government which cunningly instituted a schism within the Church in Russia itself. However, that quarrel was largely made up there after the second World War; but outside Russia there were still two Russian Orthodox Churches, one acknowledging Moscow and the other, generally called the Synodal Church, refusing to recognize the Moscow Patriarchate.

In 1951, Archbishop John was sent to look after Synodal Orthodox congregations in Western Europe, where he lived first in Paris and later in Brussels. It was not only his own flock who recognized his goodness. A Catholic priest was talking to young people in his parish, who were doubting the truth of Christianity, ‘You demand proofs,’ he said, ‘Why should I give you theoretical proofs when today there walks in the streets of Paris a saint — Saint Jean Nus Pieds (St. John the Barefoot).’”

Eleven years after his return to Europe, Archbishop John was back in America, this time as Archbishop of San Francisco. It was there that he died on July 2nd, 1966, having at last brought peace to a diocese that before his arrival had been divided against itself. It is in the crypt of the Cathedral of the Holy Virgin, that his body is buried and his tomb has been a place of pilgrimage ever since. (Vladika John was formally canonized in 1994 and his relics placed upstairs in the Cathedral which he built.)

Holy Vladika John, pray unto God for us!

Saints Called upon for Special Purposes

To Have a Child

St. Anna, Mother of the Theotokos
St. Elizabeth, Mother of the Forerunner
St. Sabbas the Sanctified of Palestine
St. Irene Chrysovolantou
St. Symeon the Myrrh-streamer, father
of St. Sava of Serbia

For Safe Childbirth

St. Eleutherios

For the Care & Protection of Infants

St. Stylianos

For Young People

Holy Great Martyr Demetrios the
Wonderworker

For Marital Difficulties

Holy Martyrs Shamuna, Guria & Habib
SS Peter & Fevronia of Muron (also for
newlyweds)

Delivery from Sudden Death

St. Barbara the Great Martyr

Against Drinking

Holy Martyr Boniface & the Righteous
Aglais

For Travelers

St. Nicholas: in general, & specifically
for sea travel
St. John the Russian: for transport,
auto, busses
St. Niphon, Patriarch of Constantinople:
for safety at sea

For the Kitchen, Home

St. Euphrosynos the Cook
St. Sergius of Radonezh: for baking
SS. Spyridon & Nikodim of Kievo-
Pechersk*: Prosphora making
St. Juliana Lazarevskaya
St. Prochor of Kievo-Pechersk

For Trading

St. Paraskeva

For Physicians

St. Panteleimon
Holy Unmercenaries

St. Agapit the Physician of Kievo-
Pechersk

For Headaches

Holy New Martyr Demas of Smyrna

For Eyes

St. Paraskeva
St. Lucia of Sicily

For Ears

St. Spyridon the Wonderworker

For Teeth

St. Antipas of Pergamum

For Hernias & Intestinal Disorders

Holy Great Martyr Artemius
St. Artemius of Verkola

For Throat

St. Blaise of Sebastia

For Finding Employment

St. Xenia of St. Petersburg

For Help in Studies

Three Hierarchs: St. Basil the Great, St.
John Chrysostom, St. Gregory the
Theologian
St. Sergius of Radonezh
St. John of Kronstadt
St. Nestor the Chronicler of Kievo-
Pechersk
St. Justin the Philosopher

For Church-Chanting

St. Romanos the Melodist
St. Theodosius of Chernigov
St. John Koukouzelis
SS. Leonty & Geronty, Canonarchs of
Kievo-Pechersk

For Iconographers

St. Luke the Apostle and Evangelist
St. Alypius of Kievo-Pechersk
St. John of Damascus

For Patient Endurance of Affliction

St. Job the Much-Suffering
St. Eustathius Placidus & Family
Holy Forty Martyrs of Sebastia:
especially in freezing cold weather
Holy Forty-Two Martyrs of Amonion
St. Pimen the Much-Suffering of Kievo-
Pechersk

For Protection Against Thieves

St. Gregory the Wonderworker of Kiev-Pechersk

For Soldiers

Holy Archangel Michael
St. George the Great Martyr
St. Barbara the Great Martyr
St. Titus the Soldier of Kiev-Pechersk

For Spiritual Help, Consolation & Compunction

St. Ephraim the Syrian
St. Alexis the Man of God
St. Seraphim of Sarov

For a Good End to One's Life

Holy Archangel Michael
St. Niphon, Patriarch of Constantinople

For Captives and Court Cases

St. Onouphrios the Great
St. Peter of Athos
St. George the Great Martyr
St. Simeon the God-Receiver

For Help in Distress, Poverty, Etc.

St. Nicholas the Wonderworker
St. Martin of Tours, the Merciful
St. John the Almsgiver of Alexandria
St. John of Kronstadt

For Finding Things

St. Phanourios the Great Martyr
St. Menas the Great Martyr of Egypt

For Meeting a Difficult Situation, an Interview, etc.

St. David the Prophet, Psalmist & King
The Holy Unmercenaries & Healers
SS. Cosmas & Damian of Rome
SS. Cosmas & Damian & their mother
Theodoti of Asia Minor
SS. Cosmas & Damian & their brothers
Anthimus, Leontius & Evropius of Arabia
SS. Cyrus & John of Alexandria
SS. Panteleimon & Hermolaus
St. Mocius
St. Thallelaus
St. Diomedes the Healer
St. Anicetus
St. Julian the Martyr
St. Zotious the Orphan-Keeper
St. John of Kronstadt
St. Nectarios of Aegina
Holy Archangel Raphael

For Animals & Livestock

St. George: cattle & herds
St. Modestus of Jerusalem
Holy Martyr Mamas
St. Parthenius of Radovysdius: cattle
SS. Spevsippus, Elesippus &
Melevsippus: horses
St. Tryphon: geese

For Protection of Crops from Pests

St. Michael of Synnada
St. Gerasimos the New Ascetic

For the Protection of Gardens Against Pests

Holy Great Martyr Tryphon,
also for hunters

Against Demons & Witchcraft

SS. Cyprian & Justina
St. Theodore Sykeote
St. Mitrophan of Voronezh

For Chastity & Help in Carnal Warfare

St. John the Forerunner
St. Demetrios the Great Martyr
St. Moses the Hungarian
St. John the Much-Suffering
Holy Martyr Theodore the Byzantine
Holy Martyr Ignatios of Athos
St. Thomais
St. Pulcheria
St. Martinian
St. Basil of Mangazea
St. Mary of Egypt
St. Joseph the All-Comely
St. Susanna [Old Testament]
St. Anysia the Virgin Martyr

For Mental Disorders

St. Naum of Ochrid
St. Anastasia
St. Gerasimos of Cephalonia: the
possessed

Against the Plague

St. Haralambos
St. Marina the Great Martyr
St. Bessarion of the Saviour,
Archbishop of Larissa

For Help Against Quick-Temper & Despondency

St. Tikhon of Zadonsk

For Workers in Hospitals

Holy Unmercenaries
St. Dositheos, Disciple of St. Dorotheos

Uncovering of the relics of the Venerable Sergius of Radonezh

The relics of the St Sergius (September 25) were uncovered on July 5, 1422 when St Nikon (November 17) was igumen. In the year 1408, when Moscow and its environs was invaded by the Tatar horde of Edigei, the Trinity monastery was devastated and burned, and the monks led by St Nikon hid themselves in the forests. They saved the icons, sacred vessels, books and other holy things connected with the memory of St Sergius.

In a vision on the eve of the Tatar incursion St Sergius informed his disciple and successor about the coming tribulations. He also said that the vexation would not be prolonged but that the monastery, arising from the ashes, would flourish and grow even more. Metropolitan Philaret wrote about this in his *Life of St Sergius*: “Just as it suited Christ to suffer, and through the Cross and death to enter into the glory of the Resurrection, so it also becomes everyone who would be blessed by Christ with length of days in glory, to be tested by one’s own cross and death.” Going through its own fiery cleansing, the monastery of the Life-Creating Trinity was resurrected unto length of days, and St Sergius himself rose up, so that his holy relics should dwell within it forevermore.

Before the beginning of construction of the new temple of the Life-Creating Trinity on the site of the former wooden one (which was consecrated on September 25, 1412), St Sergius appeared to a certain pious layman and bid him inform the igumen and the brethren: “Why do you leave me so long in the grave, covered by earth and in the water, constraining my body?” During the construction of the cathedral, when they dug the ditches for the foundations, the incorrupt relics of St Sergius were uncovered and brought up. All were astonished that not only his body, but also his clothing was undamaged, although there was water around the grave. Amidst a large throng of the devout and the clergy, in the presence of the son of Demetrius of the Don, the prince of Zvenigorod Yurii Dimitrievich (+ 1425), the holy relics were removed from the ground and placed temporarily in the wooden Trinity church (at this spot now stands the church of the Descent of the Holy Spirit). With the consecration of the stone Trinity cathedral in 1426, the relics were transferred into it, where they remain.

All the threads of the spiritual life of the Russian Church converge towards the great Saint and wonderworker of Radonezh, and through all of Orthodox Rus the grace-filled, life-creating currents radiate outwards from the Trinity monastery he founded.

The spiritual contribution of St Sergius in teaching the theology of the Holy Trinity is quite significant. The monk had profound insight into the secret mysteries of theology with the “spiritual eyes” of the ascetic, in prayerful ascent to the Tri-Hypostatic (i.e. in Three-Persons) God, and in the spiritual experience of communion with God and God-likeness.

“Coheirs of the perfect light and contemplation of the Most Holy and All-Sovereign Trinity,” explained St Gregory the Theologian, “are those which become perfectly co-united in the perfection of the Spirit.” St Sergius knew from personal experience the mystery of the Life-Creating Trinity, since in his life he became co-united with God, he became a communicant of the very life of the Divine Trinity, i.e. he attained as much as is possible on earth to the measure of “theosis” [“divinization”], becoming a “partaker of the Divine nature” (2 Pet 1:4). “If a man loves Me,” says the Lord, “he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him and make our abode with him” (John 14:23).

Abba Sergius, in everything observing the commands of Christ, belongs to the rank of holy Saints in the souls of whom the Holy Trinity “has made abode.” He fashioned himself into “an abode of the Holy Trinity,” and everyone with whom St Sergius associated, he elevated and brought into communion with the Holy Trinity.

PEARLS FROM THE HOLY FATHERS

"The spirit of lukewarmness reigns. There's no manliness at all. We've been spoiled for good. How does God still tolerate us? Today's generation is the generation of indifference. There're no warriors. The great majority are fit for parades and feasts only. ... Even people who've got something inside have begun to grow cool saying, 'Can I really do anything to change the situation?' We have to witness our Faith with boldness, because, if we continue to remain silent, we'll have to answer in the end. In these difficult days, each must do what is in their own power. Leave what's out of their power to God. In this way, our conscience will be clear." - **St. Paisios the Athonite (+1994)**

"Blessed is he who bears affliction with thankfulness." - **Abba Copres of Egypt (5th C)**

"Labor to acquire thanksgiving toward God for everything, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you, and then you will find peace." - **St. Barsanuphius**

"Even though there is only one baptism for the whitening of stains, yet there are two eyes which when filled with tears, provide a baptismal font for the limbs. For the Creator knew well beforehand that sins multiply in us at all times, and though there is only a single baptism, he fixed in the single body two fonts that give absolution." ~ **St. Ephraim the Syrian (*Hymns on the Ascetic Abraham*)**

"Remember that each of us has his own cross.. The Golgotha of this cross is our heart: it is being lifted or implanted through a zealous determination to live according to the Spirit of God.. Just as salvation of the world is by the Cross of God, so our salvation is by our crucifixion on our own cross." - **St. Theophan the Recluse (1894)**

Smoke from wood that is kindling a fire troubles the eyes. But then, the fire gives them light and gladdens them. Similarly unceasing attentiveness is irksome; but when invoked in prayer, Jesus draws near. He illumines the heart; for remembrance of Him confers on us spiritual enlightenment and the highest of all blessings. - **St. Philotheos of Sinai**

"IT IS NOT always for the same reason that sinners commit the same sin... It is one thing to sin through force of habit and another to sin though being carried away by a sudden impulse. In the latter case the man did not deliberately choose the sin either before committing it or afterwards. On the contrary, he is deeply distressed that the sin has occurred. It is quite different with the man who sins through force of habit. Prior to the act he is already sinning in thought, and after it he is still in the same state of mind." - **St. Maximus the Confessor (662 A.D.)**

"The Comforter, the Holy Spirit, who fills the whole universe, passes through all believing, meek, humble, good, and simple human souls, dwelling in them, vivifying and strengthening them. He becomes one spirit with them and everything to them – light, strength, peace, joy, success in their undertakings, especially in a pious life, and everything good – "going through all understanding, pure and most subtle spirits" (Wisdom of Solomon vii, 23). "We have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (I Cor. xii.13). All pious people are filled with the Spirit of God similarly as a sponge is filled with water.....To serve God is bliss itself." - **St. John of Kronstadt**

"SEE what praises follow this faith. Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build this Church. What does 'Upon this rock I will build My Church mean'? **Upon this faith**; upon what has been said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Upon this rock, He says, I will build My Church." - **St. Augustine of Hippo (430)**