

Tradition: *n.* Passing on an inheritance from one generation to the next.



Our supporters  
help it happen.



**The UPS Store®**

1-1439 UPPER OTTAWA, HAMILTON, ONTARIO, L8W 3J6, CANADA  
T: 905.667.1588 F: 905.667.1589 E: store417@theupsstore.ca

# Orthodox Canada



A Journal of Orthodox Christianity

**Vol.4 No.3  
Dormition  
2009**

#### ARTICLES

From the Editor:  
*Peace in our time,  
peace in our hearts*

Heaven in a Choir Loft:  
*Reflections of Orthodox  
Georgian-Russian  
brotherhood a year after  
the South Ossetian war*

Canada Just Right for  
Western Rite Monks

Sitting on  
Herod's Throne

A Russian Martyr in  
North America  
*The missionary work of  
Saint Seraphim of  
Uglich*

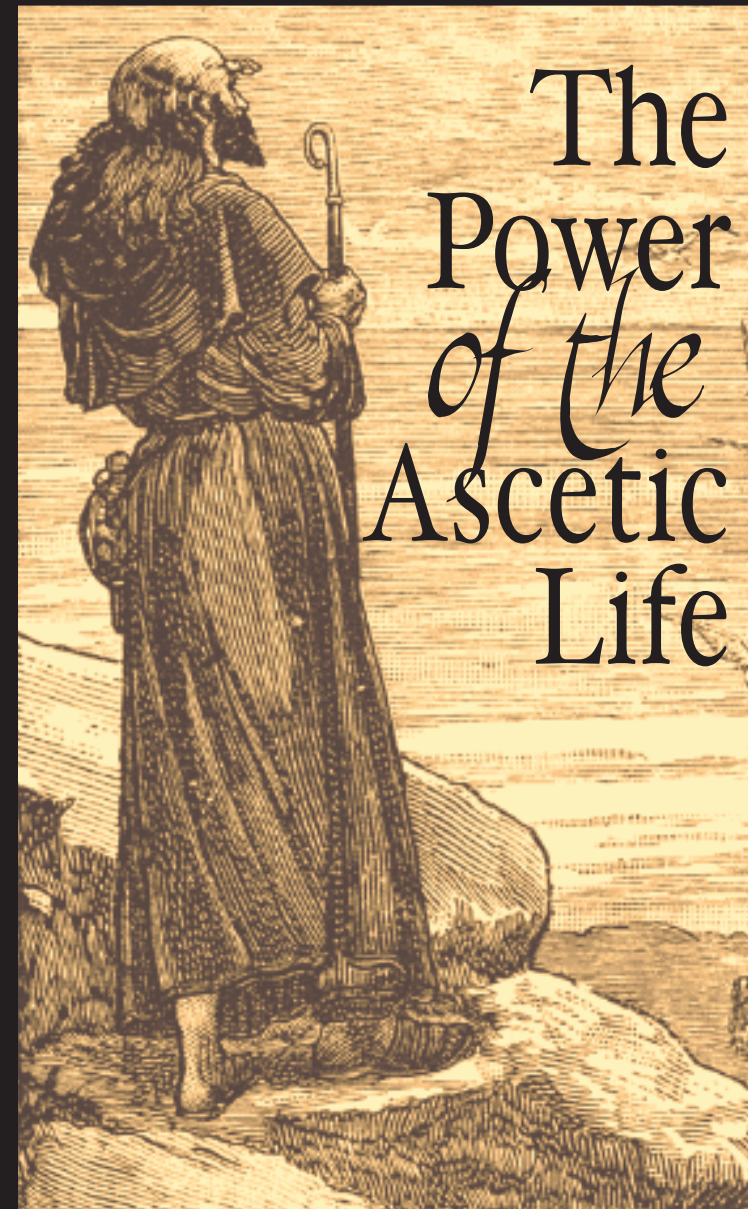
#### POETRY

THE CHURCH  
KITCHEN

NORTHERN  
NOMENCLATURE:

PRAYER & LIFE:  
*Bringing Life to  
Deadness in Prayer*

Q&A:  
*Questions from Readers*



---

CONTENTS

---

- 2 FROM THE EDITOR:  
*Peace in our time, peace in our hearts*
- 3 HEAVEN IN A CHOIR LOFT  
*Reflections of Orthodox Georgian-Russian brotherhood a year  
after the South Ossetian war*
- 6 CANADA JUST RIGHT FOR WESTERN RITE MONKS  
*An Interview with Hieromonk James Deschene*
- 17 SITTING ON HEROD'S THRONE
- 23 A RUSSIAN MARTYR IN NORTH AMERICA  
*The missionary work of Saint Seraphim of Uglich*
- 26 POETRY  
*The Bridegroom Cometh! Tarry Not Too Long*
- 27 THE CHURCH KITCHEN
- 28 NORTHERN NOMENCLATURE:  
ST CATHARINES, ONTARIO
- 30 PRAYER & LIFE: *Bringing Life to Deadness in Prayer*
- 32 Q&A: Questions from Readers

---

*ORTHODOX CANADA is dedicated to sharing a traditional vision of Orthodox Christianity with Canadians. The opinions expressed in these articles are those of the author(s), and do not necessarily reflect those of the Archdiocese of Canada (OCA) or its parishes. Uncredited articles are the work of the editorial board.*

## FROM THE EDITOR:

### *Peace in our time, peace in our hearts*

“Beauty will save the world,” – Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*

Much is made by politicians and social activists about the need for peace in the world. Even as millions of dollars are invested in terrorism and war around the world, appeals are made time and again that the ultimate goal of this aggression is peace: peace between individuals, peace between nations, and peace for the world.

In the same way our world tries to stop playground fights through the use of more rules, so too do the princes of this world seek peace through external solutions. Yet history proves this ineffective. Peace in the world – between nations or on the playground, between husbands and wives or labour and management – cannot be imposed from outside. Peace is a product of the human heart.

In the Gospel, Saint Luke reminds us that “*a good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.*” (Lune 6:45).

It is this wisdom that lies at the heart of Orthodox asceticism: the cutting off of the passions, in order to quiet the heart. The results determine the state of our lives, and the state of this world.

Christian asceticism must involve humbling our own desire for revenge, our tendency to be disagreeable, and our desire to have things fit the law of our own mind. Asceticism is the key to all that is good and holy in the human character. It is the Christian life. It is the beauty that will save the world.

The icons of holy men and women show them in their true state: a state that is beautiful, not the ugly caricature weighed down by the passions that afflict us. This is the reason the saints, starting with the Mother of God, lived in harmony with the world.

And it is only in this manner that we can, too.

– Father Geoffrey Korz+,  
Managing Editor.



## HEAVEN IN A CHOIR LOFT

### *Reflections of Orthodox Georgian-Russian brotherhood a year after the South Ossetian war*

In the ongoing saga of foreign affairs involving the Republic of Georgia and the Russian Federation, one story has escaped the attention of the news media. It is the story of an Orthodox Christian parish in Toronto, Canada, where Orthodox of all ethnicities, but especially Russian and Georgian, have come together as brothers, as children in the Kingdom of God. It is a joyful unity unnoticed by the outside world, but for those with eyes to see and ears to hear, it is a foretaste of the age to come, made possible only in Christ.

For many years, Christ the Saviour Cathedral in Toronto has been known among Canadian Orthodox as a staunch defender of Russian language and traditions. The parish itself has been very welcoming to regular worshippers of Korean, Chinese, Romanian, and Mediterranean backgrounds, yet the prevailing spirit and ethos of the parish have remained firmly Russian. However, early in 2008, a number of choir members asked to expand the choir's repertoire to include Georgian

Orthodox hymns. Within weeks, the choir tentatively grasped the rudiments of Georgian chant, an ancient tradition of polyphony from the Caucasus mountains believed to be the earliest form of polyphony in the world.

In the world at large, in August 2008, armed hostilities between Georgia and Russia broke out over the territories of South Ossetia (Samachablo) and Abkhazia (Abkhazeti). Media "experts" offered the same tired, tendentious opinions on the complex history of Georgian and Russian relations. In North America, Europe and Russia, variously polarized versions of the crisis were promoted to stoke the passions of their target audiences. Among the heightened rhetoric on both sides of the political fence, Archpriest Oleg Kirilov (rector of Christ the Saviour Cathedral) courageously stood up and preached about the spiritual brotherhood that transcended the Orthodox Georgian and Russian peoples, and of all peoples who share the Orthodox Christian faith. On local Russian television and in newspapers, Fr. Oleg spoke of the necessity to oppose the devilish tactics of nationalistic division, and to embrace the true unity that exists among believers of the one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church – the Orthodox Church. In the meantime, the choir continued to improve its repertoire of Georgian hymns as a sign of this Christian brotherhood, despite the apparent tension of Georgian-Russian relations after the South Ossetian war.

Fr. Oleg's truly Christian message of Orthodox brotherhood subsequently bore fruit in September 2008, one month after the South Ossetian war. One Sunday towards the end of the Divine Liturgy, a group of newly arrived Georgians approached the parish's choir mistress. Having witnessed the choir's goodwill in singing ancient Georgian chant, they offered to sing a few hymns in order to show "how it is done back home". The parishioners were rivetted to the floor during the performance of the haunting, other-worldly psalmody which, when concluded, left them momentarily stunned, then quickly erupting in a thunder of applause. (thus eliciting a stern reprimand to the congregation from Fr. Oleg: "Clapping hands is not appropriate behaviour in the House of God!").

Since that day, the stream of faithful Georgian Orthodox flowing to Christ the Saviour Cathedral has grown, and the choir has been a focal point of brotherhood among the newly arrived Georgians and the established Russians. The piety of the Georgians has elevated the spirit of the parish and has caused many to re-focus on the essential bond of

love for which true Christians, ancient and modern, have always been known. Fr. Oleg continues to commemorate the Patriarchs of Georgia and Russia (in the Georgian and Slavonic languages, respectively), as well as praying specifically for the armed forces of Canada and Russia, at which all parishioners fervently cross themselves – the Georgians most of all! Whether the Georgians are praying for the success of the Russian armed forces (not likely) or that God may enlighten and have mercy on their “adversaries”, this act of praying for one’s “enemies” – and to do so with the love and fervency shown every week at the Divine Liturgy – this is the Orthodox Christian way. There is no greater catechism than seeing the entire parish praying with one mind and one heart for God’s mercy – by all and for all.

Not everything has gone smoothly, however, and in the beginning there were a few bumps along the way. One Sunday, the Georgians in the choir loft unexpectedly started stumbling around in a panic, chaos quickly spreading among the ranks. One Georgian member began to pull out his hair in anguish. In this atmosphere of sudden turmoil, one of the older Georgians grabbed one of the Russians and pleaded in desperation to know why the parishioners were kneeling on a Sunday, at the consecration of the Holy Gifts! As penitential kneeling on Sundays is prohibited by the Canons, but is a local practice of reverential piety, the Georgians were up in arms. Praying for God’s mercy to be upon the Russian armed forces during the Commemorations at Liturgy is perfectly fine, but woe if you dare kneel on a Sunday!

At the feast of Pascha just past (2009), Fr. Oleg made it a point to read the Holy Gospel in as many languages as possible, including Georgian. Based on the evident joy and smiles by all Orthodox Georgians in attendance, while simultaneously shaking and holding their heads in their hands, two things were evident: 1) Fr. Oleg’s pronunciation in Georgian could use a little more practice, and 2) they knew that they are loved and appreciated by their Russian brethren in faith, as they have loved and appreciated their new parish home in Toronto.

As the celebrations after the Paschal Celebration continued long into the night – the sounds of Georgian and Russian festal hymns mingling with the joy of the communal Paschal breakfast – it was a taste of Paradise. It was the Prophet Isaiah’s vision of the age to come, where “the wolf will recline with the lamb, and they will do no hurt in all of God’s Holy Mountain, and both will feast together in the Kingdom of Heaven”.

– Michael Ivanovich



## CANADA JUST RIGHT FOR WESTERN RITE MONKS

*An Interview with  
Hieromonk James Deschene*

*In the spring of 2008, the oldest Western Rite Orthodox monastery in the western hemisphere, Christminster of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, moved from Rhode Island to Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. Now located in the midst of an older, working-class industrial neighbourhood, this unique Canadian monastic community quietly lives out the fullness of the rule of prayer as it was served in the Orthodox West before the Schism of 1054. In this exclusive interview with the abbot, Hieromonk James (Deschene), Orthodox Canada takes a look at this faithful brotherhood, dedicated to praying for the needs of the Church in Canada, and for the salvation of the world.*

Orthodox Canada (OC): Father James, thank you for meeting with us. Perhaps you can begin by sharing with us what were the key things that brought you from Roman Catholicism to the Orthodox Church?

Father James Deschene (FJD): The process of conversion was in two stages. Subsequent to Vatican Two, I began to discover that Roman Catholicism was not all it had claimed to be.

Growing up in the forties and fifties, in the church under Pius XII, one was given to believe that the church was a solid, rocklike fortress of immutable and perennial truth. But there were cracks in that rock, chinks in that fortress, as a study of history will show. The watering-down and cheapening of the liturgy too brought home to me that something was not right in Rome. Wanting the truth sent me searching. I did not at first go far afield and began to examine the Anglo-Catholic world, where there was at least a deference to and preservation of traditional liturgy.

But Anglicanism, having descended from Roman Catholicism, suffered from the same weakness – a departure from original Christian and apostolic truth. But for a long while Orthodoxy was not even a blip on my radar, and what little knowledge I had of it was that it was an ethnic and alien form of Catholicism not generally available to me. But then I began to read Orthodox authors and books – Schmemmann, Meyendorff, Ware, Berdyaev, Lossky, Clement. These authors were like a fresh wind blowing from the pages of the Gospels. Whatever truths RCism had preserved were there, but much more beside, and none of the errors introduced over the centuries by Roman Catholicism.

But I had still no experience of eastern liturgy – Orthodoxy came to me through books. Nor did what little I had seen of Orthodoxy liturgy attract me. It was certainly splendid and beautiful, especially in its Russian forms. But I had been deeply rooted and grounded in the solid and traditional liturgy of the Roman church from my earliest years. As a Roman Catholic seminarian in the years before Vatican II, I had discovered and fell in love with the services of the liturgical year and its cycles.

Thus, when I eventually discovered Western rite Orthodoxy, it seemed a gift from heaven: to have to true Church of Christ, with its full apostolic truth and tradition, and a familiar liturgy that for a thousand years before the Great Schism had been unquestionably Orthodox in its provenance and expression. It was like finally coming home. Oh, there were shocks and jolts along the way. The Orthodox situation in North

America is a canonical chaos, and Orthodox people regrettably do not always recognize the treasure they possess or desire to share it outside their ethnic and cultural milieu. But I accepted Orthodoxy, warts and all and have not regretted it. My great hope is to share this gift with the spiritually hungry and lost, and even to awaken a hunger for Orthodoxy in those who have yet to discover their spiritual malnutrition.

OC: Some people might not understand the common monastic life shared by the Orthodox West of 1000 years ago, and the Orthodox East.

FJD: I think the problem is not that people do not understand how eastern and western monasticism might differ – they simply don't understand monasticism at all. And yet monasticism is at the very heart of Orthodoxy, whether western or eastern. Christian monasticism received its definitive expression in the first millennium of Christianity, before the Church was divided into east and west. One of its formative fathers was Saint Benedict whose Rule not only governs monasteries but has had a profound influence, through monasteries, on the history and culture of Europe. It is not an exaggeration to say that European and Western civilization have been shaped and enriched by the Orthodox mind of Saint Benedict. Whether Western civilization remains faithful to that mind and vision is of course rather questionable. But that's all the more reason why the West needs monasteries.

OC: It is central to Orthodoxy.

FJD: Monasticism is so central to Orthodoxy, because it understands and insists that all Christians, monastic or lay folk, are called to the same destiny – holiness – and by the same means – asceticism, prayer and the sacraments. Regrettably, both in the east and in the west, a kind of dichotomy has developed between the monastic life and the life of the ordinary Christian. Each of us is called to a monasticism of the heart – to become an inner monk – and monasteries and their monks express visibly, in tangible form, what each of us is called to be.

OC: Can you tell us about finding your way to Canada? What differences have you found between Canada and the United States, as far as being Orthodox, or as far as monasticism is concerned?



FJD: Well, I came to Canada in April 2008, not as a result of planning, but because we were unexpectedly invited to come in order to staff a church and monastery provided to us here in Hamilton. The nest was made ready and we flew to it.

However, for about nine months I was the only monk in residence. Fr. Joseph remained behind undergoing long-term medical treatment, and was only able to join me in December 2008.

I think I can say we enjoy being in Canada. The weather, which I was dreading, is remarkably similar to that back home in Rhode Island, and in fact was much more severe this past winter in Rhode Island than here in Hamilton. The summers seem equally warm and humid. Culturally, there are few shocks or surprises for an American moving to Canada, or at least to Ontario. The only qualm I have had is the horror stories I hear about some Canadian Human Rights Tribunals and their apparent infringement of free speech and the open discussion of ideas – to a US citizen, these make one uneasy. And to a Christian, with their suggestion of oppression and censorship, they make one wonder about the future of freedom in Canada, not just for Christians but for religion itself. As a guest and visitor in this country, I am in a poor position to speak out on such matters, but they do leave me unsettled and troubled.

As far as Orthodoxy here I have to say it seems a lively and warm phenomenon. I have been edified by the enthusiasm, cooperation and fellowship of the Orthodox clergy and churches here and I hope we may contribute to that in whatever way we can. We are, so far as I know, the only Orthodox monastery (eastern or western) in the immediate area. So I can't say anything about Canadian Orthodox monasticism. But certainly we have had much friendliness from Father Nicolas of the Romanian monastery in Toronto and Father Philip of the OCA monastery in Edmonton. And I might add – not to make you blush – your own warm welcome and ongoing friendliness to us has been a precious gift.

OC: Many thanks, Father. We appreciate your friendship here, and the brotherhood we're blessed to share with you, here in Hamilton. Your monastery is in the city – an industrial city at that – a life that is part of city life, but removed from it as well. How does that work?

FJD: Our essential need as monks is for the freedom and opportunity to devote ourselves to prayer. Where we do this is to some degree irrelevant, so long as there is a measure of quietness, recollection, and a regularity of life. A rural setting is nice, allowing one to be in touch with nature and creation in ways not possible where we live in Hamilton. But we have everything we need for our life of prayer here – except, probably, space for more monks! Or for more guests who come to share for a short time the gift of monastic peace and prayer. We welcome all who come and wish we had room for more.

It is important for a monastery to be in a city such as Hamilton, I think. Partly because Hamilton needs prayer. And also partly because our presence here, in this teeming, industrial city, symbolizes the role of monasticism as the little bit of yeast in the dough – the hidden instrument for transfiguration that works quietly and behind the scenes, but performs unseen an essential function.

If I may quote myself here from an article I wrote some time ago: “Monks (it has been observed) are like the great and silent forests of the earth. In silence and stillness the trees grow, unremarkable and unobserved in their forest wilderness, silently but effectively purifying the air of the whole world, removing, in their unmoving, unimpressive

activity, the poisons and carbons that would otherwise destroy the world of cities and nations. It is for others to be the primary movers and dramatic doers. Monks, like trees, will do the world far less good by removing themselves from the purifying task of prayer and monastic observance. The world in its folly sees no usefulness in its rain forests – or in its monastics. But destroy either of these – and the world is ever ready to destroy both – and the world will strangle itself and die, poisoned by its own toxins.”

Saint Silouan said something similar -- that when there are no more monks in the world praying, the world will come to an end.



OC: Father, what does your rule of prayer look like?

FJD: Our rule of prayer – or what Saint Benedict calls the “work of God” – is taken directly from his own Orthodox Rule written over 1500 years ago and given to the undivided Church. It is the primary work and occupation of our monastery and consumes a good part of our waking hours, starting at 5:00am with Matins. Lauds follows at 6:15am and Mass at 7:00am, followed by Prime (First Hour) at 8:45am, Terce (Third Hour) at 9:30, Sext (Sixth Hour) at 11:45, None (Ninth Hour) at 5:00, Vespers at 6:30 and Compline at 7:45. Several additional hours are devoted to private prayer and spiritual reading – or *lectio divina*, which is a kind of prayerful reading described in St. Benedict’s Rule.

In the middle of the day, after lunch, we also have a brief service of intercessions, in which we pray especially for the Church, for the Queen and Canada, for our city and neighbourhood, for our own community, for benefactors, relatives and friends, and for the departed. At this time we also say the Lord’s Prayer “on behalf of those who have said no prayer this day.” All our prayer is done on behalf of all and for all. We also pray for particular people and their intentions.

Our prayer life should present a challenge to a world unsure of God. If God is not true and alive, then our entire lives, spent largely in prayer, are simply being wasted, thrown away senselessly, and we are the most pitiable of men. But God is real and prayer is the most valuable activity of man on earth. People will either see that or they won’t. But as long as we’re alive and praying they will be challenged with the issue.

OC: What do you say to people seeking advice about living an authentic Orthodox spiritual life?

FJD: To live an authentic Orthodox spiritual life, one must be faithful to the basics: daily prayer, the sacraments, the ascetical disciplines of fasting, abstinence and almsgiving, and feeding the mind and heart with holy reading. All of this must be done within the context of a lively and faithful church life and under the guidance of one’s spiritual father or confessor. The essence of becoming holy is learning to become totally open to and submissive to God, utterly malleable to his will and his wise and gentle moulding of us into the saints he has created us to be. There are no gimmicks or shortcuts to this end – only the patient struggle each day to lay aside sin and all that keeps us from God, who is the true and only source of our joy and who seeks nothing more than to give us the fullness of his joy. But regrettably, we have so many ways of blocking and refusing his gift. We need his help even to stop resisting his help – that’s how messed-up we are.

But God is good and full of mercy and loves us unfailingly. It is such foolishness to resist such goodness, but there you are – we’re fools!

OC: The ROCOR has just consecrated and appointed a new bishop to care for the Western Rite Orthodox parishes (Bishop Jerome of Manhattan, the former Father John Shaw). People speak very highly of him. What can you tell us about him?

FJD: The newly consecrated Bishop Jerome is a man of singular and impressive gifts. We have known each other, but entirely through letters and emails, for more than thirty years now – we’ve still never met! But I have turned to him many times for advice and counsel and for the answer to many a question. He has invariably been wise, patient and

instructive over these many years, and I look forward to his continuing support in this new role.

OC: And your primate, Metropolitan Hilarion, has been very supportive of monastic life, and the authentic Western Rite Orthodox life...

FJD: Our monastery and church have recently been given stavropegial status – i.e., we have been placed directly under the Metropolitan rather than under the local Bishop. This is always an honour for a monastery, but it is especially wonderful for us since our Metropolitan Hilarion is the one who originally blessed our community and who ordained me to the priesthood and tonsured me a monastic. We own him a great deal and he is much loved by all who know him. He is such a gentle and loving man. We hope and pray that his well-known support both for western-rite missions and for missions in general will be a great blessing to the church and a gift to Orthodoxy around the world.

OC: There seems to be a distinct divide between the historic, ancient Orthodox Western Rite which you follow, and the cobbled-together Western Rite supported by some converts to Orthodoxy...

FJD: Well, if you follow some discussions on the internet – and I don't recommend this! – the issue of which western rite is best is a controversial one. I have always argued in principle for a variety of authentic rites, both eastern and western, as this was the pattern of Orthodoxy for the first millennium – you had multiple rites in the east and west and all were recognized as valid and authentically Orthodox. It is only in recent centuries, pretty much after the Great Schism, that liturgical uniformity (eastern and western) has come to the fore. Regrettably this has led to “liturgy wars” that are most unedifying. I don't wish to contribute to them here.

Our own rite – often called, erroneously, Tridentine – is largely the Roman rite as it might have been celebrated in European monasteries in the eighth to tenth centuries. The primary alternative to this used in other western-rite parishes is some variant of this but often influenced by the usage of Sarum or Book of Common Prayer rites. As these have received the authorization of Orthodox hierarchs, it is not for me to

judge them. But we certainly prefer our traditional usage with its unquestionably Orthodox provenance.

Saint John Maximovitch once said to Abbot Augustine of Mount Royal (from which our monastery is descended): “Never, never, never let anyone tell you that, in order you to Orthodox, you must also be eastern. The West was fully Orthodox for a thousand years, and her venerable liturgy is far older than any of her heresies.”

OC: The Mother of God plays a particularly important role in your monastic life. Your monastery is named for her, and for Glastonbury.

FJD: The Mother of God does play a significant role in our monastic life. Our monastery – Christminster, for short – is actually named after Christ the Saviour, a title given by (then) Bishop Hilarion when blessing us to form a monastic community. Our Lady of Glastonbury is the title of our monastic church here in Canada. But we have always been devoted to the Mother of God, and there is no service celebrated at Christminster that does not end with or include some prayer or hymn to her, usually one of the four great seasonal hymns: *Ave Maris Stella*, *Ave Regina Caelorum*, *Regina Caeli*, and *Salve Regina*, as well as the Ave Maria. The last hymn we sing every evening is the solemn chant of the Salve Regina. We sing these in Latin, partly because that's how they were written and there are no adequate translations; and partly to keep alive the use of Latin as the traditional liturgical language of the West. Of course, most of our liturgical services are not in Latin, but traditional English – what Anglicans would call “prayer book” English.

The Mother of God is also important for us as a sign and guide to what we are called to do: to become wholly obedient and submissive to the will of God.

The title Glastonbury relates to the site in England where the oldest church dedicated to the Mother of God was found. It is traditionally associated with St. Joseph of Arimathea who, as a tin merchant, visited the tin mines of Somerset and is said to have brought our Saviour with him as a young man. The wonderful poem “Jerusalem” by William Blake summarizes the story:



*And did those Feet in ancient time  
Walk upon England's mountains green?  
And was the holy Lamb of God  
On England's pleasant pastures seen?*

*And did the countenance divine  
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?  
And was Jerusalem builded here  
Among those dark satanic mills?*

This yoking of our Saviour's life with the spiritual history of the English land and people is, even if legendary, especially inspiring and endearing. I think of it often when I see the "dark satanic mills" of Hamilton and realize that we are called to build Jerusalem even here – or especially here.

OC: I know that your monastery is blessed with many holy relics. These are often so unfamiliar to people today, even to faithful Orthodox people. What blessings have they provided to you and to your monastery?

FJD: We are singularly blessed with many holy relics, including a relic passed on to us from Dom Augustine and Mount Royal – a relic inscribed *Ex capillis Beatae Mariae Virginis*: "From the hair of the Blessed Virgin Mary." We also have a small piece of her Veil, and relics of the Holy Cross, the Crown of Thorns, and of many New Testament and early saints.

Relics are among those things – like the sacraments -- that materially connect us to holy things and people. In Orthodoxy, matter matters – the material is God's instrument and vehicle of the spiritual. Otherwise we'd all be gnostics. So the presence of holy relics helps to anchor us in the historical reality of the church and of the saints, and to keep our vision and religion from wandering off into abstract realms where heresy often breeds.

This past Saturday we celebrated the annual feast of the Holy Relics, celebrated in some places in November, but with us always in Eastertide. We always keep on the altar the relics of the Veil of the Mother of God

and of Saint Benedict. The others are brought out on their appropriate feasts. On Good Friday we venerate the relics of the Cross and the Crown of Thorns. The thorn relic is extremely tiny – about the size of a baby's eyelash.

There's an article on our website about the relics at Christminster and giving a complete list of them. ([westernorthodox.ca](http://westernorthodox.ca) and [Christminster.org](http://Christminster.org))





## SITTING ON HEROD'S THRONE

*When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked if [Jesus] were a Galilean. And as soon as he knew that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time. Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad; for he had desired for a long time to see Him, because he had heard many things about Him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by Him. Then he questioned Him with many words, but He answered him nothing. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him. Then Herod, with his men of war, treated Him with contempt and mocked Him, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate. – Luke 23:6-11 (NKJV)*

The Gospel according to St. Luke is remarkable for its depth of detail and literary liveliness. More than any other Evangelist, Luke takes the time to lovingly decorate the scenes in which his vibrant characters play out the drama of Christ's life, teachings, death, and resurrection. Luke's richness of detail is a hallmark of his entire text, but it comes to the fore most of all in his description of the events taking place in Jerusalem shortly before the crucifixion of Jesus.

One striking element of Luke's narrative is his description of Christ's encounter with Herod from Chapter 23 (printed above), and which is not mentioned by the other Evangelists. According to Luke, after Christ's arrest Pontius Pilate, caught in a jurisdictional grey-area which would have been quite common in First Century Judea, sends him to speak with Herod in the hope that he would no longer have to deal with the strange prophet who had so angered the people. The meeting between Jesus and Herod takes place as noted above, and Jesus is eventually sent back to Pilate with whom, Luke reports, Herod begins to develop a friendship.

It is easy enough to see the small details of this encounter as simply enriching the story of Jesus' suffering, and they certainly do so. But this short passage may well contain a hidden lesson for us today, particularly those many of us in the North American Church who, much like Herod, enjoy comfortable lives in one of the richest societies in history. Herod's attitude towards Jesus begins to strike a chord when we pause for a moment and compare ourselves to the ancient client king.

In order to do this, we must break down Herod's reaction to Jesus after he has received the man from Pilate. Luke reports that Herod was, at first, eager to meet Jesus, having heard many rumors about the prophet making waves in Galilee and Jerusalem. Herod's hope, it seems, is for Jesus to perform some sign or miracle. He has a genuine interest in Jesus, and is entirely open to the possibility that he really can live up to the hype. This initial reaction may strike us as somewhat surprising. This King Herod is, of course, the namesake of the villainous leader reported by St. Matthew to have ordered the murder of thousands of infants shortly after Jesus' birth. (Mt. 2:16). He will, we already know, eventually mock Jesus and return him to Pilate and certain death. Yet, as his encounter with Jesus begins, he shows distinct interest in the supposed messiah, and remains open to the possibility that Jesus will, in fact, be able to back up the claims being made by his followers. Herod, in a shallow sense, wants to believe Jesus, and his hope is that Jesus will satisfy this desire through outward signs.

Jesus' arrival, however, brings something else for Herod. Placed at the king's feet, Jesus is faced with direct questions from him, as Herod sits in judgment with Jesus' life in his hands. We may be assured that among Herod's questions were included his demands to see a miracle - an earthly sign which he thought would stand as proof of Jesus' status as prophet or Christ. Jesus' reaction, however, is to remain entirely silent. Frustrated, Herod begins to mock him, with his advisors pitching in, and returns him to Pilate decked out in royal clothing. After this we may assume that Herod dismissed Jesus from his mind. He waived his jurisdictional privilege to charge such a petty criminal and metaphorically washed his hands of the man in just the way that Pilate would literally do soon after. For Herod, Jesus had turned out to be nothing special - just one more of the many new religious leaders of the area mentioned by Luke in the Acts of the Apostles (5:33-39). Herod moved on with his life, to focus more directly on the political turmoil of Judea and the erosion of his own power which would soon lead to direct Roman imperial rule of the province.

It is easy to simply scoff at Herod as one of the great villains of the Gospel. Like Judas, Pilate and the people of Jerusalem, we may simply chalk him up as conspirator to the murder of Jesus. But it is important not to be too arrogant when assessing Herod's actions. Indeed, when we take a moment to consider them, it is easy to see how often we as Orthodox Christians fall into an identical attitude.

If we have grown up in North America, we have heard of Jesus Christ from the very beginning of our lives. Whether raised Orthodox, heterodox, non-Christian or atheist, we, like everyone in our society, have met the news of Christ in much the same way as Herod: with curiosity. Can what is said about this ancient man possibly be true? We have wondered to ourselves at the supposed miracles, thumbed through the scriptures, visited churches and spoken with friends and family. Just like Herod, our relationship with Jesus began through hearsay followed up by curiosity.

But what follows this initial curiosity is the issue of concern here. Exactly how have we reacted to what we have heard of Jesus? For most reading this magazine, the broad answer is that we have embraced Him and chosen to follow the teachings of His Church. But our reaction to Christ is more than a broad life choice - it is also something established from day to day and moment to moment. And here, in the immediate

present, we find our selves, more often than not, adopting Herod's attitude.

For Herod's great sin did not come from his initial reaction to Christ. Curious, he had an open mind about the man, and even believed that it was possible that he might be a true prophet. He was excited, as we all must be, to see whether what he had heard was true. For this, Herod knows no condemnation. Instead, where Herod misses the mark is in his approach to an answer. Herod, sitting before Christ (almost certainly sitting above him physically as well as politically) begins to ask the questions. Herod places himself as king, and demands that proof come to him in the way that he desires: through miracles and physical wonders. He wishes to stay in his throne, powerful and arrogant, and still be shown the truth as though it is as simple as a mathematical calculation: there for all to see. When he receives no response, Herod simply mocks Jesus and sends him on his way, placing on him a beautiful cloak. Far from flogging or executing Jesus, Herod simply writes him off, sending him away with a gift: a small kindness which only highlights Jesus' apparent humiliation and serves to build Herod up even further. In giving Christ a cloak, Herod seems to say, 'you are so great a fool that I do not even have time for anger with you - I will show my contempt through my kindness.'

Do we Orthodox Christians not do this every day to Our Savior? Though we have heard of his signs and wonders, his power to transform lives, his image shining through in the eyes of the living saints, do we not daily send him on his way with feigned kindness? Do we not demand of him signs which we wish to see and miracles for our own benefit just as Herod did? Do we not demand that things turn out the way we want them to, thereby placing Christ at our feet instead of sitting beneath his? Do we not demand that his wisdom conform to our understanding rather than conforming ourselves to Him? Do we not adorn him in beautiful garments without adorning ourselves in the garment of humility?

Indeed, even we who have embraced Jesus Christ in our lives do this day after day. Having heard of Jesus Christ we approach him, at first, with interest. We pay lip service to his salvation, believing nominally in His Name. But, powerful and successful as we are, we daily get the next step wrong: we place Christ at our feet, and not the other way around. We give a nod to his power, we treat people nicely, we make donations to our parish, and come to liturgy now and then. Yet, by the end of the

day we allow ourselves to be distracted by our businesses, our jobs, our finances. We gossip about our co-workers, fight about the housework, grow angry about politics. And, in doing so, we build ourselves up, seeking after earthly benefits, reveling in praise and success - placing ourselves in the seat of power as though we are kings and queens of our own lives. And we expect that God will serve these lives, praying for our own will rather than His, begging for benefits from Christ instead of seeking to benefit Him. We know, just as Herod did, that there is something about this Jesus which is worthy of worship - but it is a rare day that we come down from our thrones to sit at his feet. And just as Herod did, when we live like this we discover a Christ who is remarkably silent in our lives. And instead of seeing the depth of Truth in this silence, we take it for foolishness, and proceed with ourselves as though it is Christ who is deficient.

It is Herod's belief, not his unbelief, which ought to be a lesson to us. Herod begins in the right place, but he remains seated on his throne, and, with his vision clouded by this power, tosses Christ away wearing a beautiful coat. In just the same way, if our faith does not lead us to absolute humility, we robe Christ in a garment which serves not to glorify his name, but to condemn our own ignorance. If, then, Christ is silent in our prosperous lives, let us do what Herod failed to do: let us set aside for a moment our busyness, self-importance and even our own good works, and take the time to sit at his feet through prayer and cultivate humility in our hearts. If we do so we will discover indeed that it is He who is worthy to speak to us on His own terms, even when we do not understand. We will discover that His silence is, most often, His wisdom. We will discover that it is He who is the King of our lives, even if we attempt to place ourselves in that position. We will discover that it is the humility of our hearts which allows us to see His miracles, and that they will remain invisible if we do not approach them with faith. And, ultimately, we will discover that it is He who is worthy to place a garment of purple on our shoulders, and not the other way around.

– Daniel G. Opperwall is a doctoral student in Religious Studies at McMaster University.



## Maple Syrup for the Soul.

**To send a gift subscription to Orthodox  
Canada, see inside the front cover.**

**For subscription questions, call us at (905) 318-6436  
(Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm EST)**



## A RUSSIAN MARTYR IN NORTH AMERICA

### *The missionary work of Saint Seraphim of Uglich*

The Holy Martyr Archbishop Seraphim of Uglich was a hierarch of the Church of Russia during the early twentieth century, a missionary under Saint Tikhon of Moscow to the Alaskan people, and a stalwart defender of Orthodox Christianity against the persecutions of the Bolshevik government of Russia.

Semyon Nikolayevich Samoilovich was born July 19 of 1881, 1882, or 1885 (sources differ) into a family of a parish priest in Poltava province of Russia. After attending local schools, Semyon enrolled in the Poltava Theological Seminary from which he graduated in 1902. After graduation Semyon was sent as a missionary to the Diocese of Aleutian Island and North America as teacher under the diocesan bishop Tikhon (Bellavin). In 1905, Semyon elected to become a monk and was tonsured, receiving the name Seraphim. A month later he was ordained a deacon. A year later in 1906 he was ordained a priest.

During his time in Alaska, Father Seraphim took a number of assignments for which the dates are not clear. For a while he taught at the school in Unalaska in the Aleutian Islands, then at Sitka in 1905. In late 1906, he was assigned to the Nugeka mission before returning to Sitka to teach Scriptures and theology at the seminary during 1907 and 1908. By 1908, Father Seraphim's health began to be affected by the harsh Alaskan climate, and he returned to Russia.

His early years after returning to Russia are unclear as sources differ as to his assignments. One line has Father Seraphim, in turn, assigned in 1908 as an assistant to the Yaroslavl diocesan mission, followed by an assignment to the Alexandrosky Theological Seminary in 1909, and then in 1910, as prior, at the Mogilev Bratsk and Tolga Yaroslavl monasteries, before an assignment as abbot at the Uglich Alexandrosky monastery. The other thread has Father Seraphim assigned as abbot of the Tolga Monastery, a few miles north of Yaroslavl, by Archbishop Tikhon, who was Archbishop of Yaroslavl, after his return from North America in 1907. At Tolga, Father Seraphim led the preparations for the six hundredth anniversary of the monastery in August 1914 and established a school for beekeeping for the orphan children cared for by the monastery. After the start of World War I, at Tolga, Father Seraphim's efforts were erecting hospital wards and assisting Archbishop Agathangelus govern the diocese. In the event, after defending the monastery against the Bolsheviks at Tolga, Father Seraphim was transferred to Uglich as abbot of the Protection Monastery.

Following either thread, Father Seraphim was elevated to the dignity of archimandrite while in Uglich. On February 2, 1920, he was consecrated Bishop of Uglich, vicar to the Yaroslavl Diocese, by Patriarch Tikhon.

During the following years Bishop Seraphim became involved in the chaos in which the Church was placed by the persecutions of Bolsheviks. In 1922, Bishop Seraphim was arrested and imprisoned for the first time by the Bolshevik authorities for anti-government activities. He was released after a term in prison and, in 1924, he was elevated to archbishop. In 1925, he was appointed administrator of the Diocese of Yaroslavl. After the death of Patriarch Tikhon in 1925, the Church was thrown into complete chaos as the Bolsheviks championed the hierarchy of the "Living Church" in their attempt to destroy the Church.

Leadership of the Church became uncertain with the systematic arrest of the hierarchs named by the patriarch in the event of his death.

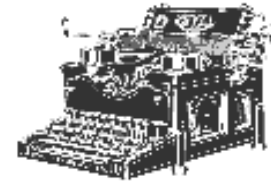
During this period, from November 30, 1926 to March 27, 1927, Archbishop Seraphim became the “Substitute of the Patriarchal Locum Tenens” while Metropolitan Sergius was in prison. During this time Archbishop Seraphim was approached by the Bolsheviki to form a new Synod, providing him with a list of hierarchs they wanted, but he refused the list and gave them a list of his own. The Bolsheviki retaliated by removing him from office. At the same time they released from prison Metropolitan Sergius, who took Archbishop Seraphim’s place.

Realizing that the Bolsheviki had systematically imprisoned those hierarchs who had been named as successors by Patriarch Tikhon and his successors, Archbishop Seraphim when questioned by their persecutors as who would head the Church if he was imprisoned, he responded, “The Lord Jesus Christ Himself.” His interrogator, not understanding, questioned that all the ruling bishops had left lists of substitutes. To which Archbishop Seraphim responded, “Well, I myself have left the Church to the Lord God, and I have done this on Purpose. Let it be known to the whole world how freely Orthodox Christians are living in a free government.”

In July 1927, Metropolitan Sergius capitulated to the Bolsheviki and issued his “declaration” submitting to the government. The Synod that he formed was found to be those hierarchs on the list the government presented to Archbishop Seraphim. On January 24, 1928, Archbishop Seraphim together with Metropolitan Agathangel of Yaroslavl, Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd, Archbishop Barlaam of Perm, and Bishop Eugene of Rostov issued an epistle strongly rejecting the declaration.

Archbishop Seraphim was then arrested and sent into exile to Mogilev. In 1929, he was sentenced to five years at the old Solovki monastery, and condemned to work at hard labour. During this time he fell from a ladder and became an invalid. But these persecutions could not break his indomitable will. After his “release” in 1930, sources vary on his life. In May 1932, he was reported as exiled to the region of Komi. In 1934, he is reported to have been sent in exile for five years in the Kemerovo camps in Siberia. Some source noted his execution in 1937 (reportedly on November 4 or 9), while others just note he did not return from exile.

*Adapted from Saint Herman’s Theological Seminary newsletter “The Seminary Star”. The Life Of St Seraphim of Uglich, 2009, pp5-6.*



## POETRY

### *The Bridegroom Cometh! Tarry Not Too Long*

The Bridegroom cometh! Tarry not too long,  
My wretched, weary soul, amid the thick  
And clinging sleep of sin! O trim thy wick,  
And light thy vigil-lamp! Amongst the throng  
Of virgins wise and prudent raise thy song  
Of joy and join the feast! Do thou be quick  
To let His long-awaited coming prick  
Thee to the core! O let Him make thee strong!  
The oil of grace must feed and fan the flame  
Of faith which thou must ever keep alight  
By prayer and praising of the King of kings!  
But if thy lamp be dark, O heavy shame!  
Thou shalt be cast into the bitter night.  
So rise and watch! Await the joy He brings!

- Sara Hillis





## THE CHURCH KITCHEN

### GRILLED BARBEQUE PORTOBELLOS

*A Summertime East Coast Fasting Favourite*

#### Ingredients

2 tbsp balsamic vinegar	1 tsp olive oil
6 black olives, chopped	1/4 tsp sugar
6-8 caps portobello mushroom, stems removed	
2 medium plum tomatoes, chopped	
1 cob of corn, kernels removed (or equivalent canned),	
2 tbsp cilantro, fresh, chopped.	

#### Instructions

Mix together vinegar, oil, sugar and salt to taste. Remove 2 tablespoons of vinegar mixture for basting portobellos; reserve the rest for the corn salsa. Preheat grill. Off heat, coat grill rack with cooking spray. Place mushrooms, stem side up, on grill.

Brush lightly with vinegar mixture; cook 2 minutes. Turn mushrooms; brush with remaining vinegar mixture and grill until tender, about 2 to 3 minutes more. Remove from grill; allow to cool about 5 minutes. Mix together corn, tomatoes, olives, cilantro and reserved vinegar mixture. Cut mushrooms into 1/2-inch-thick slices; top with salsa. Yields about 3 to 4 slices of mushroom and 1/3 cup of salsa per serving.

- Laurie Woods



## NORTHERN NOMENCLATURE

### ST. CATHARINES, ONTARIO

*(Pr. Noun)*

A city in south-central Ontario, Saint Catharines was originally settled by Loyalists who fled across the Niagara River, near the famous Niagara Falls (located just a few minutes from St. Catharines). The city is also home to a large Roman Catholic population, dominated by Canadians of Italian and French origin. The city was named for the teenage martyr, St. Catharine of Alexandria, Egypt (+305), who testimony and self-sacrifice converted many sages of her home city to faith in Christ, after which all faced martyrdom.

The patron saint of the city of St. Catharines provides a little-known reflection of the life of one of Canada's great heroines, Laura Secord, whose spirited self-sacrifice to warn Loyalist troops in the nearby Niagara area actually secured the city of St. Catharines as part of the Dominion of Canada. It was this act of self-sacrifice, involving a 30 kilometre trek through dangerous brush and bog, that preserved the entire Niagara region from American invasion across the Niagara River in 1813. Hundreds of soldiers sacrificed their lives in defence of the region – one of the most significant hubs of Canadian military history on domestic soil.

In tribute to the highly educated St. Catharine – and perhaps by virtue of her intercessions – the area bearing her name has also become a hub for postsecondary education, on both the Canadian and American sides of the border.

While Latin calendars removed in 1969 the commemoration of St. Catharine of Alexandria<sup>1</sup>, the Orthodox Church maintains her veneration as a patron saint of young women and education. Her miraculously revealed relics rest in the monastery bearing her name, atop Mount Sinai, where the Lord appeared in the Burning Bush to the Patriarch Moses, known as the God-Seer.

To the present day, the bush in which the Lord appeared in Uncreated Light remains safeguarded in a walled garden within the monastery, not far from the relics of St. Catharine. It is perhaps providential that the Canadian city of St. Catharines should be known as “The Garden City”, a reflection of this holy garden where the Lord appeared.

As one of the world’s major tourist attractions, the Niagara Falls/St. Catharines area will doubtlessly benefit from the prayers of their patron saint, whose prayers we should also seek for our own spiritual struggles, and for the salvation of those who visit the area that bears her name.



---

<sup>1</sup> This feast was restored as an optional commemoration for Roman Catholics at the revision of their calendar in 2002, following a pilgrimage by John Paul II to the Greek Orthodox shrine that houses the holy relics of the saint.



## PRAYER & LIFE

### *Bringing Life to Deadness in Prayer*

*“Without me, ye can do nothing”*  
– John 15:5

It is not a rare thing for zealous Christians to experience what the Church father call “dryness” in prayer. A daily rule of prayer requires effort and will, and these can be weakened by tiredness, and distracted by activity. Yet familiarity with prayers can often make them a mere set of words or – even worse – sounds. Much like students singing the national anthem each morning the heart of prayer, the *life of prayer*, can soon become deadness.

One Church Father (perhaps Saint Dorotheos of Gaza) reminds us that even in cases where are prayers are said by wrote, with little attention and little feeling, we should still persevere: even if it benefits us little, it still bothers the devil. Yet this is not the ideal for which we should strive. The Lord looks upon our efforts in prayer – particularly the times when we truly struggle – as our sacrifice of prayer to Him. These struggles are blessed. Yet between these times of struggle, the practice of holy people down through the centuries offers us something more, which enriches, strengthens, and enlivens us, that we should not fall away to become “prey to the wolf of souls” (as we read in the prayers before Communion).

In the practice of the Church, both in monasteries and in the world, the saying of the Jesus Prayer may be used if daily services must be missed.



In this we must use great care, lest the practice become a routine one, simply to allow us to skip the trip to Church. The use of the Jesus Prayer, before or after our regular rule of prayer, can help to warm and to humble our hearts, and to prepare it to receive the holy words of other prayers. The Jesus Prayer is also ideal for the numerous “in between” times of contemporary life, in waiting rooms or on busses, in class or while on the telephone. With the help of a spiritual guide, the prayer rope may also be used to pray for the pressing needs of the day, such as the repeated *Lord, have mercy* for our spouse, our children, our colleague whose mother is chronically ill, or our boss who is disagreeable.

Similarly, we might put to use more fully the inherited short hymns of the Church, particularly the *Akathist* Hymns (literally, the hymns that are sung or read *without sitting*). Since the composing of the first Akathist by Saint Romanos the Melodist, with prayer and praise to the Mother of God, a wide variety of other Akathists have been composed and blessed for use in the Church. It is most appropriate to read these prayers in time of real, everyday needs, including Akathists to St Xenia (for those seeking a spouse, a job, or a home), St Nectarios (for those with cancer), St John Maximovitch (for travellers, those in storms, and those far from home), and numerous other saints. Many of these are available online, and are worth printing out and using. The prayers of these saints make a real difference, granting us strength as well as help from God.

It is good to endure periods of spiritual dryness in prayer: from these spring forth great stability of faith. But in our weakness, we also require spiritual tools we may use in the midst of those periods of spiritual dryness which might otherwise be a danger to our soul. It is these tools which help to return our prayers to a strong, lively state, and to connect the needs we feel in our hearts, with the words and purpose of our prayers.

— *Father Geoffrey Korz+*



## Q&A

### *Questions from Readers*

#### The Soul After Death

I read "The journey Beyond Death" and I'm guessing it's describing toll houses. I don't understand it. How can my good deeds which are rags out weight my sins? How is it possible that I will be guilty and have to either "outweigh" or be punished for sins I haven't repented from when it is not even possible to repent of all my sins. I understand that there is some kind of pre-judgment judgement. But if sin is a sickness and not a crime how can demons show certain sins I've committed that I have to outweigh with good deeds? I mean it sounds a lot like purgatory, I must go through some kind of punishment to cleanse my sins.

— JM, Hamilton, Ontario

*It is important to look at the overall teaching and experience of the Church Fathers on the topic of the soul after death.*

*The teaching of the toll houses is the long-held tradition of the Orthodox Church, both east and west (before 1054 AD). Saints as diverse as Sts Agatho of Egypt, Ambrose of Milan, Athanasius the Great, Columba of Iona (Scotland), Basil the Great, Dionysios the Aereopagite, Dorotheos of Gaza, Nicolai Velimirovich, John Maximovitch, Gregory the Great of Rome, and John Chrysostom, along with many others, speak directly of the experience of the toll houses. Any modern critics who speak out against them have likely been told by their bishops to be silent on the matter. Be sure to check the background on anyone who rails against this. Like*

*the famous line in Shakespeare says, if they insist upon talking about it non-stop, "methinks he doth protest too much".*

*While the bodiless demons confront souls after death on their way to judgment, it is the threats of the demons which are silenced by the remembrance of our righteous living, not any sort of anger from God. Our guardian angel offers up our good deeds as a defense for us against demonic accusations. God's judgement is merciful and just. This is vividly described in the lives of the saints.*

*It is important not to fall into an understanding of the toll houses or life after death as requiring some sort of appeasement of an angry God: this is the kind of thinking that leads to certain heresies, and ultimately to atheism.*

*Our sin is a sickness which the demons in their jealousy want to exploit. God in His mercy only wants us to repent, and to find our way to happiness with Him.*

- FrG+

#### On the Best Way to Offer Spiritual Help

Someone who is very dear to me has fallen away from their faith, and refuses to respond to requests to return. They are hostile to spiritual discussions, and reject even the suggestion of spiritual advice. I feel as if I should be able to do something more to help them, but feel quite helpless.

Am I missing something? I want to do whatever is best for them.  
- Anonymous

*Our natural response to any situation like this is to "do" something: to offer counsel, to prove our point to the friend or relative, or to somehow manipulate them into doing the right thing.*

*Nothing could be further from the path suggested by the Church Fathers. If someone is open to receiving (and following) solid advice, and if they are asking questions, by all means either offer some modest advice, or suggest a priest or monastic who could help. In many cases individuals in this position are in a determined state of spiritual rebellion: they reject advice, and are often hostile to any sort of spiritual direction, even if their consciences are letting them know they are heading the wrong direction.*

*Spiritual rebellion is often coupled with some passion – such as lust, laziness, addictions, or (in almost all cases) pride. As such, the will of the individual becomes the critical thing, and no one can force the person to use their will. Clever arguments may only make the situation worse.*

*In these more serious cases, the very best tool to use is the prayer rope, praying perhaps one hundred times "Lord, have mercy on...", each day. The Holy Spirit is much more effective in influencing the human heart than we could ever be, and our prayers ask God to work from the inside out.*

*There is a piece of wisdom from the Greek hesychast Fathers that teaches that one hour of real prayer grants the benefits of three hours of good sleep. While I cannot offer much regarding this level of prayer, it is very safe to say that our fervent prayers for those we love have a much greater impact than anything we can say or do to offer spiritual help.*

*As a good priest once said, think (or plan) less, and pray more.*

- FrG+

## Sexual Sins

Is it a more serious sin to have sex with your boyfriend/girlfriend during a fast? What about in the days leading up to receiving Holy Communion? Can't I just go for Confession?

- An Orthodox Student

*There is a crying need to provide answers to questions like these, since our secular, anti-Christian society has most people (old and young) in a fog about these questions.*

*Firstly, any sexual activity outside the blessed state of marriage between one man and one woman is a serious sin for an Orthodox Christian. This covers everything from premarital sex to adultery, heterosexual and homosexual, long-term relationships to short-term affairs, physical intimacy to full sexual intercourse. Most Church Fathers would include kissing in this category, save a kiss on the cheek.*

*Any of these things overtakes our heart in such a way as to move us away from God. These are things we must confess, and we should not receive Holy Communion until we do. Breaking a fast in any way is undesirable, but extramarital sexual activity is sinful whenever it occurs, and is a very difficult habit to break.*

*Most confessors will encourage fasting and prayer to overcome sexual passions. The critical ingredient in overcoming such passions is the will of the people involved. Even in cases where an Orthodox Christian says they want to struggle to overcome this kind of passion, their choice of company, activity, and actions are the real test of whether they want to put themselves in the path of their passion. True Confession assumes an authentic desire to try to overcome a sin or a passion. In many cases, an individual simply does not desire to break from their physical addictions, and in such cases, there is little hope for them until they have a change of heart.*

*It is important to remember that one should not approach Holy Communion in a state of wilful rebellion from holy living. This should not be used as an ongoing excuse, however: the assumption that one can simply keep on sinning, and "eventually" repent is spiritual stupidity, and priests have buried far too many Orthodox people who have ended their lives – at both advanced and young ages – still planning to "eventually" repent.*

- FrG+

## Miraculous Icons

Is it common for icons of the Mother of God and saints to smell like incense or holy chrism?

- R.J. Brantford, Ontario

*Yes: miraculous icons often have this sweet odour. Tradition tells us that some people will notice the odour, while others will not be blessed to smell it. Another tradition teaches that the presence of such a sweet odour, or the flow of myrrh from an icon, reflect the spiritual presence of the saint and their response to our prayers, a sign of comfort for the faithful.*

- FrG+

## Unusual Patron Saint

Is there a patron saint of teddy bears?  
- SK (8 years old), Hamilton, Ontario

*Of course: it would be Saint Seraphim of Sarov, in whose holy presence the bears of northern Russia became mild and friendly, just the way they were in their original state, before the Fall.*

*While the modern affection for teddy bears originally began when U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt spared the life of a bear cub during a hunting trip, the presence of teddy bears in most Canadian homes should remind us that the true, original state of nature which was lost through sin was in fact much more like the gentleness of a teddy bear than like the distorted world in which we live.*

*It's not an exact analogy, but it is a reasonable one.*

- FrG+

## Converts & Apostasy

How common is it that converts leave the Church after a few years? I read stuff about "the two year itch". I don't want something like that to happen to me. Is there any warning signs that this may happen, why do these people leave?

- JM, Hamilton, Ontario

*Sadly, this is too common. Much of it happens when the "mystique" of Orthodoxy wears off, when the zeal gives way to the fact that being a Christian is simply hard work. If you begin with a willingness to endure, to "look neither to the left nor to the right" as the Fathers say, this is helpful. Also, moderation is critical: a moderate prayer rule, a normal life (i.e. not trying to pretend to be a monastic living in the world), and a spirit of genuine love for everyone and humility.*

*Sure signs of the deception that leads to apostasy are cynicism, a critical spirit, a sense that "Orthodox people are the best", judgementalism toward other faithful, priests, or bishops, a desire to take on the cultural traits of other cultures, and the sense that the only important thing in life is Church services (not even the saints lived like this - just read their lives!).*

- FrG+

## Names and the Priesthood

When a man decides to commit himself to the priesthood, does he choose the new name he is tonsured with? Or is that up to the priests superiors? If you could answer, I would be grateful.  
- AJ, Des Plaines, Illinois

*Thank you for your question.*

*Normally, when non-monastic men are ordained to the priesthood they do not take a new name, providing they already have a saint's name (which is almost all the time). In some cases, they will choose a new name to mark their new vocation.*

*The same is true with monastics who are ordained to the priesthood, although monastics will be given a new name upon tonsuring (i.e. taking monastic vows), as well as a different name when (and if) they are given the Great Schema. Hope this helps.*

- FrG+

## Vested interest

What is the red "cape" that a priest wears? What are those things that a priest wears on his wrists during services? Why do priests wear black clothes, even when they're not in church?

- MD, Burlington ON

*Thank you for your questions. I think many people have wondered about the same thing.*

*Priestly vestments find their roots in ancient clothing, which was first used for very practical purposes. The "cape" (called the pheloneon) was a common garment in the Byzantine East centuries ago, for reasons of warmth and protection from the elements. At times that the Christians were persecuted and the Liturgy had to be served in*

secret – often in the catacombs – It made sense for a priest to wear one, to keep warm and dry in the catacombs under the cities.

In other parts of the world, vestments were adapted. In hotter climates such as Greece and the Holy Land, light-weight fabrics were used, while colder climates gave rise to the use of heavy brocades. In Kiev, the practice of making priest's vestments with a high back became popular, to protect from drafts, a tradition which was later transferred to Russia.

The cuffs that priests wear on their arms were a common garment in certain parts of Europe, Africa, and the East. These were sometimes decorative, but were primarily used for gathering together loose-fitting sleeves at a time when few garments had buttons. The cuffs took on the spiritual meaning that no priest would serve any Liturgy based on his own strength, but only rather based on the strength of God.

Cuffs may seem like an unnecessary decoration in the contemporary world. As a priest serving the Liturgy, however, I can attest to their very practical usefulness in avoiding accidents with loose sleeves around the Holy Mysteries.

As for black clothes, black is a symbol of mourning over our sins, and keeps us ever mindful of our own death, to help us remember that we will be judged by God – an important mindset for any priest (and any Christian) to have).

– FrG+



## OUR COVER

The Scots-Irish Orthodox monk Saint Columba (Columkille) of the Isle of Iona looking westward toward North America.. From *Illustrated Notes on English Church History* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1901)



PUBLISHER  
All Saints of North America Orthodox Church  
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

*With the blessing of  
His Eminence Archbishop SERAPHIM  
of Ottawa, Archdiocese of Canada (OCA)*

Managing Editor: Father Geoffrey Korz  
Assistant Editor: Zoran Radisic  
Staff Writers: Father Geoffrey Korz, Linda Korz,  
Sara Hillis, Michael Ivanovich, Dan Opperwall, Laurentia Woods.  
Printing: The UPS Store

#### SUBSCRIPTIONS & CORRESPONDENCE

Letters and Inquiries can be directed to:  
ORTHODOX CANADA  
c/o 10 Princip Street,  
Hamilton, Ontario L8W 2M3  
CANADA

Call 9:00am to 5:00pm Eastern Standard Time  
(905) 318-6436  
Email: [korzg@hotmail.com](mailto:korzg@hotmail.com)  
Web: [www.OrthodoxCanada.com](http://www.OrthodoxCanada.com)

#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters to the Editor can be submitted in writing or via email.  
Orthodox Canada reserves the right to edit letters.

ORTHODOX CANADA is published four times annually:  
Pascha (Spring), Dormition (Summer),  
Feast of Saint Nicholas (Late Autumn), and Nativity (Winter).

SUBSCRIPTIONS:  
\$25/year, single issue \$5.  
U.S. Orders add \$5 shipping. International Orders add \$15 shipping.  
(Cheque or Money Order to All Saints of North America Orthodox Church)

Printed in Canada  
© 2009 All Saints of North America Orthodox Church.  
All rights reserved.

