

*Dormition of the Mother of God*

# St. Innocent Orthodox Church

✙ Founded in 1967 ✙ Moscow Patriarchal Parishes ✙

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PASTOR: Rt. Rev. Mitered Archbishop ROMAN STAR † Cell: 313-319-0590

Dean, Central States Deanery, Patriarchal Parishes

AUGUST 21, 2016

ASSISTANT PRIEST: Rev. DANEIL SHIRAK † 313-295-3073

EPISTLE: 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 3:9– 17 (#128)

DEACON: Rev. Dn. Michael Comerford

GOSPEL: St. Matthew 14:22 – 34 (#59)

SUBDEACON: Dr. Joshua Genig

STONE: 8

ATTACHED: Sister Ioanna

CHOIR DIRECTOR: Elizabeth Star Hatfield

READERS: Robert Joseph Latsko & George Hanoian

## ✙ 9<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST ✙

† 9:15AM — HOURS & AKATHIST &/or CANON; CONFESSIONS †

† 10am — DIVINE LITURGY OF ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM †

**COMMEMORATED TODAY: Afterfeast of the Dormition.** Apostle Thaddæus of the Seventy (ca. 44). Martyr Bassa of Edessa and her sons Theogonius, Agapius, and Pistus (2nd c.). Ven. Abramius, Archimandrite and Wonderworker of Smolensk, and his disciple, Ven. Ephraim (13th c.). Ven. Abramius the Lover-of-Labor, of the Kiev Caves (Near Caves—12th-13th c.).

**FOR THE REPOSE OF:** Estelle & Joseph Star; Anna & John Witkowski; Michael Sr. & Margaret Rusko; Mary, Andrew, Daniel, Michael & Lottie Yakuber; Ross & Margaret Falsetti; Helen, John & Carole Andrayko; Peter & Theresa Harvilla; Betty Martell; Frances & Todd Smoly; Peter Glover; Irene Adams; Ethel Elizabeth & Wayne Joshua deVyver, David Horka; Michael Rusko; Anna Lichagina, Yelena & Zinaida Korniyevskaya; Joseph Nossal; Michelle Tucker; Todd Comerford;

**MEMORY** Jaimie Truskowski (newly departed), *mother of Kayleen Truskowski*

**ETERNAL!** Peter Starinshak, whose anniversary of his repose is Wednesday, 24 August, *by nephew, Fr. Roman & Mat. Rose Marie*

**FOR THE HEALTH OF:** Archimandrite Seraphim; Priest Daneil, Matushka Debra & Corrina Shirak; Deacon Michael, Matushka Mary Ellen & Julius Comerford; Matushka Mary Donahue; Subdeacon Joshua & Abigail Genig; Reader Robert Latsko, Reader George & Betty Hanoian, Rose Nossal, Mary Glover, Nancy Cupp, Vasiliki Stamoulis, Gerald Martell, Azbehat, Donald Yakuber, Carl deVyver, Jo Anne Nicholas, Joan Rusko, Daria, Joseph Nossal, Ed Manier

**ALSO FOR:** Marianna Wess and new-born son, Andrew-Vladimir Jason, born on Friday, 15 July  
Elizabeth & Larry Hatfield, who celebrate their Anniversary on Tuesday, 23 August

**\* MAY GOD GRANT THEM MANY YEARS! \***

### **SCHEDULE FOR THE COMING WEEK** (*regular Wednesday & Friday fastig*)

Friday	8/26	6:30pm	AKATHIST TO ST. MOSES THE BLACK, followed by reception
Saturday	8/27	4pm	GREAT VESPERS & CONFESSIONS
Sunday	8/28		<b>10<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost &amp; Feastday of St. Moses the Black</b>
		9:15am	Hours & Akathist &/or Canon; & Confessions
		10am	DIVINE LITURGY; followed by Coffee Hour
		6pm	GREAT VESPERS for the BEHEADING OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST
Monday	8/29	10am	DIVINE LITURGY for the BEHEADING OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST & Panikhida ( <i>Strict fast day</i> )

### **PROSPHORA FOR TODAY IS OFFERED BY: Sister Ioanna**

**In Memory Eternal of:** Parents: Wayne Joshua (anniv. 8/29) & Ethel Elizabeth (B-day, 9/2); David Horka (anniv. 9/27); Alex Ruggieri (anniv. 7/21); Mother Benedicta (anniv. 8/7); Popadia Vera Nicoloff (anniv. 8/24); Olive Brower (anniv. 7/10); Elise Laney (anniv. 9/4); Michelle Tucker (anniv. 8/28); Archim. Roman (Braga); Fr. Photius; & all other departed family & friends; and **for the Health of:** Brother, Carl; Rdr. Robert (B-day, 9/2); Fr. Roman & Mat. Rose Marie (49<sup>th</sup> wedding anniv. 9/3); Dcn. Michael (B-day, 8/19); Rose N; Jo Anne N; Abigail & Anna G. (B-days); new-born Andrew (7/15); all family & friends.

✙ CHRIST IS IN OUR MIDST! ✙ HE IS NOW & ALWAYS SHALL BE! ✙

## **CANDLES FOR LAST SUNDAY, 14 AUGUST**

### **YEARLY CHURCH VIGIL LAMPS:**

*Royal Doors Lamp:* In Memory of Husband, Joseph; Son, Kenneth; parents, Michael & Margaret Rusko, & John & Martha Nossal, *by Rose Nossal*

*Altar Candelabra:* In Memory of Parents, Nicholas and Susan Yakuber, *by son, Donald Yakuber*

*Altar Candles (2):* In Memory of Irene Adams, *by Goddaughter, Rose Ann Everhardt*

*Iconostasis Lamps:* In Memory of Parents, Ethel Elizabeth & Wayne Joshua; Robert David H; & Health of brother, Carl, *by Sister Ioanna*

*Candles on the Solea:* In Memory of Peter & Theresa Harvilla, Norman & Monica Holst, & Ricky Ellis, *by Jason & Debra Truskowski*

*Table of Oblation Lamp:* In Memory of Parents, Helen & John Andrayko, Sr. & sister, Carole Andrayko, *by John Andrayko, Jr.*

*Reliquary-Icon Lamps: Sts. Innocent, Tikhon & Herman:* Health of Joseph/Sue; Robert/Diane; Pat/John; Joseph B., Jared, Jay; Rachelle/Aaron, Gabriel; Tricia, Lindsey; & In Memory of sisters, Anna, Margaret, Theresa & Irene; & brothers, John, Edwin & Michael *by Rose Nossal*

*Reliquary-Icon Lamps: Sts. Elizabeth & Raphael:* Health of the Genig and the Just Families, *by Subdeacon Joshua & Abigail Genig*

*Reliquary-Icon Lamps: St. Seraphim & St. Alexis:* In Memory of Ross & Margaret Falsetti, *by daughters, Rose Ann Everhardt & Margie Martell*

*Reliquary-Icon Lamps: St. Hilarion & Sts. Alexandra & Martha* **(AVAILABLE)**

*Reliquary-Icon Lamps: St. Nestor & St. Gerontius* **(AVAILABLE)**

### **IN MEMORY OF (MEMORY ETERNAL!)**

Joseph & Estelle Star, *by son Father Roman and family*

Paul & Alexandra Yupco, Basil & Ellen Starinshak, *by grandson, Father Roman and family*

John & Anna Witkowski, *by daughter, Matushka Rose Marie and family*

Samuel & Mary Kupec, *by granddaughter, Matushka Rose Marie and family*

Parents, Helen & John Andrayko, and sister, Carole Andrayko, *by John Andrayko*

My husband, Joe; my sisters, Margaret & Ross Falsetti, Anna & Mike Elaschat, Theresa & Pete Harvilla, Irene, & brothers, Michael, John &

Edwin Rusko; niece, Rose Mary & Dean Hough; Joe's brothers, Raymond & Walter Nossal, & sisters, Theresa, Florence & Helen Nossal,

*by Rose Nossal + + + Pete & Theresa Harvilla, by Mary Ann Harvilla & Kay Truskowski + + + My husband, Michael Rusko, by Joan Rusko*

Parents, Ethel Elizabeth & Wayne Joshua; David H; Nina I; Marion P; Fr. Photius; Mo. Benedicta; Archm. Roman; Popadia Vera, *by Sr Ioanna*

Thelma Ratcliff, Louis Pitts, Gloria Robinson, Reginald Bell, Lessie Favor, Lois Hamby, *by Manier Family*

Jaimie Truskowski (Newly departed), *by daughter Kay + + + Jaimie Truskowski (Newly departed), by Margie Martell & Rose Ann Everhardt*

### **FOR THE HEALTH OF: (MANY YEARS!)**

Elizabeth & Lawrence, Caitlin & Zachary, *by parents & grandparents, Father Roman & Matushka Rose Marie*

Gregory & Tamiko Star, *by parents, Father Roman & Matushka Rose Marie*

Children, Grandchildren & Great-grandchildren; Monk Fr. Sdn. Tikhon (Dade); *by Rose Nossal*

Father Roman & Matushka & family; Sister Ioanna; John Andrayko; Nancy; Mary G; Jo Anne N; Grandson Joey (*in the Navy Reserves*) & all people in the Armed Forces; & all St. Innocent Church parishioners, *by Rose Nossal + + + Family & Friends, by Mary Ann Harvilla & Kay*

Brother, Greg & Donna; nephew, Gregory & Liz; & nephew, Alex, *by Mary Ann Harvilla & Kay + + + Ed Manier, by Mary Ann Harvilla & Kay*

Archimandrites Nafanail, Gregory & Seraphim; Fr. Roman & Mat. Rose Marie; Fr. Lawrence & fam; Fr. Laurence & fam; Fr. Daneil & fam; Dcn.

Michael & fam; Mat. Mary D; Carl; Sdn Fr. Tikhon; Sdn Andrew; Sdn Joshua, Abigail & children; Rdr Robert; Robert M; David Samuel, Sky

& Avi; JoAnne/Nick; Athanasius; John A; Ed/Tiffany; Kim & fam; Vasiliki; Rose; Emil; Billy/Fonda; Donald Y; Marianna & new-born Andrew,

Jennifer & family, *by Sr. Ioanna + + + John Andrayko (May God watch over him), by Rose Nossal + + + Rose Nossal, by John Andrayko +*

Tamiko, *by Greg, Fr. Roman, Mat. Rose Marie & Family + + + Sdcn. Joshua Genig, by Genig Family*

*H & S of: all Manier children & grandchildren; Jennifer Kelley(cancer returned); Donna Williams (MS); Brittany (family issues), by Ed & Tiffany*

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**1) AKATHIST TO ST. MOSES THE BLACK, THIS FRIDAY, AUGUST 26<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 pm.** St. Moses the Black, or "Ethiopian," is very special to our parish, because the first local chapter of the national Brotherhood of St. Moses the Black (BSMB) was established under Fr. Roman's leadership right here at St. Innocent 9½ years ago, in January of 2007. Ever since, St. Innocent has been the permanent home of the Detroit Chapter, and Fr. Roman has served as the Spiritual Advisor. Every year we celebrate the Feastday of St. Moses (August 28<sup>th</sup>) by serving the lovely Akathist Service to him on the eve of his feast (*although this year it is a day earlier*). **AKATHISTS** are beautiful short (about 40 minutes) services celebrating the life-story of countless saints and feasts, in which the people all sing a series of verses to a repetitive 4-line melody, alternating with sections chanted by the priest(s). This Akathist to St. Moses service is a great opportunity to invite non-Orthodox friends to experience a short Orthodox service and to learn about this highly revered late 4<sup>th</sup> century African saint, whose life is an example of repentance and transformation. There will be refreshments and fellowship immediately after the Service, and a "Church Tour" of the icons of the many African (and other) saints will be available upon request. For more information, call: 734-634-2650. Do come!

**2) MARIANNA & JASON WESS' NEW-BORN SON, ANDREW-VLADIMIR WILL BE BAPTIZED & CHRISMATED ON SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 11<sup>th</sup> at 9am,** prior to the usual 10am Divine Liturgy, and then he will receive his first Holy Communion during Liturgy.

**3) WEEKLY "ST. INNOCENT ORTHODOX STUDY GROUP,"** led by Subdeacon Dr. Joshua Genig, meets on most Wednesday Evenings, 6:30-7:30 at St. Innocent Church hall.

**4) MANY ON-GOING THANKS to John Andrayko and Rdr. George Hanoian** for mowing & weed-wacking the lawn every week; and to all those who regularly help maintain the church's property — its beautiful church flower gardens & bushes, etc. **Volunteers always needed.**

**5) LISTEN EVERY SUNDAY TO THE COCC'S DETROIT'S OWN ORTHODOX RADIO HOUR [DOOR] ON WNZK 690-AM, 4-5 pm,** or on your computer/smart-phone, live, at <http://www.doorradio.org>. This website also has an archive of all its previous programs. **Excellent!**

**6) REJOICE, OUR NEWLY-PAVED PARKING LOT HAS BEEN FINISHED!!!** Not only does it **LOOK** so nice, it is so much **SAFER**, with no more holes and crumbling pavement to cause falls. Contributions to help pay for it are most welcome.



## **AT THE HEART OF THE STORM**

**By Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh**

A Sermon delivered on August 5, 1990

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

I should like to begin with the words of Saint Paul. He tells us that we all who have heard the life-giving, the creative word of God are building our lives on a sure foundation, not only on the teaching of Christ, but on His presence, both invisible, and communicable in the Sacraments. This is a sure foundation of all life — ours, and that of the whole creation. But what do we build on this foundation? Some, the heroes of the spirit, the Patriarchs, the Prophets, the Apostles, the

Martyrs, the Saints that cannot be shaken even by the storms of the History. Others have build of gold and silver that rust cannot destroy, that rust cannot spoil.

But do we belong to these? Or are we not rather those who are building on the foundation of Christ, Who is a column and a pillar of truth and of life — are we not building of wood and of straw? As long as we live, as long as a storm doesn't come, both wood and straw seem to be so secure; but then, comes a hurricane, then fire comes — and what is left of it? And it is not only physical fire and physical hurricanes that destroy: History is made of fire, a fire of judgment; and remember the words that the judgment of God begins within His Church, and this Judgment is the judgment by fire. And History is like a storm...

What is left then — is there any hope for us? There is! Because Paul has given us a very stern warning lest we lightmindedly build on a Foundation which is Holy something which is unholy, unworthy of this foundation. St. Paul tells us: Yes, your works may go up in flames, but you may stay... And why? How can we? Aren't we judged simply by the final reckoning on our life, on what we have built? Perhaps today's Gospel can give us some vision of what may happen.

The Apostles left Christ to cross the Sea of Galilee/Genesareth. The weather was good, the sea was calm, they hoped for a safe crossing. And then the wind came down, and the storm arose, and the waves raged, and they felt that the little skiff in which they were crossing the Lake had become a possible grave for them — a cold, watery grave. They fought as they could; but they could do nothing against the raging sea and the furious wind.

And at that moment they saw Christ walking on the sea, walking on the waters, at the very heart of the storm, in the eye of the hurricane. And they cried out in horror because they thought this could be nothing but a ghost — God could not be in the midst of the storm, a storm that spelt death to them, destruction. If God were there, there should be peace, stillness, safety for themselves... And yet, God was at the heart of the storm, as He is at the heart of all the historical storms which rage all around us and tosses us about, and frighten us so much, and bring us to the brink of death.

And they cried in terror. And then, they heard a voice; a voice unmistakably that of Christ: It is I! — don't be afraid!

And a degree of peace came upon them; and Peter turned to Christ, and said, If it is You — let me come to You on the waves!.. And Christ said, 'Come! Enter into the storm, don't try to escape it, don't look for safety in this small, frail skiff that can be broken to pieces by the waves, and drowned — don't count on that! Walk into the storm, walk on the raging waves!..

And as long as Peter was looking at nothing but Christ, to be with Him wherever Christ found Himself, he could walk. But he became aware of himself; at that moment he became aware of the storm, he was aware of the fact that he could die in a moment, helpless, drowned. And terror seized him, and he cried to Christ again, 'Lord, save me!'— and the Lord stretched out His hand.

In another passage of the Gospel we are told, 'And at that moment they discovered that they were all near the shore' — they were at the end of the journey, while terror made them think that they were in the power of death...

Isn't that something which we can learn, each of us, from the circumstances of life? Let us ask ourselves whether on the unshakeable foundation of Christ we are building of stone, of gold, of silver — or only of perishable things? Let us ask ourselves whether it is with Christ, with God that we want to be in the midst of the storm, at the heart of the storm, fearless, because that is the place where He is — or whether we look for salvation in the little boat that is being drowned.

Let us reflect on this; and let us walk again into life with new hope, with a new sense of responsibility, but with the certainty that all things are possible for us in the power of Christ Who sustains us. Amen.



## **“I AM WAITING FOR YOU AT SAMTAVRO”: ON A MIRACLE OF ELDER GABRIEL (URGEBADZE)**

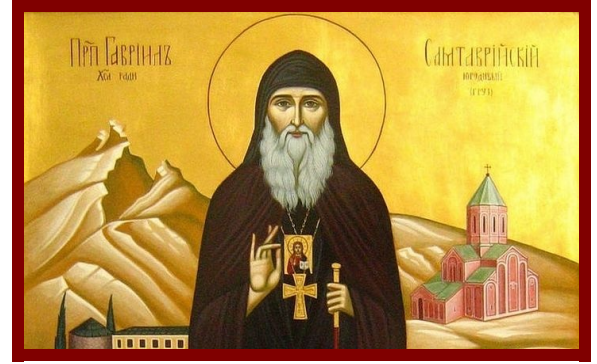
By Constantine Tsertsvadze

I met Elena Getsadze at the Tbilisi [Georgia] airport purely by accident. The woman attracted my attention by crossing herself and venerating an icon of Elder Gabriel (Urgebadze). That was in 2015. I came up to her, gave her icons and oil blessed on the holy relics of Elder Gabriel and entered into a conversation with her. “Everybody loves him [St. Gabriel] so much!” I said. “It cannot be otherwise!” Elena replied with a smile. And then she told me her story which left an indelible impression on me and strengthened my faith in the greatness of the Lord. So I am going to share this story with you, my dear readers.

Elena Getsadze relates:

“In February 2010 my younger son fainted during a lesson at school (it happened in Tbilisi). The teachers called a medical emergency team and the child was promptly taken to the hospital. When I came there and saw my boy in such a grave condition I lost consciousness myself. As I came round and opened my eyes I saw a priest vested in black who was assisting the nurses. Suddenly he looked at me and said: ‘I am waiting for you at Samtavro’. At that moment I did not recognize him and paid no attention to his words.

Soon I was shown the tests results and the computer-aided tomography scan of my son’s brain: he had a malignant tumor with metastases in the brain. Georgian doctors refused to perform an operation on my child and we were advised to sell all our possessions and go either to Germany or Israel for medical treatment. This verdict of the doctors plunged me into despair. I was about to sell everything I had and go to Germany when I suddenly spotted a photograph that hung on the wall of the resuscitation unit. The man who had helped the nurses bring me back to my senses was depicted on it! I asked who it was and they answered that it was an elder, a man who possessed extraordinary spiritual gifts, at whose grave numerous healing miracles had occurred. I was startled beyond speech and was even unable to tell the doctors that I had seen him at the hospital! So I resolved to go to Mtskheta without delay.



*Venerable Elder Gabriel (Urgebadze)*



*Elder Gabriel’s Grave.*

*(Now his relics are enshrined at the Samtavro Monastery.)*

When asked where the elder’s grave was located, I was told that it was in the center of the town of Mtskheta, at Samtavro Monastery! Samtavro ... It was precisely the word that the elder had uttered at the hospital... And all became clear to me at once: I dared not lose a minute and had to go to the elder’s grave immediately. And this is just what I did. I took my son and brought him to the saint’s grave and was amazed by what I saw: there was a great number of believers there; they knelt down before the grave, took their rings and crosses off and laid them on the ground. I prayed to the elder and asked him to help us sell our house as soon as possible and go to Germany for medical treatment.

On the following day the boy again felt very sick. He even collapsed and was hospitalized and put on an intravenous drip of many drugs. I insisted that my son have another computerized tomography in order to learn how rapidly the

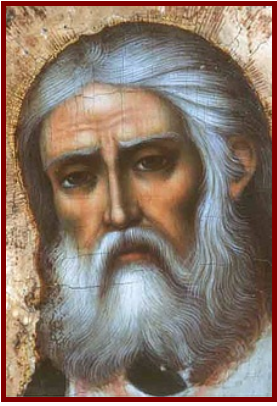
disease was progressing. So he had a CAT scan again. But time went by, the results were delayed, and I was awfully worried and felt restless. All of a sudden I was asked to enter the head doctor’s consulting room and was informed perplexedly: ‘Mrs. Elena, we have good news for you, although we cannot explain this phenomenon: everything is absolutely fine with your child—there are neither brain tumors nor metastases! He had two additional CT scans done and we have double-checked the results—but we have found nothing wrong! However, the results of the previous scan were completely different. From a medical point of view it is inexplicable!’

I hooted with joy and swooned again. Surprisingly, I saw the same ‘priest’ again, our Elder Gabriel, who was smiling and crossing us. As I regained consciousness, I started sharing my story with physicians and nurses who listened to me with bated breath and cried! They wept and thanked God for such a great and unpredictable miracle!

As for me, after that miraculous event I became a church-goer; and every day we thank Elder Gabriel and read the Akathist to this glorious ascetic, who helps sufferers and intercedes for us in the Heavenly Kingdom.” *Source: www.pravoslavie.ru*

## **ST. SERAPHIM OF SAROV**

By Archpriest Artemy Vladimirov *Translated by Nun Cornelia (Rees); Source: Pravoslavie.ru*



I greet you, dear friends, on the day of St. Seraphim of Sarov [7/19//8/1], wonderworker of all Russia and luminary of Russian history, the Russian land, and the Russian Church! Allow me to ask you a question: What is the main difference between our contemporaries and the venerable Sarov ascetic? What is most characteristic of the soul and personality of the twenty-first century man living in Russia? Generalizations are always lame, it's true; but in observing myself and those around me, I would say that our contemporaries are always or at least most of the time in a state of anxiety, inner disturbance, whirling thoughts and feelings, which unruly swirling draw us in and throw us off the constructive path, according to the old saying, "a foolish head gives the feet no rest." Fickle morals, absolutely contradictory emotional states: now wild joy, now deep depression, and mainly—the wretched ability, of course well acquired—of losing peace, equilibrium of emotional and physical strength, getting

irritated at trifles, falling into a state that is amusing but in fact repulsive to angels, of offensiveness and defensiveness. This is the diagnosis that each of us can, with even minimal self-criticism and self-observation, apply to ourselves.

From the above it would follow, dear friends, that the memory of St. Seraphim of Sarov, his life experience and spiritual lessons that he shares with us by simply looking at us from old and modern icons with his characteristic angelic, half-sad, half-joyful smile, which are as precious as the air we breathe. Regardless of the well-known commandment that St. Seraphim left to us, his compatriots and spiritual children: "Acquire the spirit of peace, and thousands will be saved around you," a brief survey of those I speak with and of myself shows that only 5% out of a hundred have ever taken this commandment seriously as a guide to action. That is why today we stretch our hands trembling from anxiety, stress, and cardiac arrests to St. Seraphim and ask him to intercede for us before the Throne of the All-Sovereign Lord and before the Heavenly Queen, whose servant he, St. Seraphim, humbly called himself; so that the warm azure of Divine grace might descend upon us also, instructing every Christian in piety, righteous and chaste living, as the apostle Paul said in one of his epistles. It is grace alone, flowing in streams of living water from the Risen Christ through the Church's sacraments, that can help us if we truly desire it; if we understand how to go to God, if we make use of every means offered to us by St. Seraphim.

It is God's grace that can change us and recreate us—from anxious, nervous, ill-wishing, irritable, mean, vindictive, resentful, vengeful, querulous and therefore, simply stupid and dense, that we would become at least a little humble, a little meek, peace-loving, joyful, bright, amiable, benevolent, nice, tactful, kind, and therefore smart; that is, knowing how to make intelligent use of those grace-filled sparks, which, fanning into the heavenly fire of faith, hope, love, and ceaseless prayer and brotherly service of people, makes us Christians not only in name but in life.

Thus, venerable Fr. Seraphim, enlighten us and instruct us unworthy, sinful and blind kittens. Teach us who live in the midst of the clamorous world to walk the path of peacemakers, which you commanded us to walk and which you yourself walked right up to the open gates of Christ's eternal Kingdom of peace and love.

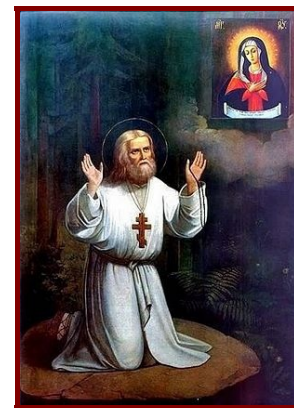
I recall in connection with this instruction the saint's unobtrusive witness. If we would heed ourselves, if we would reproach our own consciences, we would have no time to judge and watch our neighbors. This is the first but not the most important instruction, which is oh so hard but not impossible to fulfill, for all is possible for those who believe in Christ and desire to save their souls in this rapidly changing world. Self-reproach, my friends, presupposes constant mental attention to the regions and space of our own hearts. Only the person who is accustomed to not looking left and right, who avoids superficial, frivolous pulp reading, and not only reading but also colorful, glamorous pictures, which are rotten food for the majority of today's gapers, poisoning with visual toxins our immortal human soul... only he will be able to peer into the closet of his own soul, to gaze upon the ancient passions innate to fallen man—I mean pride, lust, and anger. To enter into verbal combat, to oppose the suggestions coming from evil thoughts that attack the heart from within—this is a sign of a soul true to Christ, a soul that is truly well-ordered, sensible, and wise; the soul about whom is written in Holy Scripture: *Saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word* (Is. 66:2). And the Savior Himself continually says in the Gospels to us, "Heed yourselves."

Heed yourself as did the youth Prokhor, later a novice at Sarov Monastery, and then monk Seraphim, who blossomed amidst the Russian winter with wondrous gifts of the Holy Spirit. And one of these was his abiding within, self-reproach, combined with ceaseless converse, prayer, directed to the Heavenly Father.

Just the same, it is not enough just to count your failings. Some folks we know do this and call it self-analysis, getting themselves into a—forgive me—depressive state. It is necessary also to emulate St. Seraphim's childlike faith and pious prayer, which his innocent soul poured forth to the Lord and the Mother of God and did not cease from morning till late evening. Is this possible for modern man, plastered over with gadgets, who looks at his tablet device more often than the mirror or the dinner plate? Is this possible for the person who is overloaded with information, who wants to know everything, not even having time to look up to

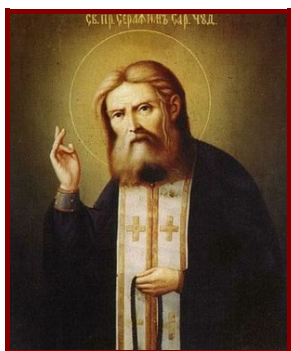
the heavens? It is quite possible, because the swine will find the mud, and a person who desires ceaseless prayer will easily acquire this gift, if he unites to his desire constant practice and total gentleness toward others.

Gazing upon us from his beautiful distance, St. Seraphim unobtrusively reminds us: “Your godliness, remember that praying to the Mother of God with the archangel’s greeting, ‘O Theotokos and Virgin, rejoice,’ read ten, or fifty, or 150 times a day, is an activity proven by two thousand years, and is the inner need of the immortal human soul.” And truly, not only in the fifth, or the eighteenth, but even in the twentieth centuries certain earthly angels with the same monastic name as St. Seraphim, one of them Holy Hierarch Seraphim of Dimitrov (last name Zvezdinsky, murdered by Red bandits in 1937 in Siberia), had the practice of reading 150 times every day with attention and love the prayer: “Theotokos and Virgin, rejoice. Mary full of grace the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, for thou hast borne the Savior of our souls.” Holy Hierarch Seraphim did not simply pray, but placed himself before the face of the Heavenly Queen. He wrote from exile to his spiritual children in the city of Dimitrov, “My close ones, can you believe that I have never felt during my years as bishop of Dimitrov such joyful days as those spent here in faraway Siberian exile. It is frightening to say, but the Heavenly Queen fulfills my slightest wishes. I only have to think about a piece of bread, or of rest, or of receiving the possibility to rest in conversation with a kind, like-minded person and I receive everything beyond all expectation. Perhaps it is because I try never to miss a day of fulfilling the Theotokos prayer rule.” Whoever disbelieves, let him try it.



Whether you are sitting or standing in a traffic jam or traveling from one end to the other of our golden-domed capital in the subway, it is all the more convenient to arm yourself with small prayer ropes, striving with every bead or knot to pronounce the wondrous prayer that Mikhail Lermontov knew by heart, “in difficult moments of life,” calling upon the Mother of God, as his grandmother taught him.

But we also know St. Seraphim for another commandment. He loved to repeat the thought of St. Gregory of Thessalonika, a great fourteenth century ascetic on Mt. Athos, that the prayer of Jesus is given not only to monks but also to laypeople. He called the Jesus prayer a golden thread, which if the Christian holds in his hand he will never stray from the path and will not fall into the devilish labyrinth of everyday vanity. The Christian who calls upon the name of God with attention is raised up, even if he is not very well versed in patristic teaching, to the very height of spiritual life—if the Jesus prayer is done with humility and angerlessness, and is strengthened by frequent confession and Communion of the Holy Life-giving Mysteries of Christ. We must speak more particularly about the latter.



St. Seraphim rejoices when Orthodox Christians confess thoroughly and approach the Holy Chalice like children who are always seeking their mother’s breast. Furthermore the God-pleaser of Sarov testifies that no one can fully prepare himself for Communion of the Body and Blood of the Lord, even if he fervently reads the entire prayer rule of preparation. The rule itself is given to us only so that we would feel a spiritual appetite, so that we would immerse ourselves in an awareness of our infirmity, unpreparedness, and incapability of receiving the mental light of the Divinity. “Even if you were to prepare yourselves for a million years you would never be worthily prepared, my dear ones,” St. Seraphim would say. Nevertheless, with repentance and boldness for God’s endless mercy, let us approach the Holy Chalice and purify ourselves little-by-little, illumining ourselves until we become burning lamps before the face of our Sweetest Lord Jesus.

We must also mention that in receiving the Holy Mysteries we should preserve the grace we have received as St. Seraphim did. He strove never to be scattered, never to fall into idle talk—never mind judging. He was very restrained with respect to earthly food, and loved much more after Communion of the Holy Mysteries, if it was not during his months and years of reclusion and total solitude, to pour grace through his joyful, peaceful, and Paschal words: “My joy, Christ is Risen!” And thus, smiling with his lips and with his soul, he poured out grateful light of consolation into cold, shivering, hardened souls drawn by God’s Providence to Sarov Monastery for the healing of their hearts.

Let us also, dear friends, emulate St. Seraphim’s smile; for looking at one another askance, like bogeymen, or like mice squinting at the grain, is the unenviable lot of those who follow conceptual art. But let us, Orthodox, cultured people, who have passed the threshold of 2000 years of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, having learned “a thing or two and how to do this or that,” embody our many centuries of learnedness—if such is the case—in the ability to greet one another with a smile and to part in such a way that our souls would feel bright and warm and wanting to meet again.

We could talk about St. Seraphim from morning till night. Nevertheless, he, whom the whole world knows, hints also to us that it is high time to go from words to deeds. And parting with you now, my dear friends, I do not part with St. Seraphim, whose prayers, I am convinced, will bring joy to our souls until we go to sleep.

*Holy father Seraphim, pray to God for us and make us bright suns for the consolations of our neighbors. Amen.*