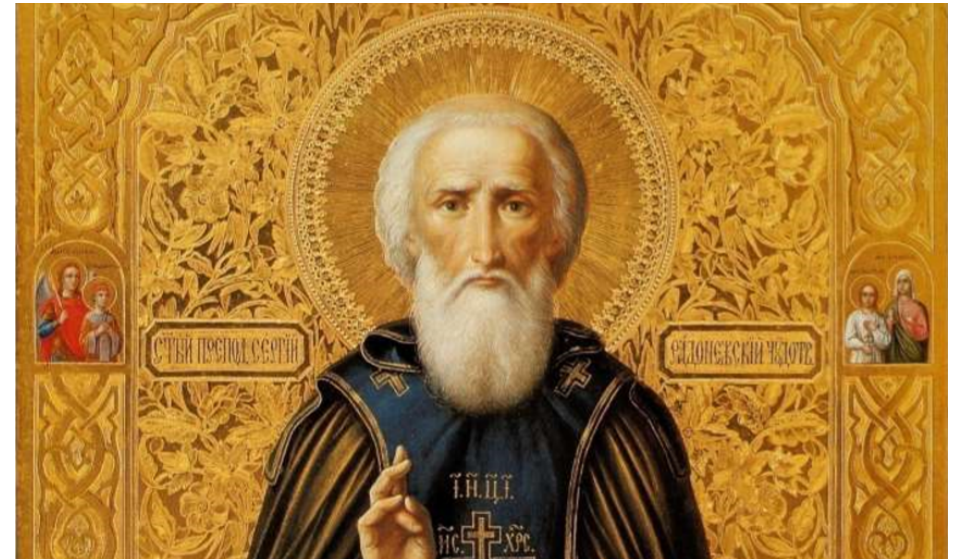


THE TRISAGION

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH

St. Sergius of Radonezh



A Life Worthy of Imitation

The lives of the saints as well as their writings are one of the ways that we learn about the spiritual life. In reading attentively the lives of saints, one of the first things we learn is that the saints are neither distinctively Russian or Greek (nor any other nationality); they are at all times Orthodox and Christ-loving. They breathe forth the same spiritual fragrance no matter when or where they lived.

One of the most beloved Orthodox saints of Russia is St. Sergius of Radonezh whose life for countless generations of pious Orthodox, both young and old, served as a source of spiritual nourishment. And so it can for us, if only we read it not so much with our minds, as with our hearts.

A Greek bishop, a contemporary of St. Sergius, doubted the many reports he had heard concerning the saint's sanctity and said: "Can there be such a lamp in this land and in these latter times?" Desiring to see for himself, he set out for St. Sergius' monastery, but "no sooner had he seen the Saint when he was struck blind. The Saint took him by the hand to his cell, and there the bishop confessed his unbelief and begged with tears for healing. The Saint touched his eyes and healed him, exhorting him not to come tempting the simple monks again. The bishop, now enlightened, spoke loudly everywhere about having seen a true man of God, a heavenly man and earthly Angel."

How many of us approach the reading of lives of saints, our minds clouded by doubt, skeptical about the miracles

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Schedules

	COFFEE HOUR	GREETERS	TELLERS
Sept 7	J. Cassar, N. Shaub, M. Stevens	M. Fedkin & K. Bazilevskaya	H. Torbic & M. Stickle
Sept 14	Russian Ladies Group A (Katya F.)	R. Patel & Mat. K. Oleynik	K. Cattell & M. Fiori
Sept 21	M. Leathers, L. Georgiou, D. Patel	C. Pelllock & M. Leathers	G. Cattell & B. Haupt
Sept 28	H. Torbic, AT Pelikan, Mat. K. Oleynik	Chambers & A. Stickle	M. Fedkin & H. Torbic
Oct 5	Russian Ladies Group B (Elena G.)	M. Fedkin & K. Bazilevskaya	M. Fiori & K. Cattell

■ LIVES OF SAINTS

St. Sergius (con't)

and thus blind to the treasure of holiness which they contain? Let us heed the example of the Greek bishop and beg God to open our mind's eye, for only in this way shall our reading of these lives be spiritually fruitful.

St. Sergius was born in 1314 in Rostov of pious and devout parents. Even before his birth, God worked a miracle upon the future saint: while still in his mother's womb he cried aloud three times during the Divine Liturgy. His biographer says that from this moment his mother "carried the child in her womb as if it were a precious treasure... She guarded herself from every stain of sin, observing a fast."

Baptized with the name Bartholomew, the growing boy was a poor student, unable to learn how to read. He often prayed to God in secret: "O Lord, give me understanding of learning!" One day he met in the fields a holy elder of angel-like appearance who asked, "What are you seeking, my child?" The boy replied that he wished most of all to read and write. Assuring him that for his faith the Lord would give him learning, the elder at the boy's entreaty accompanied him to his parents' house. They all went into the house chapel and the elder told the boy to read aloud from the Psalter. "Father, I do not know how," Bartholomew said. But after the elder commanded him to "Speak the word of God without doubt," the boy began to read easily. Then the elder foretold to the parents that their son would be a dwelling of the Holy Trinity, that he would be great before God and man, and that he would-direct



Some time later it fell on Bartholomew to care for his parents in their old age, a task he willingly undertook, although he wanted to become a monk. After his parents died he abandoned the world, and together with one of his brothers, went deep into the forest to build a cell and a small church, dedicated to the Holy Trinity. His brother was unable to remain long with him, so Bartholomew continued in the forest alone. At the age of 23 he received the monastic tonsure with the name Sergius.

Late one night when the Saint was praying, he heard a voice calling 'Sergius.' "Opening the window of his cell he beheld a marvelous vision . . . an extraordinary radiance shone in the heavens and a multitude of beautiful birds filled the air."

He was troubled by wild animals—especially bears. "One bear in particular would come to the Saint. Seeing that the animal came only to get some food, the Saint would place a small slice of bread on a log.... Often there was no bread, and both he and the bear would go hungry. Sometimes the Saint would give his only slice to the bear, being unwilling to disappoint him. Let no one be astonished at this, knowing certainly that when the Holy Spirit dwells in a man, the creatures become submissive to him, just as to first-created Adam in the beginning."

After two years, God-fearing monks came to dwell with St. Sergius. Although he had gone to the forest to work out his salvation in solitude, St. Sergius accepted their arrival as God's Providence and said to them, "Know that if you have come to dwell in the wilderness, the beginning of righteousness is the fear of the Lord."

Each monk built his own cell, and all gathered with the Saint for the Divine services in the chapel. A priest came from a village for Divine Liturgy until, finally, the Saint was persuaded to accept ordination at which time the bishop also named him abbot and exhorted him to "'Remember this saying: 'Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ' (Gal. 6:2). If you follow this precept, you will save yourself and those who live with you.' St. Sergius remembered this all his life and was not only a father but also a servant to all those who came to him."

St. Sergius worked at grinding grain, baking bread, cooking food, and making candles, as well as making shoes and clothing for the other monks. "He never spent an idle

(continued, see St. SERGIUS, facing page)

■ NEWS & NOTES

6th-12th Grade Youth Group

Our 6th-12th grade youth group will meet on Saturday, September 6th after vespers until about 8:30 pm for a Color Clash at Holmes Foster Park upper deck. They will meet again on Saturday, September 27th from after vespers until about 9 pm for Holy Smokes, a western-themed bonfire at the Patel's house. For more information on these or other youth group events, please contact Abby Swisher at aaswisher995@gmail.com.

Adult Ed – Garments of Salvation

On September 24th at 7pm, Matushka Seraphima will teach on the subject of clerical and monastic clothing, both liturgical and extra-liturgical. Topics to be covered include the meanings and functions of various types of clothing, and then also what various garments reveal about the identity or status of their wearer.

OCF Paraklesis

Our OCF college ministry is greatly expanding its weekly opportunities for worship, fellowship, and fun this fall, and one of their main initiatives promises to be a blessing to the whole community. Starting on September 9 and running throughout the semester, the OCF will gather at the church at 6pm to sing the service of Paraklesis to the Mother of God. These student-led services will be open to all, and will offer the whole community another chance during the week to gather and pray. May it be blessed!

For the Record

Theodore Harrison Lively was born to William & Lisa Lively on August 28th. May God grant them (and big brother Rad) many years.

Adelaide Johnson was baptized by Fr. Ignatius on Sunday August 31st. Many years to her parents, Cam & Josie (and big brother Silas) and her godparents, Dn. Evan & Amber Ashmore.

All-Parish Photo

Dress your best and make sure to be at church! On September 14th, immediately following the Divine Liturgy, we will take our annual all-parish photo. Bring your smiling face!

Sunday School Teachers Needed

Sunday school classes begin September 14th, and our Sunday school is in need of a few more teachers for our younger classes (fifth grade and below). If you enjoy working with children and have a heart for sharing God's love and the beauty of His Church, please contact Pdn. Mark (dnmark@holyltrinity-oca.org).

Sunday School Picnic

There will be a kickoff picnic for all Sunday school teachers, students, and families on Sunday, September 21, at 4 pm at Circleville Park. Families are asked to bring some sides and desserts to share!

Orthodoxy 101

Holy Trinity's traditional "Orthodoxy 101" fall inquirers class makes its return at 7 pm on Wednesday evenings, beginning on September 18th. Sessions will be taught by a rotating cast of Fr. Ignatius, Matthew Wallace, and Anna Stickles, and can serve as a perfect bridge point for introducing our friends and neighbors to the Orthodox faith.

Trinity House Renovations

Trinity House is moving forward with renovations. A group of men will soon be doing sheetrock, painting, and finishing the floor. If anyone has experience doing this and is willing help, please contact David Swisher. The front windows and door are scheduled for professional installation in late October, and we are hoping to have the whole project wrapped up by November.

Mortgage Paydown Update

On August 22nd, one day after the expiration of the prepayment penalty on our parish mortgage, Sbdn. Michael Stickles made the first principal payment of our years-long payoff drive in the amount of \$221,443.45. The balance of the mortgage is now around \$83,000, and our new interest rate on the remaining balance is 7.5%. Please prayerfully consider donating to the payoff drive, as now all monies collected can be immediately applied to mortgage principal and can save the parish significant interest expenses as we begin to pivot towards the next chapter of our life together.

■ SCRIPTURAL INTERPRETATION

Christian Meekness

The life of the Christian worshipping the living God and following Jesus may be summed up in the Beatitudes. The Beatitudes form the introduction to the Sermon on the Mount in the same way that the Ten Commandments formed the introduction to the entirety of the Law. The contrast between Law and Beatitude is intentional: the ten commandments gave instructions for regulating the life of the theocratic community, but Christ bestows blessing in the coming kingdom. The former found its context in the national life of Israel in this age, whereas the latter finds its context in the eschatological reversal coming with the Kingdom of God. The former demands obedience: the latter assures reward for those who have served Christ. The difference here is the difference between the Law and the Gospel. The reward promised in the Beatitudes consists of blessing in the age to come. The word usually rendered “blessed” is the Greek *makarios* (μακάριος), a word used in classical Greek to denote the happiness of the gods. In Christ’s day, the world looked at those poor, bedraggled souls who followed him, and thought them to be deluded, pitiable, and pathetic—a bunch of fools rightly to be met with disdain and a sorry shake of the head. This is what the Pharisees thought of Jesus’ disciples, writing them off and saying, “This rabble which does not know the law is accursed” (John 7:49).

In response to such denunciation, Christ assured his followers that they were not accursed, but blessed. A tremendous reward awaited them in the coming kingdom. The rich who despised them and who rejected Jesus will one day hunger and howl, but not his disciples. They will be filled and will laugh. On that blessed day of vindication, anyone might envy their fate. His disciples therefore must persevere in their faith despite the persecution their faith brought upon them. Their reward will be great in the age to come.

But to live the eschatological life of the age to come and inherit those rewards, Christ’s people must live differently than those around them. They must imitate the Lord. This imitation is described in the Beatitudes in a series of word pictures.

In one such picture, Christ’s disciples are characterized as the meek. The English word “meek” is not

a happy word. It conjures up images of spinelessness, moral timidity, cringing subservience, and pathological faint-heartedness. No sensible and responsible parent would raise their child to be meek. Meek people are not psychologically healthy or able to withstand the rigors of life. This is not, of course, what the Greek word used here means. That word is *praus* (πραῦς), and it was the word used in the Septuagint Greek to describe Moses in Numbers 12:3. One recalls that Moses suffered from none of the timidity or cringing subservience usually associated with the English word “meek”. Moses stood defiantly before Pharaoh, head of the world’s greatest power, and boldly demanded that he let Israel go. Moses, after descending Mount Sinai with the Law of God in his hands, discovered Israel indulging in an orgy of idolatry around a golden calf. He broke the tablets of the Law, ground the golden calf to powder, threw it into the local water source and made Israel drink it. He then called upon volunteers to slaughter the apostates (Num 32). This does not sound at all like pathological faint-heartedness. The Greek word indicates self-control, and the word is used to describe wild animals which have been tamed and domesticated so that they may be useful to man. A man who is at the mercy of his passions (such as uncontrolled anger) is not *praus*; a man who can control his impulses is. Christ is described as *praus* in Matthew 11:29. St. Paul commends this characteristic as a fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:23; St. Peter praises a *praus* and quiet spirit when found in wives in 1 Peter 3:4 as something very precious in God’s sight. Perhaps a better translation might be “gentle.” In a rough and tumble world, one might be tempted to push back aggressively, fearing that “nice guys finish last.” But Christ bids us be gentle and promises that such gentle souls will inherit the earth.

Taken from “Essential Orthodox Christian Beliefs,” oca.org.



■ LIVES OF SAINTS

St. Sergius (con’t)

hour. Remaining thus in ceaseless prayer and labors, he completely wore out and refined his flesh, having the constant desire to be a citizen of the Jerusalem that is above." Over and over he reminded his monks: “God’s grace cannot be given without trials; after tribulation comes joy.”

Multitudes flocked to him, wishing to be part of this growing family of monks. When dissensions arose, the Saint did not enter into them, preferring, as when the monks would not accept correction, to be silent rather than participate in any strife.

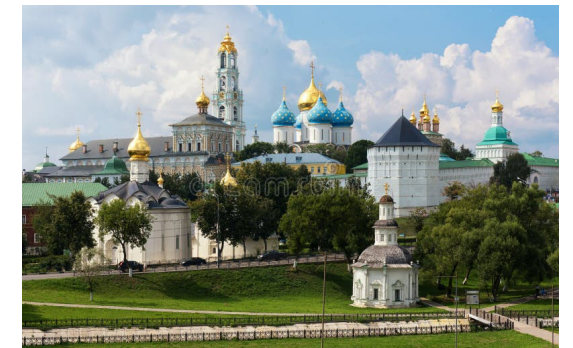
Once after prayer before an icon of the Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, a dazzling radiance shone upon him and he beheld the Most Pure One, together with the Apostles Peter and John. The bright light of the vision was unbearable, and he fell to the ground. But the Mother of God, touching him, promised that she would be with his monastery during his life and afterwards, protecting it.

"Continually chastening himself with fasting, working unceasingly, performing numberless miracles, the Saint reached advanced age The older his body grew, the stronger grew his fervor, in no way weakened by age." With the approach of death (which he foreknew) he gathered his flock and delivered a final exhortation. "He made them promise to be steadfast in Orthodoxy and to preserve oneness in mind with each other; to keep pure in body and soul and to have unhypocritical love; to avoid all evil and carnal lusts; to be moderate in food and drink; above all, to be clothed with humility; not to forget love of strangers; to avoid back-talk, and on no account to set value on honor and praise in this life, but rather to await reward from God in the joys of heaven and eternal blessings."

"He surrendered his pure, holy soul to the Lord, in the year 1392, on September 25, being 78 years of age. After his death the Saint's body gave off an ineffable, sweet fragrance His face shone white as snow Angels preceded him after his repose and opened for him the doors of Paradise and – what he had always desired – the illumination of the Most Holy Trinity."

The Mother of God has kept her promise to St. Sergius. His monastery was one of the last to remain open under the Soviet Yoke, and countless pilgrims still come to venerate his holy and incorrupt relics.

So remarkable is the life of this wondrous Saint, so full of miracles, that we tend to overlook those points which, with prayer, can be applied to our own circumstances. Even his childhood gives a picture of an exemplary Christian life. How many contemporary mothers are so solicitous over the spiritual needs of their children even while they are still in the womb? How many of us turn first to God in time of need and teach our children to do likewise? And how many young people of today sacrifice their own desires in order to care for their parents in their old age? And who among us can afford to disregard the Saint's example of constant labor even at "menial" tasks? Furthermore, while our society places such a high value on secular education (and even theological degrees) can we not see from this life that it is not so much the reading of books which we must cultivate, but rather the fear of God and the practice of His commandments? If only we would be more inclined to



The monastery of St. Sergius-Holy Trinity today

follow the example of St. Sergius. In his book on this Saint Pierre Kovalevsky writes:

"Throughout his life he remained a man for whom the Christian experience was more important than learning or reason. He never wrote anything, and he drew his knowledge not from reading but from his continual communion with God. His vocation was not to speculative theology but rather to the application of the Gospel's precepts."

