



CHURCH NEWS

Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church
№ 1 • August 2026

A NEW PUBLICATION FOR THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX AUTONOMOUS CHURCH

With the blessing of His Eminence, the Most Reverend Andrei, Archbishop of Pavlovskoye and Rockland, we are pleased to present the first issue of Church News, a publication dedicated to bearing witness to our Orthodox Faith, preserving and sharing our historical heritage, publishing sermons and spiritual writings, articles by clergy and laymen, and acquainting our readers with the life and Faith of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church.

WHAT READERS CAN EXPECT

Each issue of Church News will contain materials reflecting various aspects of the life of the Church, including news from parishes and missions, sermons and spiritual writings, historical documents and photographs, articles by clergy and laymen, as well as other materials devoted to the life, history, and witness of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church.

IN THIS ISSUE

WORD TO THE FAITHFUL

Recent sermons and spiritual instruction from the clergy of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church, offering guidance in the Orthodox Faith and Christian life.

FROM THE PAGES OF THE PAST

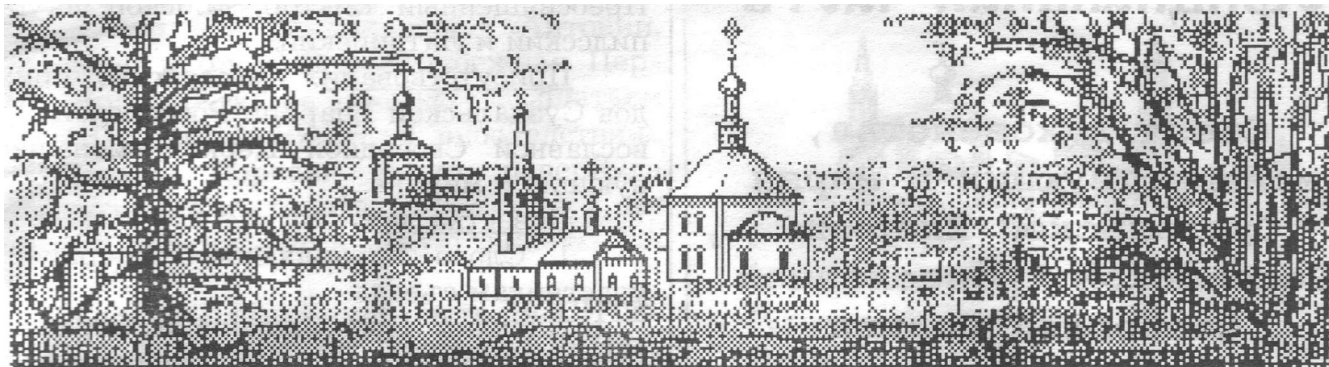
Articles, documents, and writings from the ROAC Archive, preserving the history, struggles, and witness of the Church for a new generation of readers.

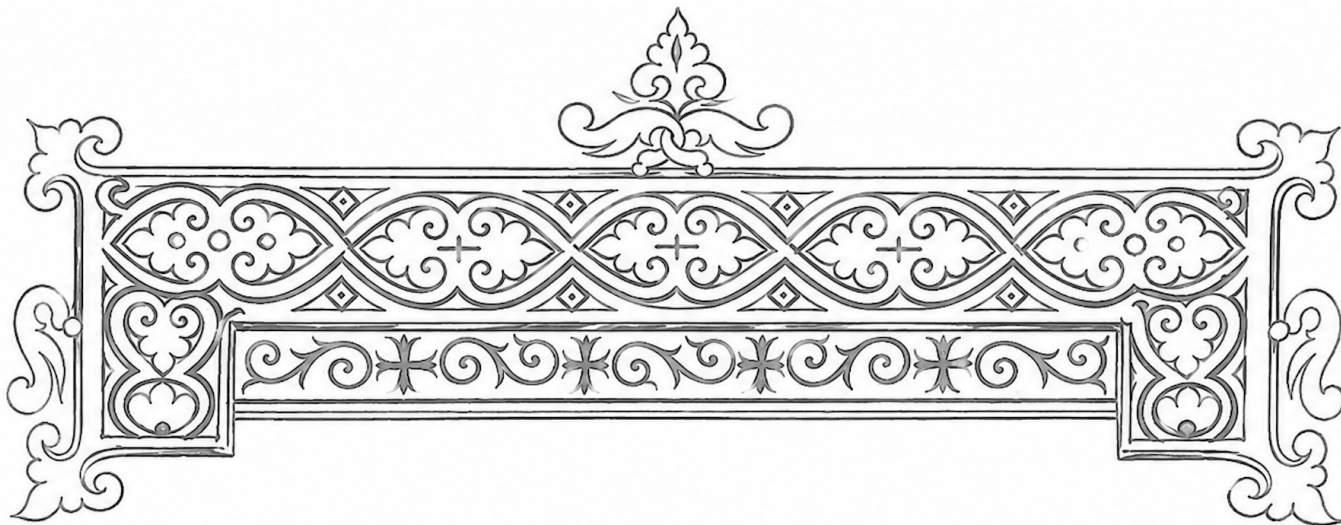
SAINT OF THE MONTH

The life, ascetic struggles, and witness of a saint of the Orthodox Church, recalling the example of those who faithfully followed Christ and handed down the Orthodox Faith to subsequent generations.

LOOKING AHEAD: SEPTEMBER

Major feasts, fasts, and commemorations of selected saints of the coming month, with particular attention to important commemorations of the Church.





WORD TO THE FAITHFUL

A SERMON BY PRIEST MONK AUGUSTINE

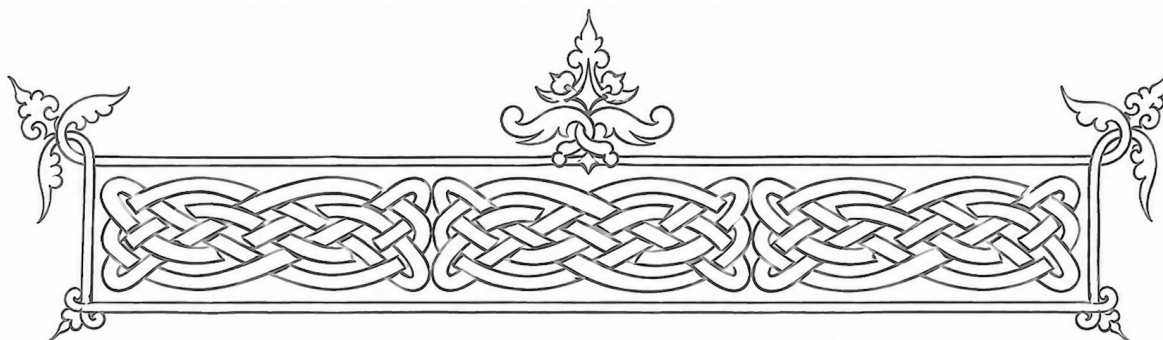
In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

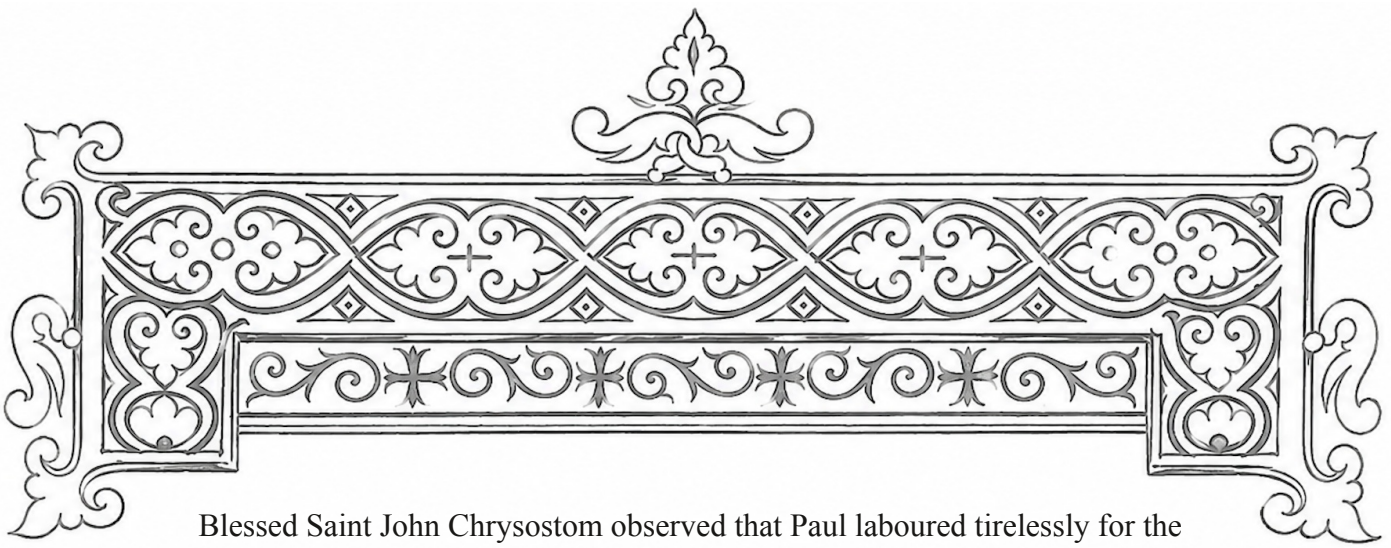
Beloved in Christ, today the Holy Church, like a loving mother, opens before us the spiritual treasury of Sacred Scripture. She sets before the table of our souls two abundant spiritual feasts: the divinely inspired word of the blessed Apostle Paul to the faithful of Corinth, and the divine, soul-saving parable of our Lord, God, and Saviour Jesus Christ concerning the unforgiving servant.

Let us therefore attend carefully to these Holy Oracles. Let us draw near with fear and longing, gathering from each text the heavenly wisdom which the Holy Spirit has graciously deposited there for the healing of our fallen nature and the salvation of our souls. Having contemplated these passages individually, as one who gazes upon distinct gems of priceless value, let us then seek the one radiant light that shines through them both. For the divine Scriptures, though recorded by diverse instruments across the ages, ever speak with a single, harmonious voice: a divine trumpet sounding across the desert of this life, continuously directing our wandering steps towards Christ, Who is Himself the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Consider first, brethren, the holy Apostle Paul as he reasons with the Corinthians concerning his divine ministry. He brings forth simple analogies from the everyday toil of men, asking: "Who goes to war at any time at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who feeds a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock?"

At first glance, these words may appear to the carnally-minded as mere practical observations regarding earthly compensation. Yet beneath the outer shell of these ordinary words lies a profound and golden spiritual principle. The Apostle is not constructing a defence for personal privilege, nor is he seeking bodily comfort or temporal wealth. No, he is unveiling to our darkened eyes the true, sublime nature of Christian service.

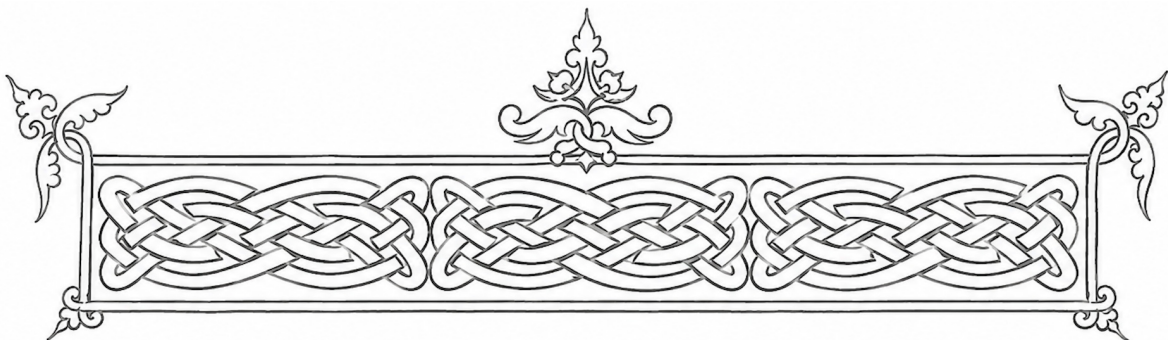


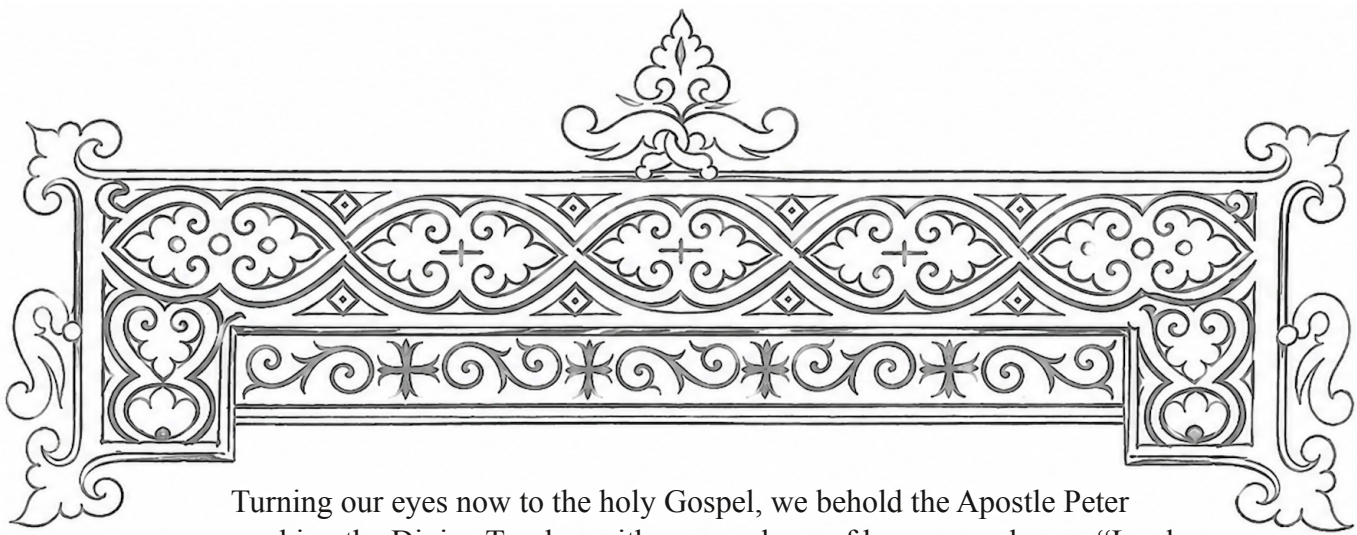


Blessed Saint John Chrysostom observed that Paul laboured tirelessly for the Gospel, enduring cold, nakedness, shipwrecks, beatings, and imprisonment. He traversed the inhabited world, bearing the sweet fragrance of Christ to nations shrouded in the darkness of idolatry. Yet throughout all these formidable sacrifices, Paul never regarded himself as a master over others, nor as a hireling demanding his wages, but rather as a humble servant of the Crucified King. Even while affirming the righteous principle that those who proclaim the Gospel have a right to live by the Gospel, he willingly surrendered that right. He laboured with his own hands, weaving tents by night so that he might preach the unsearchable riches of Christ by day without cost to his hearers.

Why did he do this? Because his heart burned with divine charity. His concern was not for his own belly, nor for the praise of men, but solely for the eternal welfare of his spiritual children. He chose to forego that which was lawfully his, lest any earthly impediment should hinder the light of the Gospel from entering a single soul.

What a soul-piercing lesson is here offered to us, my brothers and sisters. The fallen world, operating under the dark wisdom of the prince of this age, continually prompts us to demand: "What am I owed? What are my rights? What honour or gain have I earned?" But the golden vessel of the Spirit, the holy Paul, shows us a far more excellent way, asking: "How may I serve? What may I sacrifice? How may I empty myself for the salvation of my brother?" The world insatiably seeks self-assertion, self-exaltation, and self-preservation; but the Gospel of Christ perpetually beckons us towards self-offering, self-denial, and voluntary poverty of spirit. Herein lies the first majestic lesson of this holy day: the true Christian life is not centred upon exacting tribute from those around us, but upon learning the divine art of sacrificial love, the very life revealed in all its perfection by Christ Himself, Who came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.





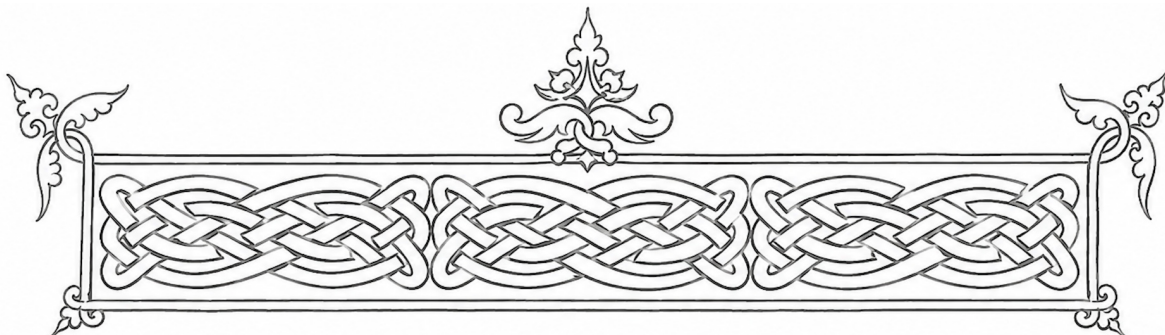
Turning our eyes now to the holy Gospel, we behold the Apostle Peter approaching the Divine Teacher with a query born of human weakness: “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?”

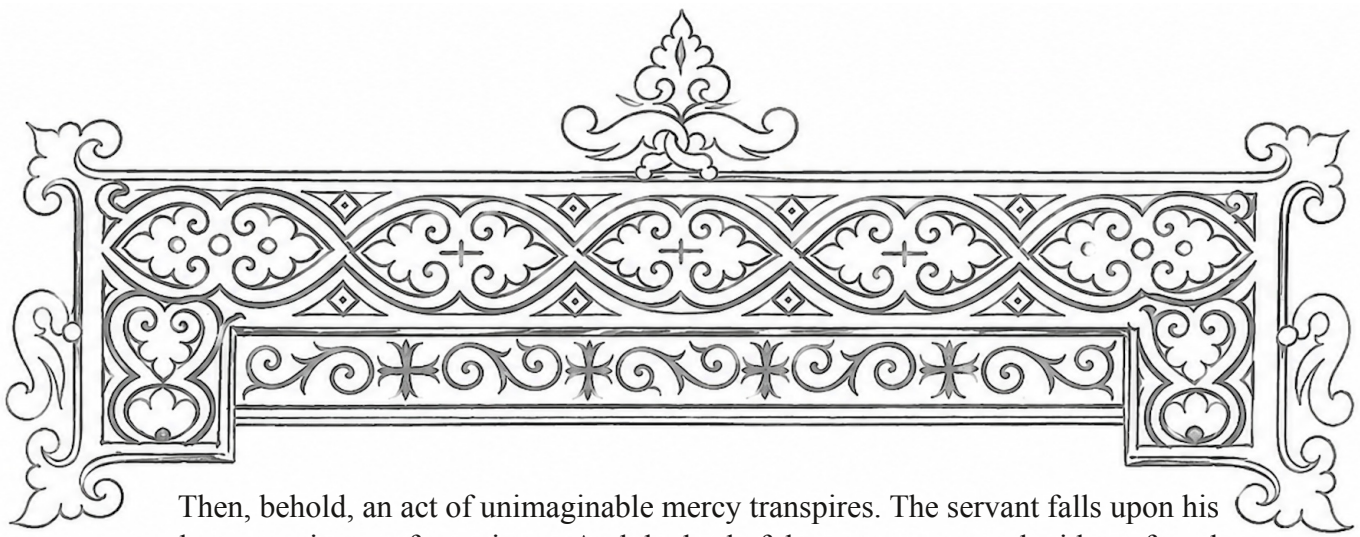
To understand the mind of the Apostle in that moment, we must remember the traditions of the ancient Hebrews. As recorded in the prophecies of Amos, the teachers of the law taught that God extended His long-suffering pardon to the surrounding nations three times, but that the fourth transgression brought down the unyielding fire of divine judgement. Thus, Peter reasoned within himself according to the frail measure of human logic. He thought: “If God’s justice kindles after three offences, shall I not demonstrate unprecedented righteousness if I double that allowance and add yet one more for good measure?” He believed that to forgive seven times was to reach the absolute summit of human virtue and spiritual generosity.

Yet how does the Lord respond? He does not praise Peter’s calculation; He utterly shatters the spiritual ruler by which Peter sought to measure love: “I say not to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.”

Our Lord offers here no mathematical ceiling, no rigid formula for the accounting of offences. Rather, He reveals an entirely new state of heart, a divine way of existence. Forgiveness in the Kingdom of Heaven is not a currency to be counted out until the bag is empty; it must become the perpetual climate of the renewed soul. To illuminate this mystery, the Lord set forth the parable of the king who took account of his servants.

Behold, a certain servant is brought before the king who owes the staggering sum of ten thousand talents. Consider the vastness of this figure. In the ancient world, a single talent represented the wages of a labourer for more than fifteen years. Ten thousand talents was an astronomical sum, a debt so vast that the wealth of entire cities could not discharge it, a debt that many lifetimes of relentless toil could never repay. The servant stood before his lord utterly bankrupt, stripped of all earthly defence, facing the horrific prospect of being sold into slavery alongside his wife and children.





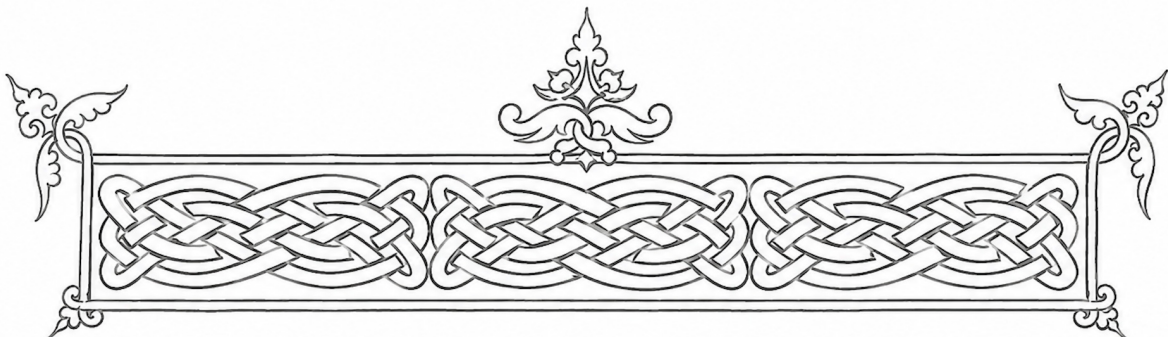
Then, behold, an act of unimaginable mercy transpires. The servant falls upon his knees, crying out for patience. And the lord of that servant, moved with profound compassion, does not merely grant a temporary delay; he looses the servant and forgives the entire debt.

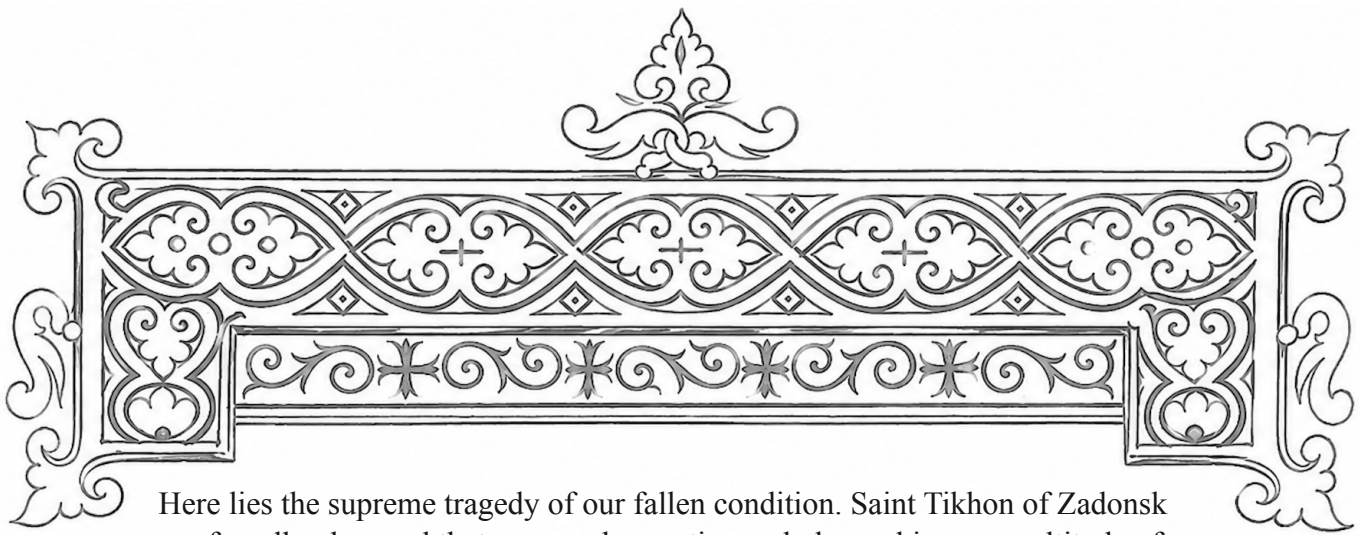
In this debtor, dearly beloved, we must behold ourselves. The ten thousand talents represent the crushing weight of our own transgressions against the Divine Law: every proud thought, every malicious word, every act of envy, every neglected duty, every indulgence of the flesh, and every forgotten prayer. Standing before the tribunal of the spotless God, we possess nothing of our own by which to satisfy the demands of infinite holiness. We are spiritually bankrupt, destitute of good works, and weighed down by a debt we can never discharge.

Yet God, Who is rich in mercy, deals not with us according to the strict scales of legal justice. As Saint John of Kronstadt writes with such fiery tears, every breath we draw, every pulse of our heart, every ray of sunlight, and every drop of spiritual grace is sustained solely by the boundless, unmerited mercy of God. He forgives us not because we have earned His favour, but because He is Good and the Lover of Mankind.

Now observe the tragic darkness that follows in the parable. That same servant, having just been delivered from the abyss of ruin, steps forth from the king's presence. He meets a fellow servant who owes him a paltry hundred pence, a tiny, insignificant sum representing a few days of simple labour.

Does the forgiven man rejoice? Does he reflect upon the ocean of mercy in which his own soul was just washed clean? Alas, no. A sudden, demonic blindness overcomes him. He lays hands upon his fellow servant, seizing him by the throat, and demanding with cold cruelty: "Pay me what you owe!" And when his fellow servant falls at his feet, using the very same words of entreaty that he himself had used moments before: "Have patience with me, and I will pay you all," he refuses. He turns a deaf ear to the cry of distress and casts his brother into prison until the debt should be paid.





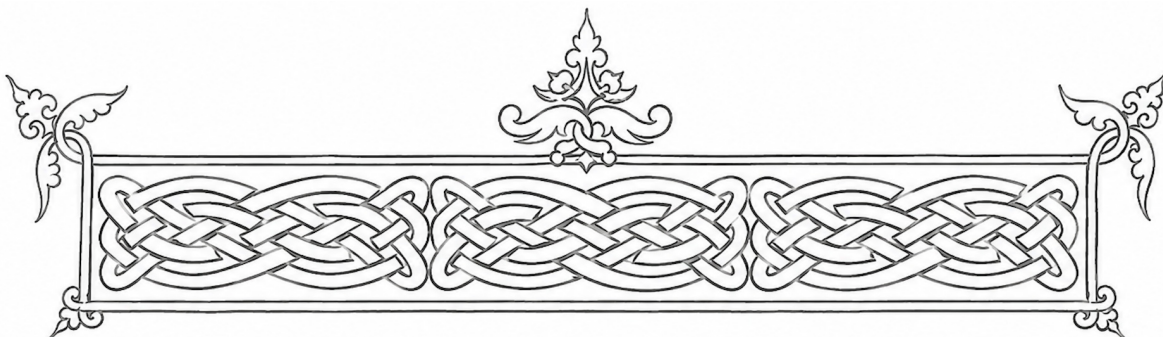
Here lies the supreme tragedy of our fallen condition. Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk profoundly observed that a man who continuously keeps his own multitude of sins before his eyes finds it natural and easy to forgive the small trespasses of his neighbour. But pride, that ancient poison, blinds the eyes of the soul. Pride magnifies the smallest fault of our brother while completely hiding from our view the mountain of our own offences against God.

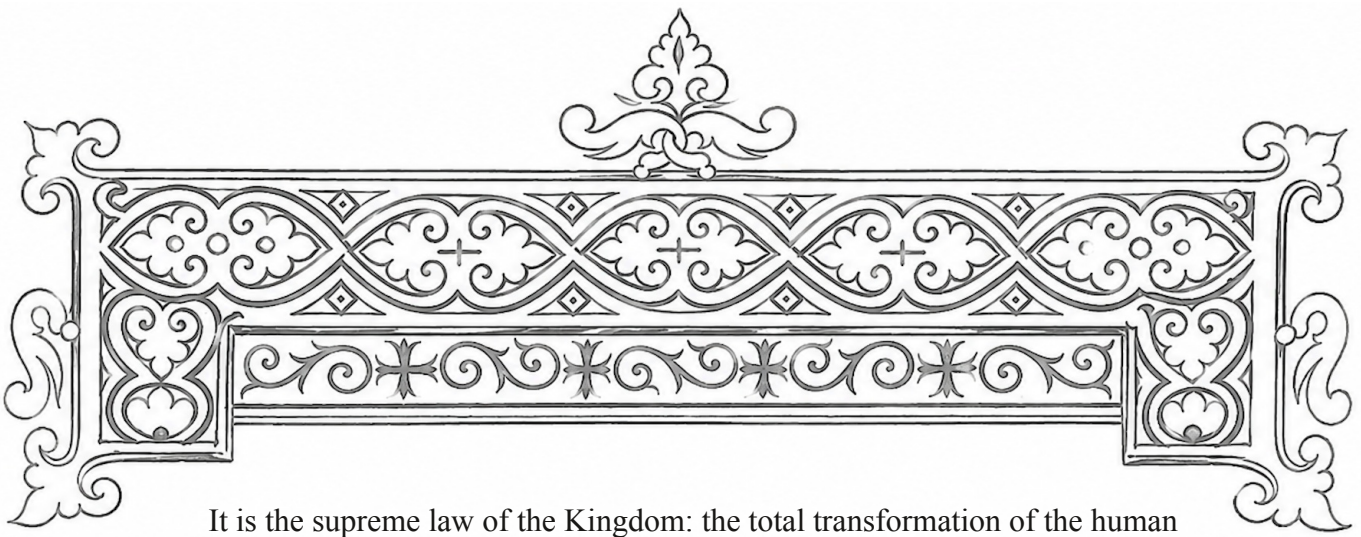
How often, alas, do we see this very tragedy enacted in our own lives? We enter the holy temple, we prostrate ourselves before the sacred icons, and we cry out with tears: “Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner! Overlook my transgressions! Be patient with my infirmities!” And God, in His infinite goodness, pours out His absolution upon us through the holy mystery of Confession. Yet no sooner do we step outside the doors of the church than we become harsh, unyielding judges of our neighbours. We harbour grudges for years; we nurse old grievances; we speak malicious words; we hold bitterness deep within the chambers of our hearts over trivial slights, forgotten offences, or petty disagreements.

The holy Fathers speak incessantly concerning the deadly danger of an unforgiving heart. Saint Theophan the Recluse teaches that resentment and unforgiveness bind the human soul with invisible, heavy chains. A man may foolishly imagine that by withholding forgiveness he is inflicting punishment upon his offender; yet in truth, he has constructed a dark prison for his own soul. He remains chained to his bitterness, excluded from the peace of the Holy Spirit.

For how can the light of God abide in a heart that is choked with the weeds of malice? Forgiveness does not mean that we condone evil, nor that we pretend sin is of no consequence. No, forgiveness means that we surrender all vengeance into the hands of the Righteous Judge, freeing our own spirits from the destructive poison of hatred.

Now, my beloved flock, let us bring these two streams of divine revelation together. What is the single, shining thread that unites the Apostle’s words to the Corinthians with our Lord’s parable in the Gospel?





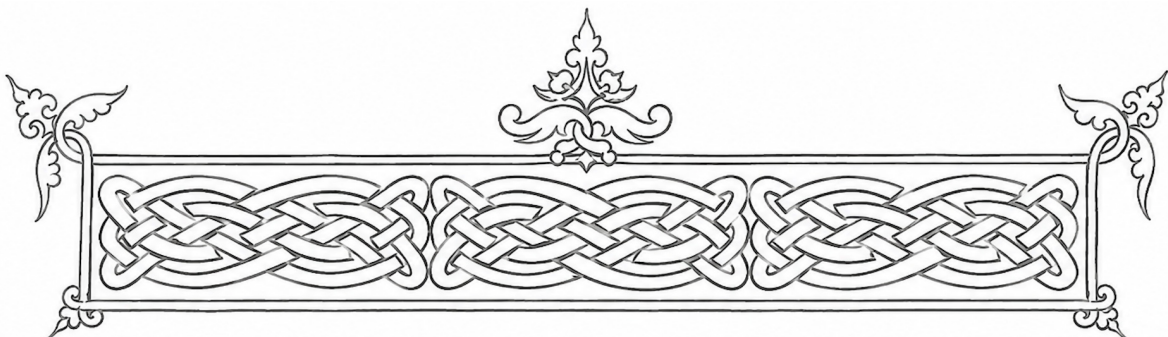
It is the supreme law of the Kingdom: the total transformation of the human heart through the imitation of God's limitless generosity. Both passages demand that we abandon the narrow, self-centred logic of the fallen world.

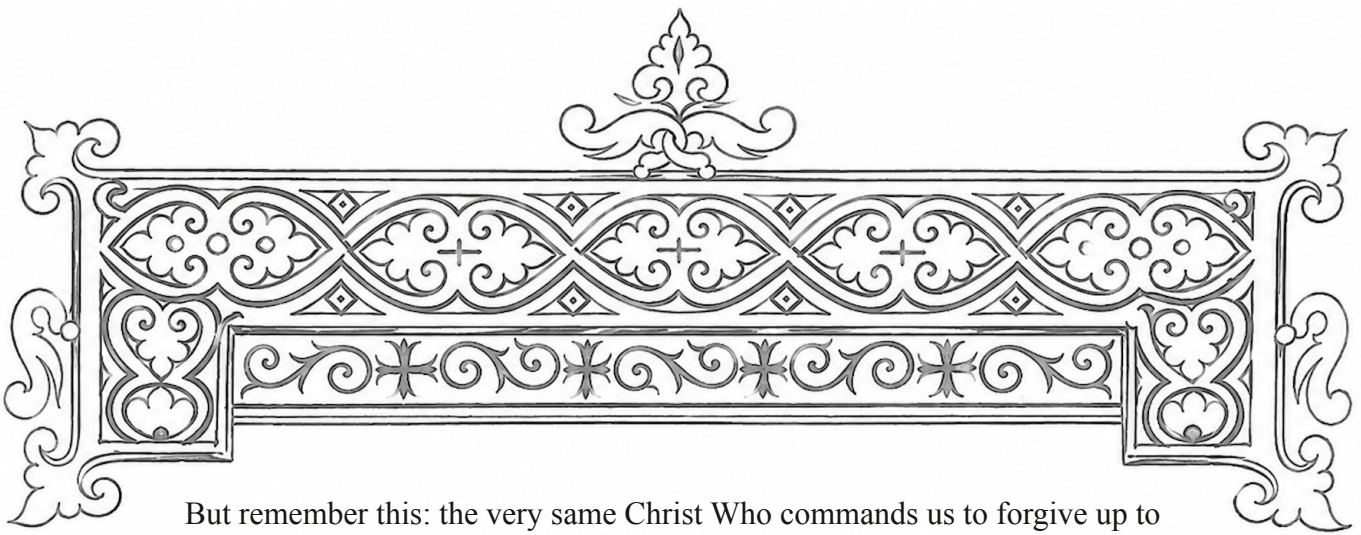
Saint Paul, though possessing the right to demand material support, willingly surrendered his rights for the salvation of others, choosing to give rather than to receive. The merciful King in the parable, holding absolute power over life and death, freely wiped away an unpayable debt out of pure compassion. In both instances, the Holy Spirit reveals that the true mark of a Christian is the willingness to transcend the cold accounting of worldly fairness in order to reflect the boundless, unmerited love of God.

The world continually counsels us: "Keep score! Protect your interests! Demand what is yours! Seek revenge!" But Christ our Saviour whispers to the soul: "Forgive, and you shall be forgiven. Give, and it shall be given to you." The world asks: "What do I deserve?" The Gospel constantly reminds us: "Consider what you have already received!"

Every time we gather in this holy church to celebrate the Divine Liturgy, we are placed directly before this immense mystery. We stand before the Holy Altar not as righteous men who have earned a reward, but as bankrupt debtors who have been shown mercy beyond all human comprehension. In the Holy Chalice, Christ offers us His very Body and Blood, the ultimate proof of a love that forgives all things, endures all things, and covers a multitude of sins.

We receive this divine gift, this holy grace, not that we may hide it selfishly within ourselves, but that we may become conduits of that same grace to a broken, suffering world. We are sent forth from the temple to be the eyes, the hands, and the merciful heart of Christ to those around us. I know well, my spiritual children, that this path is not easy for our weak nature. Some wounds inflicted upon us in this life run deep. Some betrayals leave bitter scars. Some memories return to torment our thoughts night after night. Human strength alone is insufficient to break these bonds of resentment.



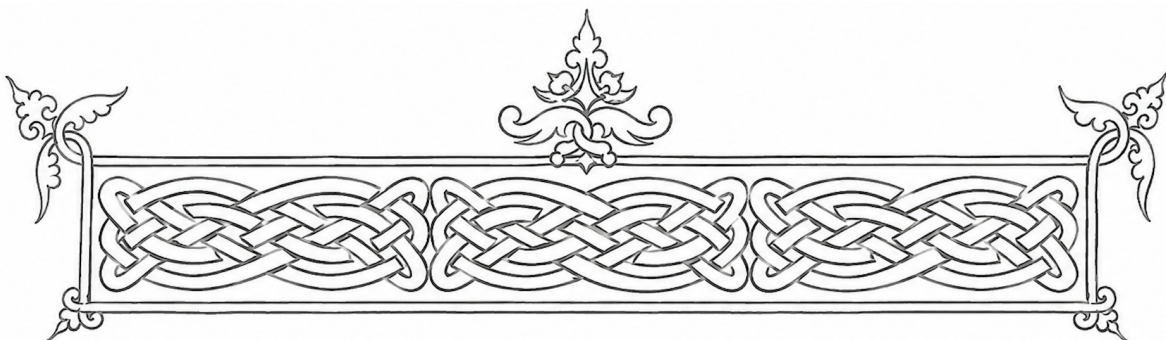


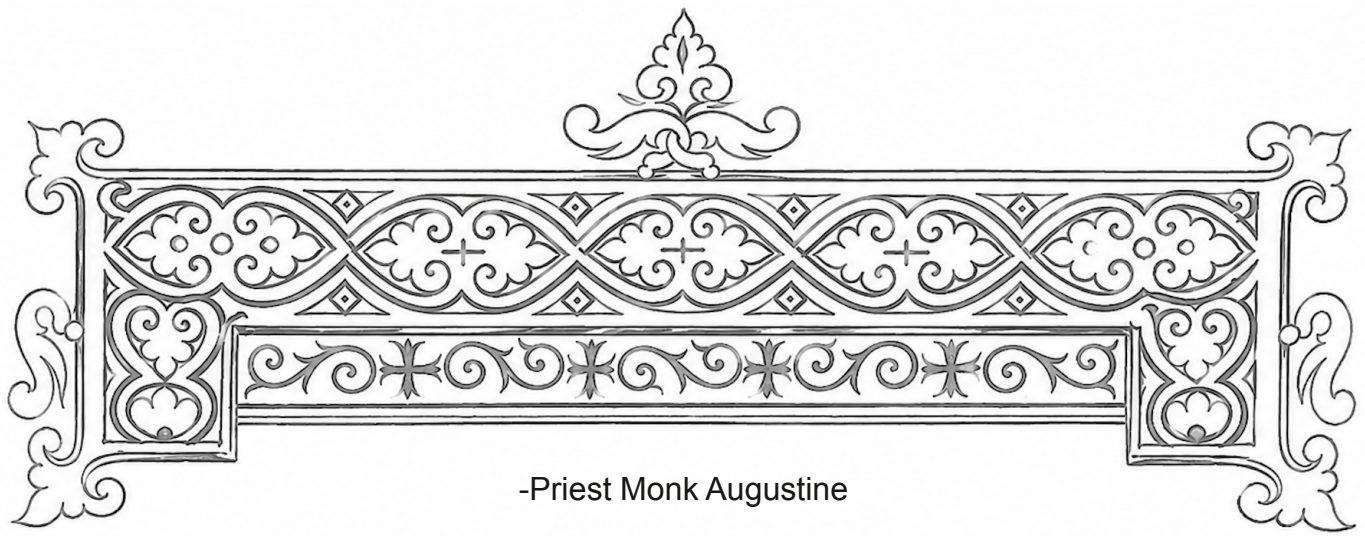
But remember this: the very same Christ Who commands us to forgive up to seventy times seven is the Christ Who grants the spiritual power to accomplish it. The same Saviour Who, while hanging upon the blood-stained wood of the Cross, prayed for His tormentors, saying: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," is present with us today in the power of the Holy Spirit to soften our hardened hearts, to heal our emotional wounds, and to grant us the grace of true reconciliation.

Let us therefore fall down before Him with humble prayer. Let us ask Him to bestow upon us a heart of flesh in place of a heart of stone. Let us constantly recall the vast, unpayable debt of sin which He has so lovingly washed away in the baptismal font and in the tears of confession.

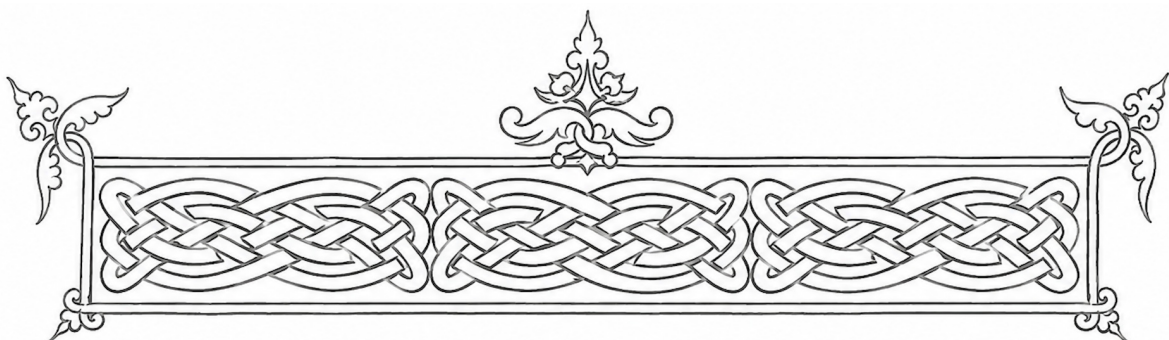
Let us emulate the apostolic zeal and selflessness of Saint Paul, who poured out his life for the benefit of others. Let us imitate the unfathomable compassion of the King in the parable, releasing our brothers and sisters from the tiny debts they owe us. Let us strive with all our strength to become a holy people whose hearts have been enlarged by the boundless mercy of the Father. Then, and only then, shall the heavenly peace of Christ, which passes all human understanding, guard our minds and hearts. Then shall our broken relationships be healed, our homes be filled with spiritual light, and our souls become radiant, living witnesses to the infinite mercy of God in the midst of a dark and unforgiving world.

To Him, our Lord and God Jesus Christ, together with His Eternal Father Who is without beginning, and His All-Holy, Good, and Life-giving Spirit, be ascribed all glory, honour, majesty, and worship, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.
Amen.





-Priest Monk Augustine





FROM THE PAGES OF THE PAST

From the ROAC Archive

AN FSB OFFICER INTERROGATED FOREIGN GUESTS IN SUZDAL

FEBRUARY 17, 2011

Originally published by the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church this report recounts the questioning of Bishop Andrei of Pavlovskoye and Tatyana Belcheva by an FSB officer during their visit to Suzdal, offering a glimpse into the pressures faced by the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church during this period.

The manager of the parishes of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church (ROC) in the USA, Bishop Andrei Pavlovsky (Maklakov) and the head of the ROC parish in Geneva (Switzerland) Tatyana Belcheva were interrogated on February 15 in the building of the Department of Internal Affairs of the Suzdal district of the Vladimir region by an FSB officer. As a Portal-Credo.Ru correspondent reports, foreign guests who came to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the episcopal consecration of the first hierarch of the ROAC, Metropolitan Valentin, were invited to the police department regarding registration at their place of temporary stay, but an FSB commissioner was waiting for them in the office of the police officer, who officially introduced himself. Bishop Andrei acted as a translator, and for several hours an FSB officer asked Tatyana Belcheva questions regarding the collection of the White Warrior Museum, which she transferred in the 1990s according to his mother's will to Suzdal. As it became clear from the questions, the FSB suspects Tatyana Belcheva of violating her will, since, according to intelligence services, the Museum's collection was donated to "the entire Russian people," and not to the religious organization ROAC. The FSB does not have the text of the will itself, and what these suspicions are based on during the interrogation remains unknown.



The White Warrior Museum's collection consists of military relics, weapons, dishes, albums and publications from the Civil War and the first period of post-revolutionary Russian emigration. In the 1980s it was located in a small room at the Russian Church of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in Nice (France), but the dying will of the owners of the Museum - the parents of Tatyana Belcheva - was to return the collection to their homeland. For many years, the White Warrior Museum was freely accessible at the ROAC Diocesan House in Suzdal, but after a series of attacks on the Museum, theft of its exhibits and attempts to set fire to the building, Metropolitan Valentin considered it necessary to move the main part of the collection to storage rooms.

The result of the conversation between Bishop Andrei and Tatyana Belcheva with the FSB commissioner was an agreement to provide, through Archpriest Mikhail Ardov, who cares for the Geneva community of the ROAC, a copy of the will on the Museum's collection. According to Fr. Mikhail, the corresponding demand was presented to him over the phone by an FSB officer who introduced himself with the name Kolosov. For his part, the First Hierarch of the ROAC, noting the constant increase in persecution of his Church and its spiritual and administrative center in Suzdal, does not rule out that the "case of the White Warrior Museum" could be used for some new criminal prosecution of the Church leadership.

SAINT OF THE MONTH

VENERABLE ANTHONY THE ROMAN WONDERWORKER OF NOVGOROD

Venerable Anthony the Roman was born in Rome in the year 1067 to wealthy parents who remained faithful to the Orthodox Faith. From childhood he was raised in piety and instructed in the Christian life. When Anthony was seventeen years old, his parents reposed, leaving him their inheritance. The young Anthony devoted himself to the study of the writings of the Holy Fathers, reading them in Greek, and his heart became increasingly drawn away from worldly possessions and toward the monastic life.

Desiring to follow Christ in poverty, Anthony distributed part of his inheritance among the poor. The remainder he placed in a wooden barrel and cast into the sea, entrusting it to the providence of God. Having freed himself from attachment to his earthly possessions, Anthony received the monastic tonsure at a wilderness monastery. There he remained for twenty years, laboring in prayer, fasting, and the other struggles of the monastic life.

During a period of persecution against the Orthodox, the brethren of the monastery were forced to disperse. Anthony wandered from place to place until he came to the shore of the sea. There he found a large rock upon which he settled, spending an entire year in fasting and prayer.

On September 5, 1105, a violent storm arose. The waters lifted the rock upon which Anthony was standing and carried it out into the sea. By the providence of God, the saint was borne upon the rock across the waters. On the Feast of the Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos, the rock came to rest near Novgorod, on the bank of the River Volkhov, approximately three versts from the city. The tradition of Anthony's miraculous arrival was recorded in the Novgorod Chronicles.

In this new land, Anthony continued the life of prayer that he had begun in Rome. With the blessing of Saint Niketas, Bishop of Novgorod, he established a monastery at the place where God had brought him. The monastery was dedicated to the Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos, whose feast had marked Anthony's miraculous arrival in the land of Novgorod. God's providence soon revealed itself again. Fishermen recovered from the waters a barrel, the very barrel into which Anthony had placed part of his inheritance many years earlier before casting it into the sea. Anthony recognized it and asked that it be returned to him, but the fishermen refused. The matter was brought before a judge, and Anthony described the contents of the barrel. When it was opened, his description proved correct, and the barrel was restored to him.

Anthony did not use the recovered inheritance for his own comfort. Instead, he used the wealth to purchase land for the monastery and to strengthen the community that was developing there. Life in the monastery combined spiritual struggle with physical labor, while Anthony taught the brethren by both his words and his example.

Anthony also insisted that the monastery remember those suffering outside its walls. Its resources were used to assist the poor and especially to care for widows and orphans. Thus, the community established by the Roman ascetic became not only a place of prayer and monastic struggle, but also a refuge of Christian charity.

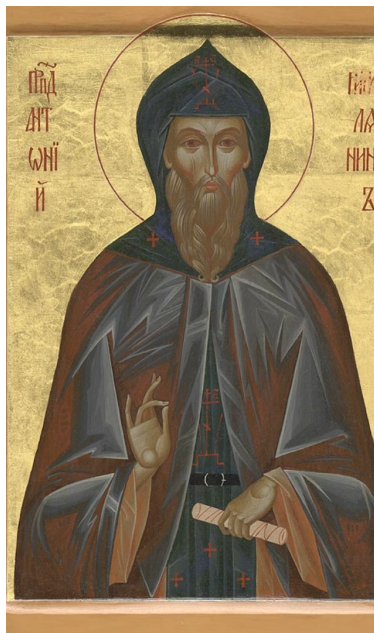
In 1117, Saint Anthony began the construction of a stone church dedicated to the Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos. The church was constructed between 1117 and 1119 by the Novgorodian architect Peter and was later adorned with frescoes in 1125. Remarkably, this ancient cathedral, erected during the lifetime of Saint Anthony, has survived to the present day.

In 1131, Saint Niphon, Bishop of Novgorod, appointed Anthony as igumen of the monastery. The saint therefore became the spiritual father of the brotherhood that had grown around the place of his miraculous arrival. He continued his ascetic labors while guiding the monks entrusted to him and caring for the monastery he had founded.

After a long life devoted to Christ, Venerable Anthony peacefully reposed in the Lord on August 3, 1147. Saint Niphon buried him at the monastery. Anthony's memory continued to be honored in Novgorod, and in 1597 he was formally glorified as a saint. His first Life had been written after his repose by his disciple and successor as igumen, the Hieromonk Andrew. Following the uncovering of the saint's relics, another account of his life and the discovery of his relics was composed in 1598 by the monk Niphon of the Antoniev Monastery.

From Rome to Novgorod, the life of Venerable Anthony stands as a remarkable witness to complete trust in the providence of God. He abandoned wealth and homeland for the monastic life, and according to the tradition preserved concerning him, God carried him across the waters to a land he had never known. There he established a monastery, built a church in honor of the Mother of God, cared for the poor, and became one of the great monastic saints associated with medieval Novgorod. His monastery and its ancient cathedral remain enduring witnesses to the life of the Roman monk who found his earthly home in the land of Rus'.

Holy Venerable Father Anthony the Roman, pray to God for us!



LOOKING AHEAD: SEPTEMBER

MAJOR FEASTS & COMMEMORATIONS

September 1 (Old Style)
Beginning of the Church Year, the Indiction
September 8 (Old Style)
Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos
One of the Twelve Great Feasts.
September 14 (Old Style)
Exaltation of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross
One of the Twelve Great Feasts. A strict fast day.

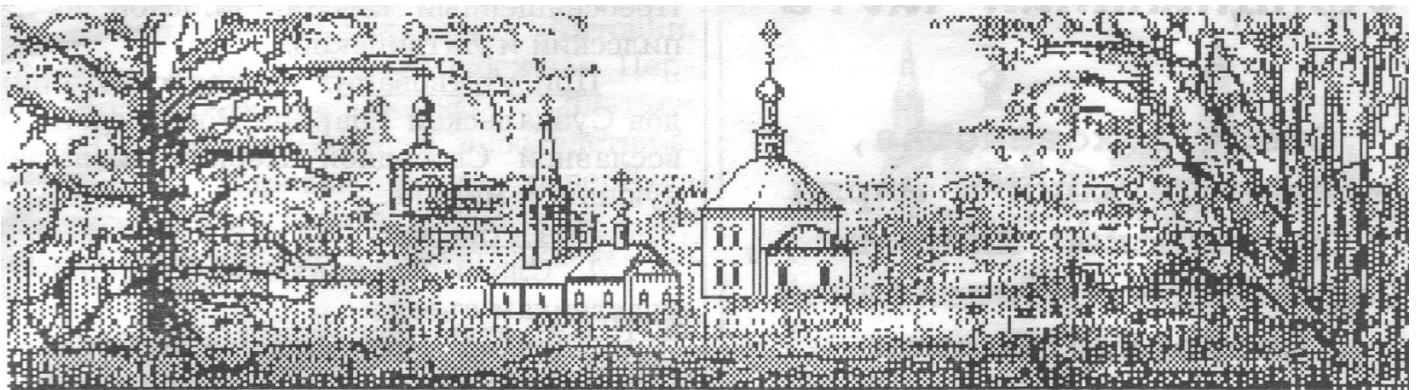
SELECTED SAINTS & COMMEMORATIONS

September 1 (Old Style)
Venerable Simeon the Stylite and his mother, St. Martha
September 3 (Old Style)
Hieromartyr Anthimus, Bishop of Nicomedia
September 4 (Old Style)
Holy Prophet and God-seer Moses
September 5 (Old Style)
Holy Prophet Zacharias and Righteous Elizabeth, Parents of St. John the Baptist
September 6 (Old Style)
Miracle of the Archangel Michael at Chonae
September 9 (Old Style)
Holy and Righteous Ancestors of God Joachim and Anna
September 11 (Old Style)
Venerable Sergius and Herman of Valaam, Wonderworkers
September 12 (Old Style)
Hieromartyr Autonomus of Italy
September 13 (Old Style)
Dedication of the Church of the Resurrection of Christ in Jerusalem
September 15 (Old Style)
Great-Martyr Nicetas the Goth
September 16 (Old Style)
Great-Martyr Euphemia the All-Praised
September 17 (Old Style)
Holy Martyrs Sophia and her daughters Faith, Hope, and Love
September 20 (Old Style)
Great-Martyr Eustathius Placidus and his family
Holy Martyr Michael, Prince of Chernigov, and his Boyar Theodore
September 22 (Old Style)
Hieromartyr Phocas, Bishop of Sinope
September 23 (Old Style)
Conception of the Holy Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John
September 24 (Old Style)
Holy Protomartyr and Equal-to-the-Apostles Thekla

September 25 (Old Style)
Repose of Venerable Sergius of Radonezh, Wonderworker of All Russia
Venerable Euphrosyne of Suzdal
September 26 (Old Style)
Repose of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian
September 28 (Old Style)
Venerable Chariton the Confessor
September 30 (Old Style)
Hieromartyr Gregory, Enlightener of Greater Armenia

FASTING

September 14 (Old Style)
Exaltation of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross — Strict Fast
The usual Wednesday and Friday fasts are observed throughout the month according to the Typikon.



Church News

RUSSIAN ORTHODOX AUTONOMOUS CHURCH

№ 1 AUGUST 2026

SHARE THE LIFE OF YOUR PARISH

Church News welcomes contributions from the bishops, clergy, parishes, and missions of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church throughout the world. We especially encourage our communities abroad to help us share the life of the Church with faithful in other countries.

Please send parish and mission news, photographs from services and feast-day celebrations, sermons, articles and spiritual writings, historical documents and photographs, announcements, and other material concerning the life of your church community to:

seraphimvasilievich@gmail.com

Through these contributions, Church News hopes to strengthen the bonds between our communities and preserve a record of the life and witness of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church throughout the world.

PUBLISHED WITH THE BLESSING OF:

HIS Eminence, THE MOST REVEREND ANDREI
ARCHBISHOP OF PAVLOVSKOYE AND ROCKLAND

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CHURCH NEWS 2026

