

# September 25

*E. Our Ven. Mother Euphrosyne*



Born in Alexandria, she secretly left her parental home at the age of 18 and entered a men's monastery under the name of the eunuch Smaragdus. Not recognizing the maiden in male clothing, the Hegumen assigned her to a solitary cell where Euphrosyne practiced asceticism for many years. Here she was, in the words of the Holy Church, "a virgin in soul and body", "a man with reason and faith", who loved "to be one with the divine goodness of Christ", who conquered "the cunning enemies" and "demonic assaults" on chastity and "the fire of abstinence". Having extinguished "the fire of passions", she increased the "fruits of good works" and reached a high degree of perfection. The father of St. Euphrosyne, Paphnutius, came more than once to the Hegumen of the monastery (where Ven. Euphrosyne practiced asceticism), seeking comfort in his grief for his daughter who disappeared. And once the Hegumen led him to the young ascetic, who so distinguished himself through vigils and labors. The father had long conversations with the monk, not recognizing in the changed face under the lowered klobuk (hood) his favorite daughter. St. Euphrosyne practiced asceticism in the monastery for 38 years, "having undergone great ascetic feats" and shining "with the beauty of virtues". Before her death (which followed in the second half of the 5th century) she revealed herself to her father and to St. Paphnutius. After he distributed his estate, he settled in that same cell where his daughter was saved, and practiced asceticism there (20 or 28 years) before his own death.

## *Kontakion, tone 2*

**Having longed to receive the highest life,  
You carefully turned away from the longest sweetness,  
And you mingled yourself among men, All-beautiful One:  
For the sake of Christ before the time  
You did not despise the betrothed of your Bridegroom.**

## *✙ Our Ven. Father Hegumen Sergius, Wonderworker of Radonezh*

Ven. Sergius, whose name in the world was Bartholomew, came from pious Rostov boyars Cyril and Maria. While yet a child, he didn't hold the nipples of his mother, and when she ate with meat, he remained without any food at all on Wednesdays and Fridays of the week. When he was seven years old he was sent to be trained in the letters. The youth with all his soul thirsted for learning, but at first he was not able to do so. Grieving over this, he prayed day and night to the Lord that He may open the door of understanding books to him. Once when

Bartholomew was sent by his father to find horses and went into a field where he saw an unfamiliar elder hieromonk under an oak tree. The elder was praying. The youth approached him and unburdened his soul. Sympathetically listening to the boy, the elder began to pray for the enlightenment of the child from above. Then, getting out his little ark, he took out a small particle of prosphora, blessed it and gave it to Bartholomew and said: "O child, take and eat what is given to you as a sign of the grace of God and for the understanding of Holy Scriptures". This grace was communicated to the youth in a really wonderful image. Good memory and understanding were given to him by the Lord, and he became able to learn wisdom in books.

Since childhood Ven. Sergius trained himself in pious ascetic exercises, observing strict abstinence, avoiding childish games and amusements, persevering in prayer, so that "before accepting the monastic paradigm, it was apparent that he was a perfect monk". He was meek, quiet and silent, gentle and kindly to all. He never showed anger and displayed perfect obedience to the will of his parents. He usually ate bread and water only, but on days of abstinence he completely abstained from food. When he was 15 years old, the parents of the Ven. Sergius moved to Radonezh (10 versts (about 7 miles) from the present Holy Trinity Laura) and 5 years later, one parent soon after the other peacefully departed to the Lord after they were tonsured into monasticism (see Khotkovsky Monastery, Moscow Diocese).

After the death of his parents, Ven. Sergius, having disdained the "corruptible glory", "the beauty of this world and temporal sweetness", and most of all having loved the "monastic life", gave his inheritance from his parents to his younger brother Peter, and went into the depths of the forest and there, about 10 versts (about 7 miles) from Radonezh by the small River Konchiur, he settled with his widowed brother Stephen who accepted monasticism. The brothers cut down trees with their own hands, and first constructed a cabin, then a cell, and, finally, a small church which, with the blessing of Metropolitan Theognostus, was consecrated in the name of the Life-originating Trinity. Thus was laid the foundation of the well-known and glorious Monastery of Ven. Sergius. Stephen did not live long in the hermitage and settled in the Theophany Monastery in Moscow.

Left alone and professed a monk in the year 1337 by Hegumen Metrophanes, Ven. Sergius went even deeper into himself and turned to prayer and repentance. The fullness of the inner peace of his soul replaced the world for him which he had forsaken with its deceptive attractions of life. A deep feeling of humility filled his soul among those ascetic feats he underwent. "Going the narrow way", he fought against the flesh and exhausted his body with labor and fasting. Living in complete solitude, with firm faith, and "frequent vigils and prayers" he quenched the "coals of passion", uprooted the very "thorns" of sinful thoughts and destroyed the "demonic assaults and invisible enemy wiles".

Whole packs of wolves ran past the cell of the Venerable One and bears passed by, but not any of them harmed him. Once it happened that the holy hermit

gave bread to a bear that came to his cell, and from that time the bear constantly came to Ven. Sergius who always shared his last crumb, but sometimes gave him all bread he had, remaining without food for himself.

The Ven. Sergius lived about two years in complete solitude among the formidable labors and ascetic struggles of the monastic way of life, enduring all possible sorts of deprivations and at war against the temptations of the devil.

Then monks desiring to serve the Lord under his direction began to gather. Ven. Sergius received them all with love giving the brethren a high example of virtue by his way of life. God Himself in a vision of a multitude of beautiful birds flying in the Monastery of St. Sergius comforted him with the hope of increasing the number of brothers and the flourishing of his monastery. In 1354, by the general vote of the brethren, Ven. Sergius was elected Hegumen and ordained a priest by Athanasius, Bishop of Volyn, in Pereiaslav. Being the guard of the monastery, Hegumen Sergius was a living example of all monastic virtues. He cut fire wood, carried water, baked prosphora, always dressed poorly in a simple linen garment covered with patches which none of the brothers would wear. Working more than all the others he served at the same time as a paradigm of humility, and succeeded in lending a hand in time to each brother coming to help him in his labor. Spending the day in prayer and labor, Hegumen Sergius made the round of the cells at night and if he noticed any thing contrary to monastic vows, he summoned the guilty monk the next day and gently admonished him. According to the witness of his disciple, Ven. Epiphanius, "He was first and last in everything and nobody could compare with him. For all and for ever he remains the paradigm of monastic perfection".

The young monastery suffered much from material want. The Ven. Sergius had to serve the divine services by the light of birch splinter torches, to perform the Holy Mystery of Communion in a wooden vessel, to stand in linen vestments before the holy altar at the Divine Liturgy, but, with all such manifest poverty, Ven. Sergius was so rich through the grace of the Holy Spirit that angels themselves concelebrated with him during his priestly actions. It happened also that not one of the brothers had a piece of bread and all of them had to go hungry for a long time. But when this happened to Ven. Sergius, striving to confirm in them an unshakable hope in the omnipotent help of God, he strictly forbade them to leave the monastery to collect alms for the monastery. A firm trust in the mercy of God did not put the Ven. Hegumen to shame. In times of famine when the brethren were near despair, the Lord raised lovers of Christ who sent the monastery bread and all kinds of food in abundance.

Inspiring himself with the ancient example of Ven. Theodosius of the Caves, Ven. Sergius introduced the coenobitic rule in his monastery. None of the brothers had any personal property, but had everything in common, and each one received what he needed from the common property of the brotherhood, and all participated equally in all monastic work. The holy life of Ven. Sergius and the tireless diligence and strict abstinence of the monks more and more attracted the general attention of their contemporaries. And the glory of the St. Sergius Monastery

began to spread throughout the Russian land. Many boyars and princes, spiritual children of Ven. Sergius, brought him a part of their estate for the use of the monastery that enabled them to build a new and more spacious church. In spite of continually increasing monastic income, Hegumen Sergius and his brethren continued to lead poor and laborious lives. Receiving rich offerings, Ven. Sergius used them for wide spread works of philanthropy. Ven. Sergius showed a special fatherly love for orphans, beggars, the poor and for all pilgrims coming to his monastery. During the years of national famine he opened the barns of his monastery and fed the hungry.

Metropolitan St. Alexis of Moscow, feeling his death was near, desired to see Ven. Sergius succeed him, but the humble Hegumen considered himself unworthy to receive the hierarchical rank.

For his holy life and marvelous asceticism the Ven. Sergius received from the Lord the gift of insight and working wonders, healing "diverse infirmities" and foretelling "the future as if it were the present". Toward the end of his life, the Ven. Sergius was worthy of the wonderful visitation of the Mother of God, Who with the Apostles Peter and John appeared in his cell, surrounded by radiant light, and She comforted him with a joyful promise of the future flowering of the monastic community planted by him.

"Having lived as if bodiless" on earth, the Ven. Sergius, six months prior to his death was informed beforehand of the time of his departure from the world by a special revelation, and he commended his blessed spirit to the Lord in 1392 at 78 years of age. Thirty years later his holy relics were found incorruptible (see Jul. 5).

The Holy Church praises Ven. Sergius, as "an angel on earth and a man of God in heaven", "a guide of monks", who cooperated "in a hermitage as if a city", "a converser with angels", "a co-dweller with Venerable ones", "the praise of fasters", "good shepherd and teacher" "defender, advocate and mediator of piety", "comforter of the sorrowful".<sup>1)</sup>

*Troparion, tone 4*

**Diligent ascetic, true warrior of Christ God,  
You practiced asceticism against fierce passions during temporal life  
And were an example to your disciples in song, vigil and fasting.  
Therefore the All-Holy Spirit abode in you,  
And operating there brightly adorned you.  
But having boldness before the Holy Trinity,  
Remember your flock which you gathered, O Wise One,  
And never forget them, as you were promised,  
Visiting your children, O Our Venerable Father Sergius.**

*Kontakion, tone 8*

**Smitten with the love of Christ, O Venerable One,  
You voluntarily followed Him without looking back,**

**And you hated all carnal pleasures,  
And you shone like the sun upon your fatherland.  
Therefore Christ enriched you with the gift of working wonders.  
Remember those who honor your all radiant memory,  
That we may call to you: Rejoice, O Divinely-wise Sergius.**

**His synaxis is performed both in his monastery and in the temples,  
with the Polyeleon.**

**Paramoia: see July 5. Matins Gospel, Epistle and Gospel in the  
Liturgy see March 17.**

*The Ven. Euphrosyne of Suzdal, in the world Theodulia*

The daughter of the holy prince Michael of Chernigov (see Sept. 20), she accepted monasticism in the Suzdal Monastery of the Deposition of the Robe. Here the Ven. Euphrosyne devoted herself to the ascetic effort of piety. She practiced strict abstinence, abided in uninterrupted prayer and submissively fulfilled all monastic obedience. Elected Hegumena of the monastery, she very much took care of the improvement and building up of the monastery and through her prayers wonderfully protected it from the invasion of Batu. She died in 1250. Her relics were found in 1699, and repose in the Deposition of the Robe Monastery (see the Vladimir Diocese).

*Martyr Paphnutius and the 546 Martyrs with Him*

They suffered for Christ in Tentyra (Denderah) in Egypt during the reign of Emperor Diocletian. St. Paphnutius was crucified on a date tree. With him 546 Christians were killed.

*Commemoration of the Constantinople Earthquake of 447 during the  
reign of Emperor Theodosius the Younger*

During the earthquake churches, houses and stone city walls collapsed and were destroyed. All the people were terrified. St. Proclus (see Nov. 20) organized a cross procession and solemnly prayed publicly in the open air. Suddenly during this prayer a little boy from among the people was lifted up to heaven by some invisible power. Having come back to earth, he related to the wondering people that he heard the angels glorifying God with the words: *Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal*, and that they commanded this hymn be sung on earth. People sang this hymn with the added words: *have mercy on us*, and the earthquake stopped. Since this time, the Trisagion, according to the order of Empress Pulcheria and her brother Theodosius the Younger, entered into universal church use in that form as sung by the people during the earthquake.

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1) Among the holy men and ascetics of the Russian Church Ven. Sergius incontestably has outstanding significance and his name in the history of Russian monasticism stands level with the names of Ven. Anthony and Theodosius of the Caves, the founders and legislators of monastic life in Rus. Ven. Sergius was not only a great ascetic, but also the father of monastic life in Muscovite Rus at the time of the Mongolian yoke. He restored Russian monasticism after the Mongols destroyed Muscovite Rus. He revived coenobitic monasticism in Muscovite Rus. The Venerable One himself founded a few monasteries besides the Holy Trinity, (Kirzhach and Annunciation in the Vladimir Province, Dubensky and Strominsky in the Moscow province, Dubensky-Dormition in the Vladimir Province, not existing now), tens of monasteries were founded by the disciples of Sergius with his blessing (see for ex., Jan. 10, Feb. 10, Apr. 11 and 25, Jun. 7 and 13, Jul 20, Sept. 17, Oct. 7, Nov. 28, and Dec. 3). The legacy of the great guide of monks, Ven. Sergius, was strictly guarded in all these monasteries and, according to his direction the coenobitic Ustav (Typicon) was followed. The personal influence of the Venerable One on his disciples and interlocutors was so powerful, that he, as the sun of Russian monasticism, was always surrounded by the whole assembly of monks, as satellites gravitating to him and who borrowed light from him. Disciples of Ven. Sergius led a hermetical life. They created new coenobitic monasteries in the far North, or only became rectors of some other constructed monasteries. In effect all of them served one and the same purpose: they spread, continued, and consolidated the activity begun by Ven. Sergius. Excited by the example of their teacher, inspired with love for him, they spread the seeds of true monasticism devised by Ven. Sergius everywhere.

Great was the influence of Ven. Sergius on his contemporaries and in religio-moral relationships. Princes and boyars came to him for advice and blessing in the important affairs of state, public and family. Russian hierarchs asked his advice and direction in their difficult service. Thick waves of simple people came to the Venerable One for blessing, guidance and enlightenment. They lay down at the feet of the Venerable One coming to him with their grief, sorrow and spiritual anguish. They received comfort from him and left with an eased heart, a newly regenerated people. And living examples of truly Christian life, making fascinating, irresistible impressions on every one who came to the monastery of Ven. Sergius, were deeply embedded in each soul and became a guiding star for him.

But, besides serving the Church, Ven. Sergius had taken on himself and bequeathed to his monastery another great ascetic service to the state. That was the difficult time for national political unification of the Russian state, the time of heavy Tatar bondage and Polish claims. In this time of troubles in the Russian land, Ven. Sergius in person and life gave to the Russian people that ideal which helped them more meaningfully to possess their native land and her dear interests. Sts. Anthony and Theodosius in the south and Ven. Sergius in the north confirmed the Russian people in the Orthodox faith and in the feeling of national independence.

Of old the Muscovite state cannot be presented without touching on this idea of Ven. Sergius and his monastery. Ven. Sergius himself was always the counselor of the Moscow grand princes relative to "building up the land" and other important state affairs. Ven. Sergius was deeply conscious of the importance and necessity of a monarchy for Rus. In it he saw the salvation of Rus from those troubles into which she was plunged by the smashing of her destiny. Through his participation and active assistance the authority of the Great Prince of Moscow was raised up and developed into the idea of a monarchy. The humble Hegumen himself with staff in hand went to Rostov, Nizhni Novgorod, Tver and Riazan to reconcile the princes warring among themselves and for them to submit to the grand prince of Moscow. The most dangerous enemies of the great prince were humbled bowing to the faith of Ven. Sergius. Nobody could reconcile the uneasy Oleg of Riazan with the grand prince. Only the gentle admonition of the Ven. Hegumen of Radonezh restrained him: "And eternal peace and love was taking hold between Oleg and Great Prince Dmitri from generation to generation", says the chronicler.

The first state document, by which the old specific order of succession to the throne in the great Moscow principedom, the right of the oldest in equal shares was suppressed, and replaced by the new, from father to the oldest son (primogeniture), was the spiritual will of Dmitri Donskoi, signed by Ven. Sergius.

With unceasing prayer, Ven. Sergius incessantly asked the Lord for the flowering of the Russian land and for the confirmation of monarchic authority in Russia, by which authority our fatherland has become glorified and which up to now sustains the basis of its might.

*S. V. Bulgakov, **Handbook for Church Servers**, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900) pp. 0348-0353  
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