

St. Cyril Orthodox Church

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+ August 29, 2021 +

Beheading of St. John the Forerunner

Venerable Theodora and her daughter Theopiste (9th cent.)

St. Arkadios the Wonderworker, Bishop of Cyprus (4th cent.)



MANY YEARS to **Ken and Kerrie Hendrickson**, who celebrate their wedding anniversary today; to **Josh Cupples**, who celebrates his nameday Wednesday; and also to **Maia Tsulaia**, who celebrates her birthday on Wednesday.

THIS WEEK – Divine Liturgy on Thursday, September 2, at 8:30 am.

INQUIRER CLASS after Sunday coffee hour – today we will look at “councils” as an aspect of the sacred apostolic tradition.

TREASURER UPDATE – For August so far our income is \$14,616, including a grant from the OCA of \$1,667 and a grant from the Diocese of the South of \$1,400. Our expenses are estimated at \$19,425, which includes \$7,900 for the purchase of our new air conditioning unit for the church.

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St. John of Kronstadt on being in the church building

Truly, the temple is heaven upon earth; for where the throne of God is, where terrible Mysteries are celebrated, where the angels serve together with men, where the Almighty is unceasingly glorified, there is truly heaven, and the heaven of heavens. And thus let us enter into the temple of God, and above all into the Holy of Holies, with fear of God, with a pure heart, laying aside all passions and every worldly care, and let us stand in it with faith and reverence, with understanding attention, with love and peace in our hearts, so that we may come away renewed, as though made heavenly; so that we may live in the holiness natural to heaven, not binding ourselves by worldly desires and pleasures.

When you are in the temple, remember that you are in the living presence of the Lord God, that you stand before His face, before His eyes, in the living presence of the Mother of God, of the holy angels, and of the first-born of the Church – that is, our forefathers, the prophets, Apostles, bishops, martyrs, God-bearing fathers, the righteous, and all the saints. Always have the remembrance and awareness of this when you are in the temple, and stand with devotion, taking part willingly and with all your heart in the divine services.

Life of St. Symeon the Stylite – September 1

Saint Simeon the Stylite was born in the Cappadocian village of Sisan of Christian parents, Sisotian and Martha. When he was thirteen years old he began to tend his father's flock of sheep. He devoted himself attentively and with love to this, his first obedience.

Once, after he heard the Beatitudes in church, he was struck by how profound they were. Not trusting to his own immature judgment, he turned therefore with his questions to an experienced Elder. The Elder readily explained to the boy the meaning of what he had heard. The seed fell on good soil, and it strengthened his resolve to serve God.

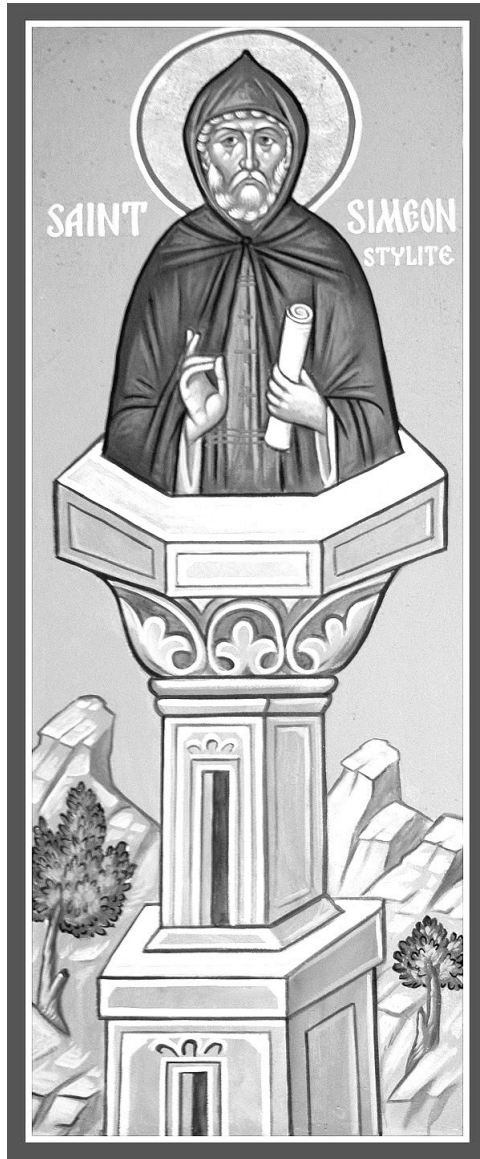
When Simeon was eighteen, he received monastic tonsure and devoted himself to feats of the strictest abstinence and unceasing prayer. His zeal, beyond the strength of the other monastic brethren, so alarmed the abbot that he told Simeon that to either moderate his ascetic deeds or leave the monastery.

Saint Simeon then withdrew from the monastery and lived in a dry well in the nearby mountains, where he was able to carry out his austere struggles unhindered. After some time, angels appeared in a dream to the abbot, who commanded him to bring back Simeon to the monastery. The monk, however, did not long remain at the monastery.

After a short while he settled into a stony cave, and he dwelt there for three years. Once, he decided to spend the entire forty days of Great Lent without food or drink. With the help of God, the monk endured this strict fast. From that time he abstained from food completely during the entire period of the Great Lent, even from bread and water. For twenty days he prayed while standing, and for twenty days while sitting, so as not to permit his bodily strength to relax.

A whole crowd of people began to throng to the place of his efforts, wanting to receive healing from sickness and to hear a word of Christian edification. Shunning worldly glory and striving again to find his lost solitude, the monk chose a previously unknown mode of asceticism. He went up a pillar about eight feet tall, and settled on it in a tiny platform with a short wall around the edge, devoting himself to intense prayer and fasting.

Reports of Saint Simeon reached the highest church hierarchy and the imperial court. Patriarch Domninos II (441-448) of Antioch visited the monk, celebrated Divine Liturgy on the pillar and communed the ascetic with the Holy Mysteries.



Holy elders living in the desert heard about Saint Simeon, who had chosen a new and strange form of ascetic striving. They wanted to test the new ascetic and determine whether his extreme ascetic feats were truly pleasing to God, or whether Simeon was deluded. They decided to send messengers to Simeon to test him.

In the name of these desert fathers, these messengers were to bid him to come down from the pillar. If Simeon was obedient to their command, the messengers were to leave Simeon on his pillar. But if Simeon was disobedient and insisted on staying on his pillar, then the messengers were to forcibly drag him down to the ground, it being clear that Simeon was in spiritual delusion.

When the messengers arrived, they shouted up their message from the holy elders for him to come down. At once Saint Simeon started scrambling down the ladder, showing complete obedience and deep Christian humility. The monks told him to stay where he was, asking God to be his helper.

Saint Simeon endured many temptations, but he invariably gained the victory over them. He relied not on his own weak powers, but on the Lord Himself, Who always came to help him. The monk gradually increased the height of the pillar on which he stood. His final pillar was 80 feet in height. Around him a double wall was raised, to create a barrier to prevent the unruly crowd of pilgrims and “sight-seers” from coming too close and disturbing his prayer.

Women, in general, were not permitted beyond the wall. The saint did not make an exception even for his own mother, who after long and unsuccessful searches finally succeeded in finding her lost son. He would not see her, saying, “If we are worthy, we shall see one another in the life to come.” Saint Martha

submitted to this, remaining at the foot of her son's pillar in silence and prayer, where she finally died. Saint Simeon asked that her coffin be brought to him. He reverently bid farewell to his departed mother, and a joyful smile appeared on her face.



Ruins of the church and monastery of St. Simeon the Stylite, about 19 miles northwest of Aleppo, Syria, begun in 473 A.D.

Saint Simeon spent 80 years in arduous monastic feats, 47 years of which he stood upon the pillar. Many pagans accepted Holy Baptism, struck by the moral staunchness and bodily strength which the Lord bestowed upon His servant.

The first one to learn of the death of the saint was his close disciple Anthony. Concerned that his teacher had not appeared to the people for three days, he went up on the pillar and found the dead body stooped over at prayer. Patriarch Martyrius of Antioch performed the funeral before a huge throng of clergy and people. They buried him near his pillar.

At the place of his ascetic deeds, a monastery was established, and a vast church was constructed that had the pillar at its center, with four basilicas extending out from a central octagon. The ruins of this monastery are now a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Glimpses of the Divine Liturgy on Mount Athos

In the large monasteries of Mt. Athos, the bloodless sacrifice of the Divine Liturgy is served every day. In addition to this, however, the Liturgy is also served frequently in the small sketes and hermitages of the Holy Mountain.

Father Daniel, the great man of prayer who lived in the cave of St. Peter the Athonite, served the Divine Liturgy daily. The manner in which he served was mystical, as if heaven had come down to earth, or rather, as if earth had ascended up to heaven. He would read the prayers very slowly and with deep concentration. If he experienced compunction (a spiritual state in which the heart is pierced by love for God), he would stop the prayers and cry with tears of joy. For sixty years he did this, every day. Each Liturgy would last for several hours, and few were permitted to be in church for them.

There are many priest-monks on the Holy Mountain who have a similar desire to serve the Liturgy every day, if possible. The famous spiritual father, Fr. Germanos from Karyes, knew the Liturgy by heart. He would celebrate the entire service absorbed in prayer, with his eyes closed. When Fr. Joachim Spetsieris would serve the Liturgy, he would experience an inner transformation which would be manifested in his face, which became very bright with light.



Fr. Dionysios from St. Anne's Skete would never allow a day to go by without a Liturgy being served in their chapel. Even if he himself were too sick to serve, he would find another priest to take his place. He was remarkable for never being angry, and for continuously saying the Jesus Prayer. For every difficult chore, Fr. Dionysios would be the first to run to do it, thus becoming always a good example to the entire skete.

The ever-memorable Russian Fr. Tikhon was an ascetic for fifteen years in the most remote desert of Karoulia, where he survived almost entirely on dry bread. Fr. P. would say of him, "Often Fr. Tikhon would be taken into a vision while he was serving the Divine Liturgy, sometimes lasting half an hour or more. We kept singing the Cherubic Hymn over and over until he would come to himself. Once I begged him to tell me what was happening to him, and he said: 'My child, my child, my angels take me where the Cherubim and Seraphim are praising God. Then when he brings me back, I come to my senses and realize that I am in the church, serving the Liturgy.'" He would not allow anyone to be in the Holy Altar with him while he served the Liturgy.

I once met the ever-memorable Fr. Matthew of Karakalou, a man of great simplicity. From the day of his ordination to the priesthood in 1940 to the day his earthly life ended, forty-five years altogether, he celebrated the Divine Liturgy every day. He would read innumerable names in the Proskomidia [when the priest prepares the bread and wine before the Liturgy], for the "souls to be benefitted," as he would say. When one of the brothers told him that it was time for him to rest after so many years of serving the Liturgy, he replied, "I will serve the Liturgy to my last breath."