



Saint Seraphim of Sarov

Ascetic of Virtue (July 19th/August 1st)

*On this day the holy Orthodox Church glorified one of its greatest saints –
the **venerable Seraphim, wonderworker of Sarov.***

Varied and complex are the different ways of spiritual life. The human spirit returns along winding paths to the abandoned dwellings of the Heavenly Father, to the holiness that had been lost through sin. And often, at the last abysses of perdition, at the brink of the yawning chasm of sin, a person feels the whole horror of rejecting God and begins to search for salvation from eternal perdition. This is the way of the last-hour arrivals (as in the Gospel parable of the laborers hired at different times), the way of the publicans, the prodigal sons, the adulterers and the sinners, who at a certain moment in their unclean lives become aware of their sinfulness and rush towards purity and a holy life in God. This is the bitter path of sinful experience, which either spiritually destroys a person or, on the contrary, sobers him up.

But there is yet another way, a path of sobriety, a path of spiritual purity, a life spent in chastity from beginning to end and enhanced by spiritual labors. This is the way of saints who from their early years have loved the Lord not outwardly, but wholeheartedly, and who have placed all their joyous hopes of salvation in Him exclusively.

The venerable Anthony the Great heard the summons of the Gospel to reject the cares and worries of the world, and without seeking advice from his flesh and blood, abandoned all and followed Christ. Hosts of God's saints came to regard all the delights of the world as dust and ashes compared to their mighty aspiration towards the temple of genuine and supreme heavenly beauty.

Such was the way of Saint Seraphim.

“From a tender age thou hast loved Christ, O blessed one,” – sings the Church, glorifying the great wonderworker of Sarov.

From his very youth he loved, and until the end, until his repose at a ripe old age, the venerable saint retained this love. His image is the wholesome image of genuine spiritual sobriety, foreign to all wavering and deviations from the right path. In this sense St. Seraphim is primarily a pillar of sobriety. He is an embodiment of spiritual health and genuine spiritual simplicity.

In our times the example of his life is especially instructive, and his prayerful intercession is especially needed. The world has become lost in complexity, has drowned in contradictions, has deviated from simplicity in Christ. And it is being called back to the abandoned path of God by the entire life's labor of the great saint of Sarov... To love Christ, to turn one's heart to Him, to serve Him and not oneself and one's whims – such is the path of Christian life...

Brethren, how fearful it is to realize (and often we are forced to do so) that we love ourselves more than God. In its final development this is a spiritual dead end, this is the second death... And the only way out here is to strive towards simplicity, reject one's own self, take up one's cross (no matter how hard it may be), and follow Christ.

O venerable Father Seraphim, pray to God for us!

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