

On the Life of St. John the Russian c. AD 1690 - 1730



St. John the Russian, c. AD 1690 - 1730. The Icon and the Relics are in New Prokopi, Euboia, Greece.

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St. John the Russian, the New Confessor of Prokopion and Evia

Christ is risen! Truly He is risen!

St. John the Russian, the New Confessor, whose incorrupt Relics are treasured in New Prokopi, Euboia, Greece - Commemorated on May 27

"The Holy Confessor John the Russian was born in Little Russia around 1690, and was raised in piety and love for the Church of God. Upon attaining the age of maturity he was called to military service, and he served as a simple soldier in the army of Peter I and took part in the Russo-Turkish War. During the Prutsk Campaign of 1711 he and other soldiers were captured by the Tatars, who handed him over to the commander of the Turkish cavalry. He took his Russian captive home with him to Asia Minor, to the village of Prokopion.

The Turks tried to convert the Christian soldiers to the Moslem faith with threats and flattery, but those who resisted were beaten and tortured. Some, alas, denied Christ and became Moslems, hoping to improve their lot. St John was not swayed by the promise of earthly delights, and he bravely endured the humiliation and beatings.

His master tortured him often in the hope that his slave would accept Islam. St John resolutely resisted the will of his master saying, "You cannot turn me from my holy Faith by threats, nor with promises of riches and pleasures. I will obey your orders willingly, if you will leave me free to follow my religion. I would rather surrender my head to you than to change my faith. I was born a Christian, and I shall die a Christian."

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St John's bold words and firm faith, as well as his humility and meekness, finally softened the fierce heart of his master. He left John in peace, and no longer tried to make him renounce Christianity. The saint lived in the stable and took care of his master's animals, rejoicing because his bed was a manger such as the one in which the Savior was born.

From morning until late evening the saint served his Turkish master, fulfilling all his commands. He performed his duties in the winter cold and summer heat, half naked and barefoot. Other slaves frequently mocked him, seeing his zeal. St John never became angry with them, but on the contrary, he helped them when he could, and comforted them in their misfortune.

The saint's kindness and gentle nature had its effect on the souls of both the

master and the slaves. The Agha and his wife came to love him, and offered him a small room near the hayloft. St John did not accept it, preferring to remain in the stable with the animals. Here he slept on the hay, covered only by an old coat. So the stable became his hermitage, where he prayed and chanted Psalms.

St John brought a blessing to his master simply by living in his household. The cavalry officer became rich, and was soon one of the most powerful men in Prokopion. He knew very well why his home had been blessed, and he did not hesitate to tell others.

Sometimes St John left the stable at night and went to the church of the Great Martyr George, where he kept vigil in the narthex. On Saturdays and Feast days, he received the Holy Mysteries of Christ.

During this time St John continued to serve his master as before, and despite his own poverty, he always helped the needy and the sick, and shared his meager food with them.

One day, the officer left Prokopion and went to Mecca on pilgrimage. A few days later, his wife gave a banquet and invited her husband's friends and relatives, asking them to pray for her husband's safe return. St John served at the table, and he put down a dish of pilaf, his master's favorite food. The hostess said, "How much pleasure your master would have if he could be here to eat this pilaf with us." St John asked for a dish of pilaf, saying that he would send it to his master in Mecca. The guests laughed when they heard his words. The mistress, however, ordered the cook to give him a dish of pilaf, thinking he would eat it himself, or give it to some poor family.

Taking the dish, St John went into the stable and prayed that God would send it to his master. He had no doubt that God would send the pilaf to his master in a supernatural manner. The plate disappeared before his eyes, and he went into the house to tell his mistress that he had sent the pilaf to his master.

After some time, the master returned home with the copper plate which had held the pilaf. He told his household that on a certain day (the very day of the banquet), he returned from the mosque to the home where he was staying. Although the room was locked, he found a plate of steaming pilaf on the table. Unable to explain who had brought the food, or how anyone could enter the locked room, the officer examined the plate. To his amazement, he saw his

own name engraved on the copper plate. In spite of his confusion, he ate the meal with great relish.

When the officer's family heard this story, they marveled. His wife told him of how John had asked for a plate of pilaf to send to his master in Mecca, and how they all laughed when John came back and said that it had been sent. Now they saw that what the saint had said was true (Compare the story of Habakkuk, who miraculously brought a dish of pottage to Daniel in the lions' den [Dan. 14:33-39], in the Septuagint).

St. John the Russian receiving Holy Communion hidden in an apple

Toward the end of his difficult life St John fell ill, and sensed the nearness of his end. He summoned the priest so that he could receive Holy Communion. The priest, fearing to go to the residence of the Turkish commander openly with the Holy Gifts, enclosed the life-giving Mysteries in an apple and brought them to St John.

St John glorified the Lord, received the Body and Blood of Christ, and then reposed. The holy Confessor John the Russian went to the Lord Whom he loved on May 27, 1730. When they reported to the master that his servant John had died, he summoned the priests and gave them the body of St John for Christian burial. Almost all the Christian inhabitants of Prokopion came to the funeral, and they accompanied the body of the saint to the Christian cemetery.

Icon of the Dormition of St. John the Russian

Three and a half years later the priest was miraculously informed in a dream that the relics of St John had remained incorrupt. Soon the relics of the saint were transferred to the church of the holy Great Martyr George and placed in a special reliquary. The new saint of God began to be glorified by countless miracles of grace, accounts of which spread to the remote cities and villages. Christian believers from various places came to Prokopion to venerate the holy relics of St John the Russian and they received healing through his prayers. The new saint came to be venerated not only by Orthodox Christians, but also by Armenians, and even Turks, who prayed to the Russian saint, "Servant of God, in your mercy, do not disdain us."

Once, the Turks had sacked the church with St. John's body while it was in in

Asia Minor. They then proceeded to throw the Saint's body into the fire to burn it. However, they soon saw the Saint appear as if he were alive and arise and walk amidst the flames; the Turks then fled in fear. This is the reason that the Saint's body is darkened to this day from the smoke of the flames. However, it nonetheless remained utterly incorrupt and wonderworking.

In 1878, Fr. Andrew, a monk from the Russian Monastery of St. Panteleimon on Mount Athos, made a pilgrimage to Prokopion to pray before the relics of St. John. When he arrived he venerated the Saint with great joy, and remained in the village for some time. On his way to Constantinople he travelled with six coaches of Turkish merchants from Anatolia, also on their way to the capital. As they reached a rutted and desolate part of the road, the monk's coach and one other slowed down to avoid mishap, while the rest went on ahead. Suddenly, a young man on a red horse appeared on a low hill near Fr. Andrew's coach, waving his hand and shouting, "Turn back! Robbers have captured your companions!" As soon as he sounded the warning, he vanished from in front of their eyes.

The two coaches immediately turned back, and although pursued by the robbers, they escaped unharmed. Fr. Andrew hastened to the nearest village, where he continued his journey in the company of Turkish soldiers. At a country inn where they spent the night, he met his former merchant-companions, who told him that the thieves had not only taken their money, but even their clothes, and they were amazed that the last two coaches had escaped unharmed. Fr. Andrew related the appearance of the youth, and they all glorified God, understanding that it was the Saint himself who had saved the monk after his pilgrimage to Prokopion.

In the year 1881 a portion of the relics of St John were transferred to the Russian monastery of the holy Great Martyr Panteleimon by the monks of Mount Athos, after they were miraculously saved by the saint during a dangerous journey.

[Another source mentions that the Saint's "missing" right hand was transferred to the Monastery of St. Panteleimon on Mount Athos. One pious desire of St. John was to go to the Holy Mountain, but he was unable to do so in life. After his death he appeared to a priest from there, and told him to seek out his right hand, which was separated on its own, and to bring it to Mount Athos. Thus after death, a part of him could reside there.

Construction of a new church was begun in 1886, through the contributions of the monastery and the inhabitants of Prokopion. This was necessary because the church of the holy Great Martyr George, where the relics of St John were enshrined, had fallen into disrepair.

On August 15, 1898 the new church dedicated to St John the Russian was consecrated by the Metropolitan John of Caesarea, with the blessing of the Ecumenical Patriarch Constantine V.

In 1924, an exchange of the populations of Greece and Turkey took place. Many Moslems moved out of Greece, and many Christians moved out of Turkey. The inhabitants of Prokopion, when they moved to the island of Euboia, took with them part of the relics of St John the Russian.

For several decades the relics were in the church of Sts Constantine and Helen at New Prokopion on Euboia, and in 1951 they were transferred into a new church dedicated to St John the Russian. Thousands of pilgrims flocked here from all the corners of Greece, particularly on his Feast, May 27. St John the Russian is widely venerated on Mount Athos, particularly in the Russian monastery of St Panteleimon.

St John's help is sought by travelers, and by those transporting things."

Wonderworker

"The Venerable Ivan shows a special love for children through the many miracles bestowed upon them by Christ. With visible intervention, many times he saved children from certain death during earthquakes when roofs fell on to children during school hours at Prokopi and in Athens at the Holy Umercenaries (Aghi Anargyri) some years ago. He also saved countless children from terrible diseases and other calamities.

Even his help and benefaction to adults is not limited! Whole streams of miracles have been bestowed upon them as well! Deaf and dumb are able to hear and speak! Paralysed are able to walk in good health! Blind see again! Cardiopathics return to their former strength! Cancer sufferers are healed! A certain woman from Cyprus bent over due to a spinal problem so that her head reached her knees, like the one in the Gospel, was healed a few years ago immediately she donned the belt of the Saint. This miracle was made known widely by the Press. A non-believer physician (who at one time, with great

disrespect, had called the relics of the Saint a "mummy"), was healed from an incurable and terminal illness when the humble Saint appeared to him and said, "I am he whom you called the 'mummy', and I heal you by the Grace of my Lord Jesus Christ"! Demoniacs are freed from the demons that possess them! Saddened people are comforted! Disillusioned people find hope! Weakened people are supported! Disbelievers become believers! Pious people are strengthened in their piety! The name of God is constantly glorified because of the small-framed slave boy from Russia. This was the suffering stable-hand who lived as a slave without slavery, voluntarily poor, unimportant, dressed in ragged clothing, obedient, but firm though in his holy Orthodox Christian Faith, having the "Slava tebie Bozhie" (Glory to you God) constantly coming from his mouth!"

St. John the Russian, with scenes from his life

"SOME MIRACLES OF SAINT JOHN

The Saint performed many wonders even after his blessed repose. A descendent of the Agha told many of the following miracle: "My children would not live except for a short time, and would die while yet infants. Their unfortunate mother, after she had lost hope in the wisdom of medicine, fled without my knowledge to the relics of the slave John, so that he might grant her a little child which would not die while yet young, so that we also might rejoice to see it as a young man or even a young girl In truth the righteous John heard the supplication of my wife. God granted us a strong little boy whom we called, as you know, Kole Guvan Oglu (that is, "Son of the Slave John"), and he lives through the power of God and the prayers of John even until today."

Several times St. John has appeared in dreams and visions warning of impending dangers. Once he warned some Greek school children that the roof was about to fall; they had time enough to jump underneath their desks and when the roof fell, its beams came down upon the desks without striking even one of the children.

More recently we have heard about the miraculous healings of two severe cases of meningitis - one a 19 year old shepherd boy in southern Greece and the other a 3-year old boy in London.

Today a part of the right hand of St. John is enshrined in a special silver

reliquary in the Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Boston [Old Calendar, HOCNA], where many people come to venerate it and to ask the prayers of this simple Confessor of the Christian faith, knowing that the Lord - Who resisteth the proud - hears speedily the prayers of the meek."

Many faithful walk 40 kilometers in the grace of the Saint

Holding a bottle of water and a towel to wipe the sweat, hundreds are the faithful who go by foot to Prokopi [Evia] to celebrate St. John the Russian. Here for two days, the center road from Chalkida to Prokopi is filled with the faithful who walk to go to the Righteous Saint. The distance is about **40 kilometers**, and many walk this every year. The power of faith is great, as are the miracles of the Saint.

For more miracles of St. John the Russian, see: <http://full-of-grace-and-truth.blogspot.com/2010/05/selected-miracles-and-hymns-of-st-john.html> **and** <http://full-of-grace-and-truth.blogspot.com/2010/02/additional-miracles-of-st-john-russian.html>.

For a video of the house and local church of the Saint in Prokopi, Asia Minor, see: http://apantaortodoxias.blogspot.com/2010/06/blog-post_6698.html **and** <http://apantaortodoxias.blogspot.com/2010/06/urgup.html>.

Elder Iakovos and St. John

"Elder Iakovos Tsalikis would regularly visit the Shrine of St. John the Russian in Evia.

He said: "Once, I saw the Saint alive inside of his reliquary. I asked him: "My Saint, how did you live in Asia Minor, what virtues and blessings did you have?"

The Saint responded to me: "I slept in the cave in which was the stable and covered myself with straw to take cover in the winter so I wouldn't freeze. I had humility and faith."

In a short while he said to me: "Wait, Fr. Iakovos, because now two people have come to pray for a sick child. Wait until I go help him."

Immediately the reliquary appeared empty, because the Saint left. In a short while, he returned, though I didn't see how he did, but I saw him inside his

reliquary like a [living] man!"

Apolytikion of St. John the Russian

He that hath called thee from earth unto the heavenly abodes doth even after thy death keep thy body unharmed, O righteous one; for thou wast carried off as a prisoner into Asia wherein also, O John, thou didst win Christ as thy friend. Wherefore do thou beseech him that our souls be saved.

Kontakion

The holy memory, O righteous father, of thine illustrious contests hath come today gladdening the souls of those who venerate thee with reverence and faith, O John.

The full service to St. John the Russian (in Greek) is available here: <http://voutsinasilias.blogspot.com/2012/05/27.html>, with the Akathist here: http://voutsinasilias.blogspot.com/2012/05/27_7018.html and the Engomia (Lamentations) here: http://voutsinasilias.blogspot.com/2012/05/27_24.html.

***Christ is risen from the dead, by death, trampling down upon death, and to those in the tombs, bestowing life!
Truly the Lord is risen!***

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