



*Welcome to St. Olympia Orthodox Church,
a young and, God willing, growing community of worshipers.*

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Please join us for prayer and fellowship.

Upcoming Services:
Saturday, July 1, 8 Great
Vespers: 5pm

Sunday, July 2, 9
Divine Liturgy: 10am
Coffee and fellowship will
follow the service

The above services are at
St. Olympia Church
34 North Main Street
Norwood, NY, 13668

Mailing Address
St. Olympia Orthodox
Church PO Box 122
Canton, NY 13617

Saint John [Maximovitch],
Archbishop of Shanghai and San Francisco
July 2



*Your care for your flock in its sojourn prefigured your prayers,
which you always offer up for the whole world.*
Thus we believe, having come to know your love, O holy hierarch and wonderworker John.
Wholly sanctified by God through the ministry of the all-pure Mysteries,
and ever strengthened by them yourself,
you hastened to the suffering, O healer, easing their afflictions.
Hasten now to help us, who honor you with all our heart.

Troparion

LIFE AND MIRACLES OF ST. JOHN (MAXIMOVICH) OF SHANGHAI AND SAN FRANCISCO—ONE OF THE GREATEST SAINTS OF THE 20TH CENTURY

Bishop Alexander (Mileant), 7/2/2012

"Sanctity is not just a virtue. It is an attainment of such spiritual heights, that the abundance of God's grace which fills the saint overflows on all who associate with him. Great is the saint's state of bliss in which they dwell contemplating the Glory of God. Being filled with love for God and man, they are responsive to man's needs, interceding before God and helping those who turn to them."

Thus describing the ancient Saints, Vladyka John simultaneously summarized his own spiritual attitude which made him one of the greatest Saints of our time.

Childhood: Michael Maximovitch, the future Archbishop John, was born on June 4, 1896, in the village of Adamovka in the province of Kharkov in southern Russia... Kharkov, where Vladyka spent his formative years, was a true town of Holy Russia, and the young Michael, impressionable to revelations of holiness, acquired there the pattern of his future life. There were two miraculous Icons of the Mother of God, the Oseryanskaya and Eletsckaya, which were carried in a religious procession twice a year from the monasteries where they were treasured to the Dormition Cathedral. In the Protection Monastery, in a frescoed grotto underneath the altar, lay the remains of the holy Archbishop Melety Leontovitch, who after his death in 1841 rendered miraculous help to those who served a panikhida for him at his coffin. Even during his lifetime the Archbishop was venerated for his severe asceticism, especially for the ascetic feat of abstaining from sleep. He was known to spend nights on end standing motionless, with lifted arms, deep in prayer. He foreknew the day and the hour of his own death. The young Maximovitch was known to have a veneration for this holy hierarch.

Today Archbishop John may be seen to resemble the holy man of Kharkov in at least three respects: he was known not to have slept in a bed for forty years; he knew beforehand of his death; and before his glorification in 1994 his relics rested under a cathedral in a special grave-chapel where panikhidas were sung almost daily and the Psalter read over his coffin by those asking for his help. This is a unique case of the transplanting, as it were, of a part of Holy Russia to contemporary America...

Belgrade: In 1921, during the Civil War in Russia, the future archbishop, ... was evacuated to Belgrade, where he and his brothers entered the University of Belgrade... Michael himself graduated in 1925 in the faculty of theology... In 1924, Michael was ordained reader in the Russian church in Belgrade by Metropolitan Anthony... In 1926 Metropolitan Anthony tonsured him a monk and ordained him hierodeacon in the Milkov Monastery, giving him the name John, after the future archbishop's own distant relative, Saint John (Maximovitch) of Tobolsk. On November 21 of the same year Fr. John was ordained hieromonk.

The city of Bitol was in the diocese of Okhrida. At that time the ruling bishop of this diocese was Nicholas Velimirovich—a noted preacher, poet, writer, and inspirer of the popular religious movement. He, as much as Metropolitan Anthony, valued and loved the young Hieromonk John, and himself exerted a beneficial influence upon him. More than once he was heard to say, "If you wish to see a living saint, go to Bitol to Father John."

For, indeed, it began to become evident that this was an entirely extraordinary man. His own students were first to discover what was perhaps Fr. John's greatest feat of asceticism. They noticed at first that he stayed up long after everyone else had gone to bed; he would go through the dormitories at night and pick up blankets that had fallen down and cover the unsuspecting sleepers, making the Sign of the Cross over them. Finally it was discovered that he scarcely slept at all, and never in a bed, allowing himself only an hour or two each night of uncomfortable rest in a sitting position, or bent over on the floor praying before icons. Years afterward he himself admitted that since taking the monastic vows he had not slept lying in a bed. Such an ascetic practice is a very rare one; and yet it is not unknown to Orthodox tradition...

In 1934 it was decided to raise Hieromonk John to the rank of bishop... The consecration occurred on May 28, 1934. Vladyka was the last bishop of the very many to be consecrated by Metropolitan Anthony, and the extraordinarily high esteem in which that venerable hierarch held the new bishop is indicated in a letter which he sent to Archbishop Dimitry in the Far East. Himself declining an invitation to retire to China, he wrote: "Dear friend! I am very old and unable to travel ... But in place of myself, as my soul, as my heart, I am sending you Bishop John. This little, frail man, looking almost like a child, is in actuality a miracle of ascetic firmness and strictness in our time of total spiritual enfeeblement." Vladyka was assigned to the Diocese of Shanghai, China.

Vladyka arrived in Shanghai in late November... The first thing he did was to restore Church unity. He established contact with Serbs, Greeks, Ukrainians... He at once became a protector of various charitable and philanthropic societies and actively participated in their work, ... He organized a home for orphans and the children of needy parents, entrusting it to the heavenly protection of a Saint he highly venerated, St. Tikhon of Zadonsk, who loved children... Beginning with eight children, the orphanage later housed up to a hundred children at one time, and some 1500 in all. When the Communists came, Vladyka evacuated the whole orphanage, first to an island in the Philippines, and then to America.

It soon became apparent to his new flock that Vladyka was a great ascetic. The core of his asceticism was prayer and fasting. He ate once a day at 11 p.m. During the first and last weeks of Lent he did not eat at all, and for the rest of this and the Christmas fast he ate only bread from the altar. His nights he spent usually in prayer, and when he finally became exhausted he would put his head on the floor and steal a few hours of sleep near dawn. When the time would come to serve Matins, someone would knock on the door, to no avail; they would open the door and find Vladyka huddled on the floor in the icon-corner, overcome by sleep. At a tap on the shoulder he would jump up, and in a few minutes he would be in church for services — cold water streaming down his beard, but quite awake.

Vladyka officiated in the cathedral every morning and evening, even when sick. He celebrated the Divine Liturgy daily, as he was to do for the rest of his life, and if for some reason he could not serve, he would still receive Holy Communion. No matter where he was, he would not miss a service...

By now it had become known that Vladyka was not only a righteous man and an ascetic, but was also so close to God that he was endowed with the gift of clairvoyance, and there were healings by his prayers. A striking account told by an eyewitness, Lidia Liu, testifies to Vladyka's spiritual height. "Vladyka came to Hong Kong twice. It's strange, but I, not knowing Vladyka then, wrote him a letter asking him to help a widow with children, and I also asked him about some personal spiritual matter, but I never received an answer. A year passed. Vladyka came to Hong Kong and I was in a crowd that went to meet him in church. Vladyka turned to me and said, 'It is you who wrote me the letter!' I was astonished, since Vladyka had never seen me before."

"A moleben was sung, after which Vladyka, standing before a lectern, was delivering a sermon. I was standing next to my mother, and we both saw a light surrounding Vladyka down to the lectern — a radiance around him a foot wide. This lasted a rather long time. When the sermon was over, I, struck by such an unusual phenomenon, told what we had seen to our friend, who replied to us: 'Yes, many faithful saw it.' My husband, who was standing a little way off, also saw this light." ...

With the coming of the Communists, the Russians in China were forced once again to flee, most of them through the Philippine Islands. In 1949 approximately 5,000 refugees from the Chinese mainland were living in an International Refugee Organization camp on the island of Tubabao in the Philippines. This island is located in the path of the seasonal typhoons which sweep through that part of the Pacific. During the 27-month period of the camp's occupancy, the island was threatened only once by a typhoon, and it changed course and bypassed the island.

When the fear of typhoons was mentioned by one Russian to the Filipinos, they replied that there was no reason to worry, because "your holy man blesses your camp from four directions every night." They referred to Vladyka John; for no typhoon struck the island while he was there. After the camp had been almost totally evacuated and the people resettled elsewhere (mainly in the USA and Australia), it was struck by a terrible typhoon that totally destroyed the camp.

Paris: Vladyka himself went to Washington, D. C., to get his people to America. Legislation was changed and almost the whole camp came to the New World—thanks again to Vladyka. The exodus of his flock from China accomplished, Archbishop John was given in 1951 a new field for his pastoral endeavor: he was sent by the Synod of Bishops to the Archdiocese of Western Europe, with his see first in Paris, and later in Brussels. He was now one of the leading hierarchs of the Russian Church, and his attendance was frequently required at the sessions of the Synod in New York City.

In Western Europe Vladyka took a deep interest not only in the Russians in the diaspora, for whom he exerted himself tirelessly in labors similar to those for which he had been known in Shanghai, but also in the local inhabitants. He received under his jurisdiction local Dutch and French Orthodox Churches, protecting them and encouraging their Orthodox development. He celebrated the Divine Liturgy in Dutch and French, as before he had served in Greek and Chinese, and as later he was to serve in English.

Vladyka's interest in and devotion to the Church's Saints, of whom his knowledge was already seemingly limitless, was extended now to Western European Saints dating from before the schism of the Latin Church, many of whom, venerated only locally, were not included in any Orthodox calendar of Saints. He collected their lives and images of them, and later submitted a long list of them to the Synod...

Vladyka's reputation for holiness, too, spread among the non-Orthodox as well as the Orthodox population. In one of the Catholic churches of Paris, a priest strove to inspire his young people with these words: "You demand proof, you say that now there are neither miracles nor saints. Why should I give you theoretical proof, when today there walks in the streets of Paris a Saint — Saint Jean Nus Pieds (Saint John the Barefoot)." Many people testify to the miracles worked by the prayers of Archbishop John in Western Europe...

In San Francisco, where the cathedral parish is the largest in the Russian Church Abroad, Vladyka's life-long friend, Archbishop Tikhon, retired due to of ill-health, and in his absence the construction of a great new cathedral came to a halt as a bitter dispute paralyzed the Russian community. In response to the urgent request of thousands of Russians in San Francisco who had known him in Shanghai, Archbishop John was sent by the Synod in 1962 as the only hierarch likely to restore peace in the divided community. He arrived at his last assignment as bishop twenty-eight years to the day after his first arrival in Shanghai—on the feast of the Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple, November 21, 1962.



Under Vladyka's guidance a measure of peace was restored, the paralysis of the community was ended, and the cathedral finished. Yet, even in the role of peacemaker, Vladyka was attacked, and accusations and slanders were heaped upon his head. He was forced to appear in public court—in flagrant violation of church canons—to answer to preposterous charges of concealing financial dishonesty by the Parish Council. All involved were completely exonerated; but this filled Vladyka's last years with the bitterness of slander and persecution, to which he unfailingly replied without complaint, without judging anyone, with undisturbed peacefulness.

Vladyka remained true to the end to his path of faithful service to the Church. To those who knew him in his last years, perhaps two aspects of his character stood out. First was his strictness regarding the Church and the Law of God... Yet Vladyka is not best remembered by his flock for his sternness, but rather for his gentleness, his joyfulness, even for what is known as "foolishness for Christ's sake." The most popular photograph of him captures something of this aspect of his character. It was especially noticeable in his conduct with children. After services he would smile and joke with the boys who served with him, playfully knocking the mischievous ones on the head with his staff. Occasionally the Cathedral clergy would be disconcerted to see Vladyka, in the middle of a service (though never in the altar), bend over to play with a small child! And on feast days when blessing with holy water was performed, he would sprinkle the faithful—not on the top of the head as is usual, but right in the face (which once led a small girl to exclaim, "He squirts you"), with a noticeable glint in his eye and total unconcern at the discomfiture of some of the more dignified. Children were absolutely devoted to him, despite his usual strictness with them...

The Death of a Saint: Among those who knew and loved Vladyka, the first response to the news of his sudden death was: it cannot be! And this was more than a reaction to the suddenness of the event; for among those who were close to him there had unaccountably developed the notion that this pillar of the Church, this holy man who was always accessible to his flock, would never cease to be! There would never be a time when one would not be able to turn to him for advice and consolation! In one sense, in a spiritual sense, this has since turned out to be true. But it is also one of the realities of this world that every man who lives must die. Vladyka was prepared for this reality.

...And on the day of his death, at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy which he celebrated, he spent three hours in the altar praying, emerging not long before his death, which occurred on July 2, 1966. He died in his room in the parish building next to the church. He was heard to fall and, having been placed in a chair by those who ran to help him, breathed his last peacefully and with little evident pain, in the presence of the miracle-working Kursk Icon of the Sign...

Epilogue: Blessed Archbishop John of Shanghai and San Francisco was canonized as a Saint by the Russian Church on July 2 1994. It was a wonderful and unforgettable event to which hundreds of clergy and many thousands of laymen came from all over the world!

The importance of St. John for the people of the twentieth century cannot be underestimated. Those who knew him personally or have read about his life and miracles have learned of the tremendous spiritual power embodied in this frail little man. God was drawn to the burning, loving heart of Vladyka John, which became a vessel of His grace. He entrusted the Saint with heavenly secrets and the ability to transcend physical laws, making him a point of contact between Himself, the Creator, and us, His creatures.

There can be no doubt that Vladyka John has been sent by God as a gift of holiness to the people of the last days. At a time when imitation has become the norm in all aspects of life, when the authentic spirit of the Christian Faith has been so hidden that most are oblivious of its very existence, he can be seen as a model of genuineness.

Vladyka John has set the right "tone" of true apostleship in the modern world. As more people are drawn into the Orthodox Church of Christ before the final unleashing of evil, may they look to him as their loving guide and a pastor who knows no death. He is a kind of "measuring stick" that indicates who and what is real in our confusing times. The unit of measure is nothing other than pure Christian love, which he possessed and distributed in abundance. With this love, the intense struggle of spiritual life becomes worth the effort.

By the prayers of Saint John may God bless and save us. Amen!

The full article can be read at <https://orthochristian.com/54575.html>

The Sitka Icon of the Mother of God July 8

Located at the Cathedral of Saint Michael the Archangel in Sitka, Alaska is one of the most revered Icons in North America: the Sitka Mother of God.

This Icon has been attributed to a famous Iconographer, Vladimir Lukich Borovikovsky (1758-1826), a protégé of the Empress Catherine II who was instructed at the Academy of Arts in Saint Petersburg, Russia. In addition to being a great portrait painter, Borovikovsky also painted many of the Icons for the Cathedral of the Kazan Icon in Saint Petersburg.

Painted in the style of the Kazan Mother of God Icon, on canvas, the Sitka Mother of God Icon is 36 x 17-1/2 inches in size. An exceptionally beautiful and detailed riza of silver covers the Icon of the Theotokos and Christ child, and the Image of God the Father blessing from above.

The Cathedral received the Icon as a gift from the laborers of the Russian American Company in 1850, two years after the Cathedral was completed. Even with their meager wages, these men generously made their contribution to the Church.

Miracles have been attributed to the Sitka Mother of God Icon over the years. It is believed that the gaze of the eyes of the Theotokos have led to the restored health of those who prayed before the Icon.

Because of the peaceful gaze of the Theotokos, the Icon has been described as a “pearl of Russian ecclesiastical art of ineffable gentleness, purity and harmony....” And “...the most beautiful face of the Mother of God with the Divine Child in her arms is so delicately and artistically done that the more one looks at it the more difficult it is to tear one’s gaze away.”

Originally part of the main Iconostasis at the Cathedral of Saint Michael the Archangel in Sitka, Alaska, the Icon is now permanently located on the far left side of the Iconostasis in a special place of honor.



UPCOMING DIOCESAN & PARISH EVENTS

Pilgrimage to St Olymphia Mission with Archbishop Michael for our Patronal Feast

Monday, July 24, 2023

Vespers, 6pm

Tuesday, July 25, 2023

Vesting the Bishop, 9:30am

Divine Liturgy, 10am

Diocesan Council Meeting

Tuesday, July 18, at 11:00 AM

Diocesan Chancery, Bronxville NY

Presbyter’s Council Meeting

Thursday, July 27, at 1:00 PM

Zoom

WEEKDAY VESPERS AT THE HERMITAGE OF ST OLYMPIA

Weekdays at 5 PM

For information please contact Mother Sophronia at mothersophronia@gmail.com

or via Facebook: Nun Sophronia Hofstead.