



Prophet Elias News

News in the time of self –isolation for the Orthodox Church of
the Holy Prophet Elias in Devon
12th July 2020



This week, on 17th July, we commemorate as Holy Passion Bearers the Tsar Nicholas II, Tsarina Alexandra and their children. The concept of 'Passion Bearer' as a form of sainthood first took root in Rus, and is still found mostly in the Russian tradition. Some of our readers may therefore not be familiar with the idea – hence our inclusion of the article below.

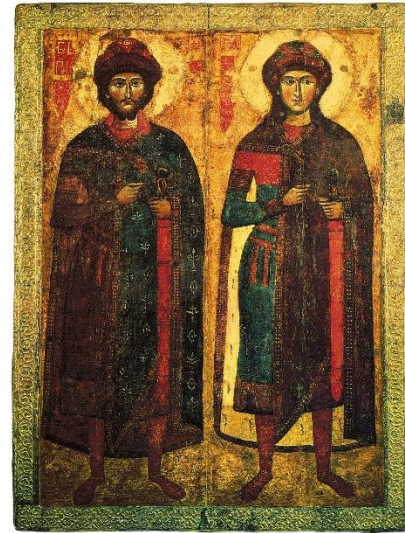


On the Holy Passion Bearers

Extract from a blog posted on 12-12- 2019 by Henry Karlson on www.patheos.com reprinted with permission. The full text can be seen at <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/henrykarlson/author/hkarlson/>

There is in the Eastern Christian spiritual tradition, especially in Russia, the notion of the passion bearer, the saint who was killed, not as a martyr for the faith, but for some other reason apart from the faith. And yet, because of their faith, they did not resist their attacker with violence, demonstrating extraordinary virtue in their death. Because Christ willingly went to his death, decrying the use of violence when Peter tried to resist the Roman soldiers, the passion bearers are said to share with Christ a particularly holy, particularly important, glory which is rare among humanity. They renounced the evil of violence, even to the point of death. Indeed, most of them went further than this, and showed great love and compassion to those who assaulted them, forgiving their attackers. They chose a higher, more difficult path, and they chose it because they believed it was what Christ would have them do. For this reason, their deaths are honoured, even though they were not martyrs who were killed because of the Christian faith. For in their deaths, they demonstrated their full desire to follow the precepts of Christ, to follow after him with self-emptying love; they humbly accepted their fate upon the earth. They found a way to make what could have been a worthless, terrible death, have great spiritual value.

Saints Boris and Gleb, two of the sons of Saint Vladimir, were the first officially canonized saints of Rus. Although they died political deaths, (both assassinated by their brother Sviatopolk), they chose not to resist and thereby plunge the nation into civil war. Their story established within the Rus-ian psyche the realization of the virtue of non-violence, a virtue which was capable of being demonstrated when someone found themselves confronted with a cruel death.



While the hagiography surrounding Saints Boris and Gleb indicates that they probably could have fought off their killers and possibly survived, not all passion bearers have such freedom. What is important is that all of them resisted the engagement of any violent forms of self-defence. A passion bearer transcends human expectations. It is not that they are martyrs, but they follow the higher path which the martyrs chose: the difference is that the martyrs were specifically killed because of their faith in Christ, while the passion-bearers died for other reasons, and yet their faith in Christ shaped the way they reacted when faced with death.

The passion bearers participate in the death of Christ, not just spiritually, [as we all do in baptism] but physically; they can be said to be united with his death in a special way. They do not look to violence as a response to violence: rather, they look to the example of Christ and follow him in forgiving all who would harm them. They show us, through their deaths, how they have truly have become partakers of the divine nature and experienced, at least in part, the kingdom of God in their lives, so that they could do what most of us cannot. They show us the true Christian response to others: it is not, of course, that Christians are to do nothing when facing evil in the world; rather, it shows that Christians must react with the dictates of love and justice, and when they have nothing else left they can do but love, then that is what they are called to do.

When we understand the ramifications of the Christian life, we will note that so long as we live, we should strive for improving the world, making it a more just place, but we will also realize that we must accept that death will come to us. Not all of us will come face to face with some great evil when we die. But some of us will, and if we do, we will be challenged. Will we embrace the opportunity and follow Christ in a death which demonstrates self-giving love to all, even to our oppressors, hoping that by such a witness we might transform their hearts and bring about a positive change in the world, or will we face them with the habits of death, taking their path and embracing it by violently resisting their violence, ratifying the path of violence and death in the process? Obviously, because of human frailty, most of us will likely follow the second path, but those who have been so touched by Christ, by the love of Christ, who do the first truly deserve our honour and respect. They have manifested the kingdom of God in and through their deaths.

Henry Karlson, after studying early church history and theology, became a Byzantine Catholic in 1995. He subsequently pursued graduate studies in theology.

All Shall Be Well

And this word: *Thou shalt not be overcome*, was said very clearly, for assuredness and comfort against all tribulations that may come. He said not: *Thou shalt not be tempest, thou shalt not be travailed, thou shalt not be afflicted*; but He said: *Thou shalt not be overcome*. God willeth that we take heed to these words, and that we be ever strong in sure trust, in weal and woe. For He loveth and enjoyeth us, and so willeth He that we love and enjoy Him and mightily trust in Him; and *all shall be well*.

Dame Julian of Norwich

This Week we Celebrate

On **12th July**, Saint **Veronica** Who was Healed by Christ (1st C)

In Orthodox tradition, Veronica was the woman who by touching Christ's garment was healed of the bleeding disorder she had suffered for twelve years. Later in Jerusalem, when Christ in exhaustion passed her on his way to Calvary, she wiped his sweating and bloodstained face with her handkerchief. When she looked at the cloth afterwards, she saw that it bore the image of His face. Veronica's name is said to be derived from the Latin for *true image*.

On **15th July**, Holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Prince **Vladimir**, Enlightener of Rus (1015)

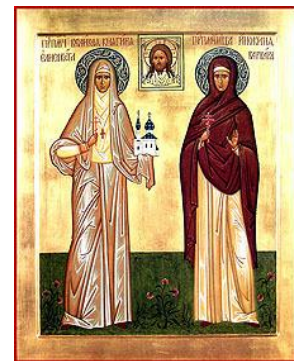
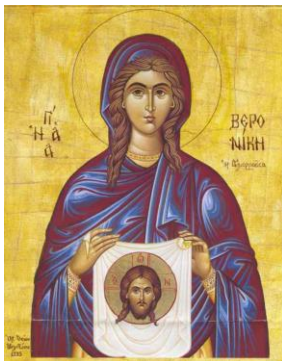
Saint **Swithun**, Bishop and Wonderworker of Winchester (862).

(According to English tradition, if it rains on St Swithun's day it will rain for forty days.)

On **17th July**, Holy Great Martyr **Marina (Margaret)** of Antioch (c 303)

Holy Passionbearers the Emperor **Nicholas II**, Empress **Alexandra** and their children **Olga**, **Tatiana**, **Maria**, **Anastasia** and **Alexis** (1918)

On **18th July**, Holy Martyrs the Grand Duchess **Elizabeth** and the Nun **Barbara** (1918)

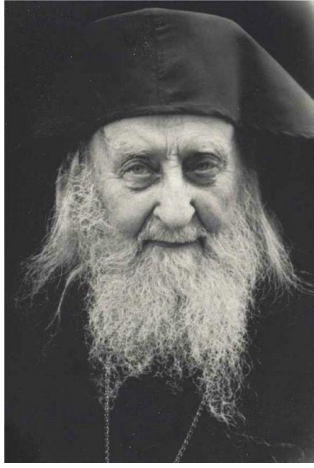


We wish our Veronika, Veronica, Marina and Eliza **Happy Feast and Many Years!**

Saint Sophrony the Athonite

The first celebration of the Feast Day of Saint Sophrony the Athonite is due to be celebrated [at the Monastery of Saint John the Baptist in Essex] on 10th/11th July. What was to have been a large festal occasion, headed by the Patriarch, their Archbishop, will now be a 'family occasion' of the monastic community. Visitors are still not allowed. Even Metropolitan John of Pergamon, a long-time friend and for many years Patriarchal representative to the Monastery, for the first time cannot be there.

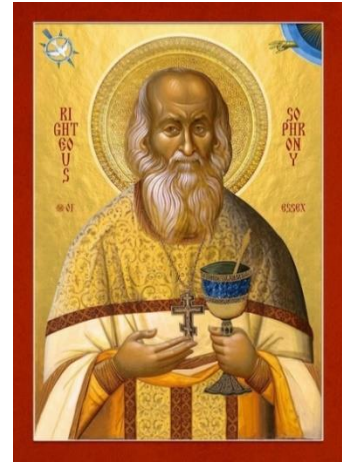
Born in Russia, exiled in Paris, and for many years a disciple of Saint Silouan on Mount Athos, Father Sophrony returned to Paris for health reasons and later, surrounded by a small community of aspiring monastics, moved to England. Archimandrite Sophrony founded the Monastery of St John the Baptist in 1959, and was known to a number of us 'oldies' and still Hegoumen in the 1960s and 1970s. In his latter years he was succeeded by Archimandrite Kyrill, but remained 'Father in God' to the community. Archimandrite Peter succeeded Father Kyrill in 2019, when he retired as Hegoumen. Archdeacon Prokopy, one of the founder members of the community, still resides there.



Father Sophrony fell asleep on 11th July 1993, and his tomb is in a crypt underneath a chapel in the grounds of the monastery. On either side rest a number of departed members of the community, including Archimandrite Staretz Symeon.

Archpriest Patrick Hodson

Holy Father Sophrony, pray to God for us!



Report on Eastern Orthodoxy and Sexual Diversity

Two members of our community, Deacon Brandon Gallaher and Edward Skidelsky, have been involved in the recently-published *Interim Report of the British Council Bridging Voices Consortium of Exeter University & Fordham University, New York on “Contemporary Eastern Orthodox Identity and the Challenges of Pluralism and Sexual Diversity in a Secular Age”* edited by Brandon Gallaher & Gregory Tucker.

Under the title *Eastern Orthodoxy & Sexual Diversity: Perspectives on Challenges from the Modern West* the report brings together the considered views of a consortium of 21 scholars, pastors, activists, and policy-makers about ‘the challenges of pluralism in general and sexual diversity specifically to Eastern Orthodox identity in a secular age.’

This is an important document, because it seeks to promote a ‘sustained, complex and respectful conversation’ about issues which are not going to go away, however much some might hope they would. Much of the ‘discussion’ in Orthodox circles about sexual diversity is shrill, ill-informed, and often uncharitable. Serious, informed discussion between thoughtful people who acknowledge their differences but are prepared to engage in dialogue is long overdue.

The full report is available as a download at

<https://orthodoxyindialogue.com/2020/07/05/british-council-eastern-orthodoxy-and-sexual-diversity/#more-17572>

Martin Olsson

Discussion Point

Whilst some readers may find this difficult to stomach and blame ‘liberalism’, I think we should all bear in mind that we live in a tolerant, liberal democracy. It is this tolerance and liberalism that allows all of us the freedom to voice our disagreement, but unlike in authoritarian states not to be arrested for doing so. However, this freedom also means we have the duty and responsibility to respect other peoples’ points of view, which admittedly is not always an easy thing to do. The headmistress of my (Roman Catholic convent) school taught us the tenets of Communism – her reason: you cannot talk against anything sensibly if you don’t know the facts from both sides of the argument.

Celia Olsson

All I Shall Be Asked

The way to God lies through love of people. At the last Judgement I shall not be asked whether I was successful in my ascetic exercises, nor how many bows and prostrations I made. Instead I shall be asked, Did I feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick and the prisoners. That is all I shall be asked.

St Maria of Paris