



*From the Spiritual Treasury of Venerable Seraphim of Sarov*

The true goal of our Christian life consists of acquiring God's Holy Spirit. Fasting and vigil, prayer, mercy, and every other good deed performed for Christ — are means for acquiring the Holy Spirit of God. Only deeds performed for Christ give us the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Excessive care about worldly matters is characteristic of an unbelieving and fainthearted person, and woe to us, if, in taking care of ourselves, we do not use as our foundation our faith in God Who cares for us! If we do not attribute visible blessings to Him, which we use in this life, then how can we expect those blessings from Him which are promised in the future? We will not be of such little faith. By the words of Our Saviour, it is better first to seek the Kingdom of God, for the rest shall be added unto us (see Mt. 6:33).

A person consists of a soul and body, and therefore his life's path should consist of both physical and spiritual activities — of deeds and contemplation.

The path of an active life consists of fasting, abstinence, vigils, kneeling, prayer and other physical feats, composing the strait and sorrowful path which, by the word of God, leads to eternal life (Mt. 7:14).

The contemplative life consists in the mind aspiring to the Lord God, in awareness of the heart, focused prayer and in the contemplation of spiritual matters through such exercises.

Anyone desiring to lead a spiritual way of life must begin with the active life, and only later set about the contemplative, for without an active life it is impossible to lead a contemplative one.

An active life serves to purify us of sinful passions and raises us to the level of functioning perfection; at the same time it clears the way to a contemplative life. For only those cleansed of passions and the perfect can set out on that other life, as can be seen from the words of the Holy Scriptures: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Mt. 5:8), and from the words of Gregory the Theologian: “Only those who are perfect by their experience can without danger proceed to contemplation.”

## **Sunday, January 15**

*Thirty-first Sunday after Pentecost*

*Sunday before Theophany*

### **Divine Liturgy 9:30 A.M.**

Commemoration of Holy Hierarch Sylvester the Pope of Rome (†335)

Righteous Juliania of Lazarevskoe (†1604)

repose and the second finding (in 1991) of the relics of  
Venerable Seraphim the Wonderworker of Sarov (†1833)

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## **Thursday, January 19**

### **Feast of the Theophany of the Lord**

Great Blessing of Water 5:30 P.M.

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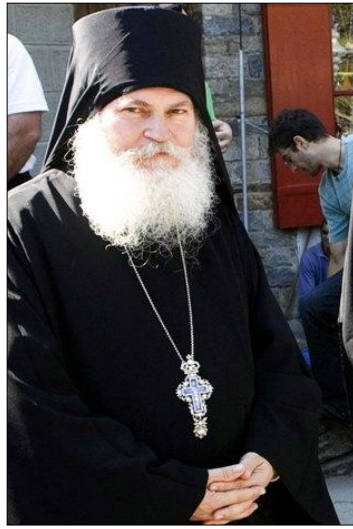
## **Sunday, January 22**

*Thirty-second Sunday after Pentecost*

*Sunday after Theophany*

### **Divine Liturgy 9:30 A.M.**

..... News From All The Ends Of The Earth .....



**Athens, Greece:** A protest has been published by monks of Mt. Athos against the holding of Vatopedi Abbot Ephraim under arrest. In it the decision by the Appeal Court is called “unfair and unacceptable”, and is described as an antagonistic act against the entire Church, monasticism, and the Holy Mountain, reports the Greek religion information agency *Romfea*. The Athonite monks’ opinion differs notably from the indeterminate position taken by the Synod of the Constantinople Patriarchate regarding the imprisonment of Fr. Ephraim, reports *Romfea*. The Patriarchate has stated that it has always avoided intervening with any judicial matters and investigations, due to respect of judicial independence, and will continue its policy, especially as far as this case is concerned, in which the Patriarchate does not know the content of the relevant papers in the case. The Ecumenical Patriarchate denounced the worldwide attempts led by the Russian Orthodox Church to defend Abbot Ephraim of Vatopedi, after the Holy Synod concluded last Tuesday. In its official announcement, the Patriarchate points out that Mount Athos lies within the jurisdiction and borders of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and though it may include Orthodox monks of different national backgrounds, its matters hold no pan-orthodox interests. Therefore, no other Autocephalous Church is allowed to interfere with the operation and issues of Mount Athos in any way. The Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew expressed his regrets over the whole situation surrounding the case of Abbot Ephraim. The monastic community has been critical of the modernist tendencies of the Ecumenical Patriarchate since the 1920s (like adoption by Constantinople of the New Calendar which brought divisions in the Orthodox world). The Ecumenical Patriarchate had asked Abbot Ephraim to leave his post until the judicial control of the Monastery’s affairs was over. This suggestion was followed by Abbot Ephraim at first, but later on a second decision of the Monastery’s Council allowed him to return to his duties.

Patriarchal Exarch Metropolitan Philaret, head of the Russian Orthodox Church in Belarus, has appealed to the Greek authorities to release the abbot of the prestigious Vatopedi monastery on Mount Athos. In his appeal, Metropolitan Philaret condemns the arrest of the abbot as a “provocation and the manifestation of a hostile attitude to the Church in a country declared Orthodox Christian by its constitution.” His Eminence argues that the accusations against the abbot are contested by many lawyers in Greece and raise doubts about the possibility of an impartial and democratic investigation of the case. Abbot Ephraim visited Belarus in November last year, meeting

with fellow clergymen, members of the House of Representatives and government officials. Metropolitan Philaret awarded the abbot with the St. Cyril of Turov Order.



*Archimandrite Ephraim and Patriarch Bartholomew*

News came through on January 13, that thanks to the worldwide pressure and despite of the meaningful silence of Patriarch Bartholomew Archimandrite Ephraim was partially acquitted by the Greek court. Nevertheless, the Greek authorities continue to hold him in prison. "This decision [acquitting Father Ephraim] applies to the ruling of the Rhodope court of appeal but not to the ruling of the Athens court of appeal under which Father Ephraim was taken into custody. The acquittal by the [supreme court] is one more positive phase in the Vatopedi case but it doesn't cancel the order on the pretrial detention of Archimandrite Ephraim," said a spokesman for the Russian Society of Friends of the Vatopedi Monastery. So Archimandrite Ephraim "remains behind bars and still needs support," the spokesman said. The proceedings against Fr Ephraim, which were first opened in Rhodope and then in Athens, will be reviewed by the appeal court of Thrace.



**Rome, Italy:** Homosexuals, just like any other sick people, need to be cured of their disease, states Francesco Bruno, a well-known Italian psychiatrist and TV commentator. "World Health Organization decided not to talk about homosexuality as about a disease, but I am not afraid of gays' harassment. Homosexuality is a deviation from the norm". "Conceptually, a homosexual ends up in the same class as the handicapped, the deaf and the blind. Gays have a different orientation as far as gender goes, and such differences point to the deviations from the norm", the psychiatrist is convinced. He was asked to help many parents of the youth with an altered gender orientation: "Those who say that their father or mother are content and accept their children's behavior know pretty well that this is a lie. For the both parents knowing that their children have this orientation is a major trauma". "Extreme tolerance regarding the deviations from the norm – and homosexuality is to be classified just so – leads to the situation when people no longer understand what is good and what is evil", Francesco Bruno was quoted by *La Repubblica*.

**Amsterdam, Holland:** Contemporary television serves not only to degrade its viewers cultural

level, now it does what the modern public – totally void of any meaning of life – ultimately long for: hosts of a Dutch television program have taken their gastronomic investigation to its final frontier by cooking and consuming each other's flesh. Dennis Storm and Valerio Zeno, co-hosts of *Proefkonijnen (Test Rabbits)* had a surgeon extract a piece of their body, which a chef then prepared in a frying pan with sunflower oil. "We didn't add any salt or pepper because we wanted to know what it tasted like," Storm told ABCNews.com. Asked about the experience, Storm said there was really nothing special about the taste of human meat, but "it is weird to look into the eyes of a friend when you are chewing on his belly." The pair insists the stunt was legal as they both entered the cannibalistic challenge voluntarily.

**New York, NY:** Representatives from diverse religious groups ask Americans to protect marriage and religious liberty in the face of the advance of same-sex unions. Richard Land, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), and Barrett Duke, the ERLC's vice president for public policy and research, signed with 37 other religious leaders an open letter to U.S. citizens. In the letter, they "encourage all people of good will to protect marriage as the union between one man and one woman, and to consider carefully the far-reaching consequences for the religious freedom of all Americans if marriage is redefined. We especially urge those entrusted with the public good to support laws that uphold the time-honored definition of marriage, and so avoid threatening the religious freedom of countless institutions and citizens in this country. Marriage and religious freedom are both deeply woven into the fabric of this nation." Many of the signers also had joined together in a December 2010 open letter that urged Americans to stand together to defend the traditional understanding of marriage for the good of society. The latest letter focuses on the threats to religious liberty from the legalization of homosexual "marriage." Changing the definition of marriage will have as one of its effects "the interference with the religious freedom of those who continue to affirm the true definition of marriage," according to the letter. The religious leaders say the "most urgent peril" in legalizing same-sex "marriage" is "forcing or pressuring both individuals and religious organizations -- throughout their operations, well beyond religious ceremonies -- to treat same-sex sexual conduct as the moral equivalent of marital sexual conduct." They point to church-state conflicts that already have occurred when those with Christian view on homosexual "marriage" resisted laws that legalized such unions. Those clashes will continue to occur as "same-sex" marriage advances legally, the signers say. They give as examples the following "sorts of situations" that have occurred already:

— Religious adoption services that place children exclusively with married couples would be required by law to place children with persons of the same sex who are civilly 'married.'

— Religious marriage counselors would be denied their professional accreditation for refusing to provide counseling in support of same-sex 'married' relationships.

— Religious employers who provide special health benefits to married employees would be required by law to extend those benefits to same-sex 'spouses.' Religious employers would also face lawsuits for taking any adverse employment action — no matter how modest — against an employee for the public act of obtaining a civil 'marriage' with a member of the same sex."

The signers say revising the legal definition of marriage will change thousands of laws. Six states and the District of Columbia have legalized homosexual 'marriage,' and there are efforts in others to do the same. The six states are Massachusetts, Vermont, New York, New Hampshire, Connecticut and Iowa. There also is an attempt in Congress to repeal the Defense of Marriage Act, a 1996 law that defines marriage for federal purposes as between a man and a woman and gives states the option of not recognizing another state's gay "marriages."

**Kiev, Ukraine:** 12 convicts of the Vinnitsa prison sentenced for life decided to take monastic vows. 12 novices and two monks live in the monastery on the territory of the prison. The morning of one

monk - life imprisoned Andrew Chistiakov starts with 40 prostrations and prayer. "For ten years I read works of the Holy Fathers for six-eight hours a day. I could have never had so much time as I have here in prison, even in the monastery," the prisoner said. The Penitentiary Service of Ukraine says there have never been cases when life prisoners massively took monastic vows before.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. January bulletin cover sponsor is Madge Petri — health of family.
2. This Sunday, the Eternal Light and the two candles by the Holy Altar Table are offered by Anne Springman, Madge Petri and Helen Urban in memory of their brother, in observance of the first anniversary of his repose.
3. Next Sunday, January 22, the Eternal Light will be offered by Nicholas Yacko in memory of his father Nicholas, in observance of his birthday.
4. Annual parish meeting is scheduled to take place on next Sunday, January 22, along with a Coffee Hour.
5. Please, continue to look, when grocery shopping, for the ingredients needed for our major fund-raising products. We need margarine, flour, nuts, sugar, sour kraut (newly-added item). No sour cream is needed at this time. Thank you for your continuous support!
6. Our Soup Sale is this coming Saturday, on January 21. As it has become our tradition, we are going to make stuffed cabbage (on Tuesday) and cabbage & noodle this week. Please plan to participate.
7. This week, the Great Blessing of Water is going to take place on Thursday evening (instead of Wednesday as indicated in the calendar) at 5:30 P.M.
8. Isn't it the time we put the Christmas tree and other decorations away till the next year?