

St. John of Kronstadt

(†1908)

Commemoration Days: February 7, October 19, December 20

Part I



Located on a small island in the Gulf of Finland, west of Saint Petersburg, Kronstadt was unlike any other place in Russia. The city-port had quite an *infamous* reputation. Its population comprised mostly of sailors, *unskilled* workers and deported criminals. Many were homeless and slept on the street. Theft, extreme poverty and moral corruption were *wide-spread*. Women often couldn't feed and clothe their children. Men, unable to *provide for* their families, resorted to drinking. Such was the cruel reality of life in Kronstadt – where, in 1855, a

newly-ordained priest, Fr. John, started his *ministry*. He came to help the most *desperate* find God.

John was born in a small village in the Arkhangelsk region, in the north of the Russian Empire, to deacon Ilia Sergiev and his wife, Theodora. At birth, the baby was so weak that his parents, fearing for their son's *survival*, baptized him on the same day.

Ilia Sergiev's family was poor, and his children knew *deprivation* from their early years. John, his first born, was a quiet child who liked to spend time by himself, thinking and observing the life around him. When John was ten, his parents collected enough money to send him to a parish school in Arkhangelsk. At first, learning came to John with much difficulty, and his grades were the lowest in the class. John was greatly troubled by this, understanding that his parents' last resources went for his education. He prayed to God for help in his studies and continued to work *hard*. Gradually, John Sergiev not only *caught up with* the other boys, but *surpassed* them, becoming the top pupil in the school.

John never questioned what direction in life to take: like his father and grandfather before him, he wanted to serve God. Since he was academically *gifted*, the state paid for his study at Saint Petersburg Academy. Parish priests were expected to be married, and John, following the tradition, *wed* before he left the Academy. He and his wife, Elizabeth, cared for each other like brother and sister. The vow of *chastity* John made in his youth, he kept

all his life. After his *ordination*, twenty-six-year-old Fr. John was appointed to serve in St. Andrew's Cathedral of Kronstadt.

Vocabulary

infamous	['in fə məs]	печально известный
unskilled	[ən 'skild]	неквалифицированный, необученный
wide-spread	[waɪd 'spred]	широко распространённый
provide	[prə 'vaɪd]	обеспечивать
ministry	['mɪ nə stri:]	пастырство, служение
desperate	['de spə rət]	отчаявшийся
survival	[sə: 'vaɪ vəl]	выживание
deprivation	[,de prə 'veɪ fən]	лишение, нужда
hard	[hɑ:rd]	в данном контексте: «усердно, старательно»
catch up with	[kætʃ ʌp wɪð]	догнать (catch-caught-caught)
surpass	[sə: 'pæs]	превзойти
wed	[wed]	обвенчаться
chastity	['tʃæ stə ti]	целомудрие
ordination	[ɔ:r də 'neɪ fən]	рукоположение

Примечания. Слово “region” в сочетании “the Arkhangelsk region” следует переводить «губерния», поскольку в английском специального слова для передачи этого значения не существует.

После глагола “help” последующий инфинитив (неопределённая форма глагола) в современном английском языке чаще употребляется без частицы “to.”

(См. последнее предложение первого абзаца “help the most desperate find)

Part II

The new priest's unusual ministry quickly drew attention and *curiosity*. Traveling door to door, he talked to people, comforted them, brought food for their children, and paid for their medical needs. The *hostility*, which some felt towards Fr. John, turned to trust and respect. One man remembered: "I came home drunk and angry as usual, and saw the priest there. I wanted to *throw him out*, but he said softly, "You are blessed with such a good wife and beautiful children. Why do you drink?" His eyes looked into my very soul, and I felt ashamed."

Knowing of his kindness, crowds of *beggars* followed Fr. John everywhere. He gave away his money and food, leaving very little for his wife and himself. But that did not solve the problem: men need to work to keep their *dignity*. Fr. John started looking for benefactors for the Love-of-Work House – a place where the poor could live and work, completely providing for themselves. Many well-to-do people donated to the project, and, in 1882, construction of a large complex was completed. In addition to workshops, it contained a school, library, *dormitory*, *orphanage*, dining area, and health clinic. The workers were trained to make ropes for ships, carton boxes and envelopes. They were paid 19-20 kopecks a day. Dinner cost about 4 kopecks, a place in the dormitory – 3 kopecks per night. Men and women of all religions and nationalities were welcome in the House. Fr. John's help was never limited to the Orthodox only. He loved everybody, and often prayed together with Muslim Tartars.

Fr. John celebrated the Eucharist every day, which was very unusual. On a daily basis, more than 5,000 people came to receive communion. Unable to hear each individual confession of such a multitude, Fr. John *introduced* the practice of mass confession. Standing side-by-side, church-goers shouted out their sins, neither hearing nor judging what others were saying. This public cleansing of souls felt like the entire city was ridding itself of *vice*.

Such uncommon methods attracted much criticism from Church authorities, who thought that Fr. John was changing the rules of the Orthodox Church. But poor people loved their priest dearly, and his fame as a *healer* spread over Russia. People from all corners of the vast Empire came to Fr. John for his advice and blessing.

Indifferent to *both praise and accusations*, Fr. John continued serving until his final days. He peacefully reposed in the Lord on December 20th, 1908.

Vocabulary

curiosity	[kju: ri'v sə ti]	любопытство
hostility	[hɒs'ti lə ti]	враждебность
throw out	[θrəu aut]	выгонять
beggar	['be gər]	нищий
dignity	['diɡ nə ti]	достоинство
dormitory	['dɔ:r mə tɔ: ri]	общежитие
orphanage	['ɔ:r fən ɪdʒ]	приют для сирот
introduce	[in trə'dju:s]	вводить
vice	[vais]	зло, порок
healer	['hi: lər]	целитель
both praise and accusations [bouθ preiz ænd ,ækju:'zeɪ fən] и похвала, и обвинения		