

St. Zachariah, Archbishop of Voronezh and Zadonsk, *Hieromartyr*

(†1937)

Commemoration Days: February 7, September 22



In 1888, a recent Seminary *graduate*, Fr. Zachariah, was appointed to serve in a rural church in the Voronezh region. The life of a village priest was expected to be simple and quiet. Nothing at the time foretold the *adversity* that lay ahead of those who had chosen the path of serving God. A gentle and humble man, Fr. Zachariah would be called upon to confess his faith, show remarkable strength of character, and *endure* great sorrow, betrayal and physical suffering.

Zakhar was born in the family of Peter Lobov, an office clerk, and his wife, Alexandra, in the settlement of Petrovka, Voronezh region. Although his parents possessed very modest means, they supported their son's desire for education. Zakhar made up his mind to become a priest when he was still a boy, and never questioned the decision. He went to study in a *clerical school* and then at Tambov Seminary.

For his *zeal* in pastoral care, Fr. Zachariah quickly earned the love of the congregation. In addition to his clerical duties, Fr. Zachariah was an educator. He taught children *the tenets of the faith* and served as director of the School of Literacy for adults. In 1900 Fr. Zachariah was transferred to the Holy Trinity Cathedral in Novocherkassk. Several years later, he became an archpriest, while continuing to teach in local schools and colleges.

1917, the year of the Revolution, brought personal grief to Fr. Zachariah. His beloved wife, Alexandra, mother of their seven children, died. Of the five sons, four tread in their father's footsteps, entering the Seminary. Alexei, later *tonsured*, would die a martyr's death in a labour camp in 1942.

The movement of *Renovationism*, supported by the new government, started spreading among the clergy. Fr. Zachariah opposed the changes in the Church from the very beginning. The Soviet secret police kept an eye on the archpriest's activities and collected a dossier on him. The documents stated that, "priest Lobov alone in the Don Diocese remains a follower of Patriarch Tikhon."

Upon his tonsure in 1923, Fr. Zachariah was ordained a Bishop. Thanks to Vladyka's great effort, and to the joy of believers, most of the parishes in the area returned to the Patriarchal Church. People held Vladyka in high regard, and when he celebrated the Divine Liturgy, the church was full. The saint's home became a *refuge* for members of the clergy returning from exile with no place to live. He corresponded with many priests and bishops asking them to be strong in defense of the Holy Faith.

Vladyka Zachariah was arrested and sent first to a Rostov jail, then, as "one of the worst enemies of Soviet power," – to *infamous* Butyrka prison in Moscow. To the *accusations* of spreading "counter-revolutionary propaganda among the masses by means of preaching," he responded, "I tell people that God exists. It is the truth, not propaganda." After spending a few years in Solovki, a prison camp in the archipelago in the White Sea, Vladyka Zachariah was released. He went back to serving and soon was appointed Archbishop of Voronezh and Zadonsk Diocese.

In his new position, Vladyka experienced many sorrows: churches were closed and destroyed daily, priests arrested, and the faithful persecuted. With great difficulty, the Archbishop was able to keep several churches open. That time also brought betrayal by those whom Vladyka considered friends. A priest and deacon of one of the area churches wrote a false report on him, accusing Vladyka of "hostility and conspiracies towards the Soviet government." A simple and kindhearted man, St. Zachariah was so loved by the faithful, that when accusations came, many people testified in his defense, well understanding the danger. But the court didn't take their testimony into consideration.

In 1937, after years at a labour camp in Kazakhstan, the seventy-two-year-old man – blind, half-starved and very sick – was sentenced to death for celebrating a Paschal service. St. Zachariah was buried in an unmarked common grave.

Vocabulary

hieromartyr	['haɪrə'mɑ:rtər]	священномученик
graduate	['græ dju:ət]	выпускник
adversity	[əd'və:sə tɪ]	невзгоды
endure	[ɪn'dju:ər]	вынести, претерпеть
clerical school		духовное училище
zeal	[zɪ:l]	рвение, старание

the tenets of the faith	[ði: 'te nɪts əv ði: feɪθ]	основы вероучения
tonsure	['tɑ:n ʃə]	постриг
Renovationism	[,rɪ nə 'veɪ ʃɪ ə nə lɪzəm]	Обновленчество
refuge	['ref ju:dʒ]	убежище, прибежище
infamous	['ɪn fə məs]	печально известный
accusation	[,æk jə 'zeɪ ʃən]	обвинение

Примечание. *The Voronezh region* следует перевести «Воронежская губерния», *an office clerk* – «коллежский регистратор» (14-й класс гражданского чина по Табелю о рангах).