

TEEN SOYO

Hello Everyone!

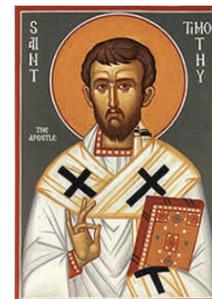
Teen SOYO would like to thank the Abughazaleh family for graciously opening their home to host our group for some New Years fun. It was a great end to the calendar year and we're looking forward to a bright 2014 together.

Our next event may be a bit delayed due to family events, especially for our leaders, but we anticipate more opportunities to grow up in our faith together this year. Thanks again for being such a supportive parish for our youth!

Jacob Voyce

St. Timothy Orthodox Church  
4593 Central Way  
Fairfield, CA 94534

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ST TIMOTHY

NEWSLETTER

Jan, 2014 Theophany

Volume 2, Issue 1



PASTOR'S NOTES/REFLECTIONS

Theophany, 2014

The Joy of the Lord is My Strength

From the Book of Nehemiah, we read the familiar passage, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength (Nehemiah 8:10)." Amen, to that admonition, especially in this season of our Lord's Incarnation and Holy Birth in the City of David, which we have just celebrated.

Anticipating His Incarnation and Holy Birth, we fasted, denying ourselves, and prepared our hearts to meet Him, at the cave in Bethlehem. Now we celebrate the feast and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and of our abundance we give alms to those who have need. Like the Wise Men from the East who traveled afar bringing precious gifts, to the newborn King, we humbly offer ourselves, as a "living sacrifice", well pleasing to Him. The joy which the Lord gives us in return is a sign and symbol of a strong spiritual life, and one that warms our heart and lifts our spirit. As we bask in His light, like the sun that physically warms us, we are invigorated and made alive in Christ. The shade of darkness, that is the world, and is, by its very nature, cool to the love of God, is put aside. We step out, as from a gloomy shadow on a cold day, into the warmth of His love for us. God is good!

At St Tikhon's Seminary in the Pocono Mts. of Northeastern Pennsylvania, some of us braver souls, would ride our bicycles for exercise, pretty much year round, even during the winter months, often in sub-freezing conditions. Of course you had to bundle-up big time to keep warm, but with the winter sun low on the horizon, and shade from the mountains casting shadow over whole areas, it was tough to keep warm. Frost-nip, frost-bite, and hypothermia, was always a concern and we seminarian cyclists had to be very careful

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YOUR COUNCIL IN ACTION

The New Year typically begins with many people making New Year's resolutions. This usually happens after a time of reflection on the previous year.

The council does not participate in this process and takes seriously our re-

sponsibility of caring for the parish. Our focus is always for doing what is needed to insure its future. We only look back at the past to keep our parish moving forward in the right direction.

(Continued on page 4)

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EVENTS OF

INTEREST

- > Theophany ..... Jan 5/6
- > Men's Lunch (TBD) Jan 18
- > Sisters Bunco ..... Jan 18

TREASURER'S

UPDATE (NOV YTD)

Income:

Tithes .....\$126,253.55

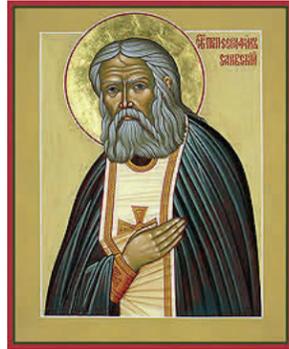
Expenses:

Paid ..... \$114,750.27

Total Net:

Inc - Exp ..... \$11,503.28

## LIVES OF THE SAINTS

**Venerable Seraphim the Wonderworker of Sarov**

Saint Seraphim of Sarov, a great ascetic of the Russian Church, was born on July 19, 1754. His parents, Isidore and Agathia Moshnin, were inhabitants of Kursk. Isidore was a merchant. Toward the end of his life, he began construction of a cathedral in Kursk, but he died before the completion of the work. His little son Prochorus, the future Seraphim, remained in the care of his widowed mother, who raised her son in piety.

After the death of her husband, Agathia Moshnina continued with the construction of the cathedral. Once she took the seven-year-old Prochorus there with her, and he fell from the scaffolding around the seven-story bell tower. He should have been killed, but the Lord preserved the life of the future luminary of the Church. The terrified mother ran to him and found her son unharmed.

Young Prochorus, endowed with an excellent memory, soon mastered reading and writing. From his childhood he loved to attend church services, and to read both the Holy Scripture and the Lives of the Saints with his fellow students. Most of all, he loved to pray or to read the Holy Gospel in private.

At one point Prochorus fell grievously ill, and his life was in danger. In a dream the boy saw the Mother of God, promising to visit and heal him. Soon past the courtyard of the Moshnin home came a church procession with the Kursk Root Icon of the Sign (November 27). His mother carried Prochorus in her arms, and he kissed the holy icon, after which he speedily recovered.

While still in his youth Prochorus made his plans to devote his life entirely to God and to go to a monastery. His devout mother did not object to this and she blessed him on his monastic path with a copper cross, which he wore on his chest for the rest of his life. Prochorus set off on foot with pilgrims going from Kursk to Kiev to venerate the Saints of the Caves.

The Elder Dositheus (actually a woman, Daria Tyapkina), whom Prochorus visited, blessed him to go to the Sarov wilderness monastery, and there seek his salvation. Returning briefly to his parental home, Prochorus bid a final farewell to his mother and family. On November 20, 1778 he arrived at Sarov, where the monastery then was headed by a wise Elder, Father Pachomius. He accepted him and put him under the spiritual guidance of the Elder Joseph. Under his direction Prochorus passed through many obediences at the monastery: he was the Elder's cell-attendant, he toiled at making bread and prosphora, and at carpentry. He fulfilled all his obediences with zeal and fervor, as though serving the Lord Himself. By constant work he guarded himself against despondency (accidie), this being, as he later said, "the most dangerous temptation for new monks. It is treated by prayer, by abstaining from idle chatter, by strenuous work, by reading the Word of God and by patience, since it is engendered by pettiness of soul, negligence, and idle talk."

With the blessing of Igumen Pachomius, Prochorus abstained from all food on Wednesdays and Fridays, and went into the forest, where in complete isolation he practiced the Jesus Prayer. After two years as a novice, Prochorus fell ill with dropsy, his body became swollen, and he was beset with suffering. His instructor Father Joseph and the other Elders were fond of Prochorus, and they provided him care. The illness dragged on for about three years, and not once did anyone hear from him a word of complaint. The Elders, fearing for his very life, wanted to call a doctor for him, but Prochorus asked that this not be done, saying to Father Pachomius: "I have entrusted myself, holy Father, to the True Physician of soul and body, our Lord Jesus Christ and His All-Pure Mother."

He asked that a Molieben be offered for his health. While the others were praying in church, Prochorus had a vision. The Mother of God appeared to him accompanied by the holy Apostles Peter and John the Theologian. Pointing with Her hand towards the sick monk, the Most Holy Virgin said to St John, "He is one of our kind."

## LIVES OF THE SAINTS ... (Continued from page 10)

he had placed in the ante-room of his cell, and which he had prepared for himself.

The saint himself had marked the place where finally they would bury him, near the altar of the Dormition cathedral. On January 1, 1833 Father Seraphim came to the church of Sts Zosimas and Sabbatius one last time for Liturgy and he received the Holy Mysteries, after which he blessed the brethren and bid them farewell, saying: "Save your souls. Do not be despondent, but watchful. Today crowns are being prepared for us."

On January 2, Father Paul, the saint's cell-attendant, left his own cell at six in the morning to attend the early Liturgy. He noticed the smell of smoke coming from the Elder's cell. St Seraphim would often leave candles burning in his cell, and Father Paul was concerned that they could start a fire.

"While I am alive," he once said, "there will be no fire, but when I die, my death shall be revealed by a fire." When they opened the door, it appeared that books and other things were smoldering. St Seraphim was found kneeling before an icon of the Mother of God with his arms crossed on his chest. His pure soul was taken by the angels at the time of prayer, and had flown off to the Throne of the Almighty God, Whose faithful servant St Seraphim had been all his life.

St Seraphim has promised to intercede for those who remember his parents, Isidore and Agathia.

Jan 2

**TROPARION — TONE 4**

*You loved Christ from your youth, O blessed one, / and longing to work for Him alone you struggled in the wilderness in constant prayer and labor. / With penitent heart and great love for Christ you were favored by the Mother of God. / Therefore we cry to you: / "Save us by your prayers, venerable Seraphim, our father."*

**KONTAKION — TONE 2**

*Forsaking the beauty as well as the corruption of this world, / you settled in the monastery of Sarov, O Saint. / There you lived an angelic life, / becoming for many the way to salvation. / Therefore, Christ has glorified you, Father Seraphim, / enriching you with abundant healing and miracles. / So we cry to you: "Save us by your prayers, venerable Seraphim, our father."*

# January

**Service schedule for every week:**  
 5:30pm Friday, Paraklesis  
 6:00pm Saturday, Great Vespers. Confessions heard afterwards  
 8:45am Sunday, Orthros  
 10:00am Sunday, Divine Liturgy

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Celebrate Theophany	Theophany		Council Meeting	St. Seraphim of Sarov	Paraklesis (5:30pm)	
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
					Paraklesis (5:30pm)	
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
+John "Jack" Lodge	+Dimosthenis Mantalvanos	+Miriam Aziz Dughman			Paraklesis (5:30pm)	Men's Lunch (TBD) Bunco (Mary Kenney)
26	27	28	29	30	31	
All Parish Meeting					Paraklesis (5:30pm)	Men's Fellowship Church Workday
Shaded days are fasting days						

Birthdays (B), Patron Saints (P) and Anniversaries (A)	
1 Hala Abughazaleh (P)	10 Noura Yaser (B)
2 Stephen Bishop (P)	10 Bill Hartman (P)
4 Selma Teklu (B)	12 Jasmine Yaser (B)
7 John Abudawood (P)	12 Jasmine Yaser (P)
7 Ioan Coor (P)	14 Ogla Ghebe (B)
	14 Hannah Wernecke (B)
	14 Noura Yaser (P)
	19 Irene Bezzetides (B)
	19 Hazel Lodge (B)
	22 Nicholas Andrews (B)
	22 Sabal Timothy Abudawood (P)
	23 S. Mike Abughazaleh (B)
	24 Lulu Kassa (P)
	24 Crissy Parrish (P)
	25 Alex Whitehead (B)
	25 Gregory Dibs (P)
	26 Mona Shammeh (B)
	27 Sanyia Abudawood (B)
	28 Dn Andrew Andrews (B)
	28 Anna Abughazaleh (B)
	30 Deacon John Dibs (P)

(Continued on page 11)

LIVES OF THE SAINTS ... (Continued from page 7)

ness. No matter what time of the year it was, he would greet everyone with the words, "Christ is Risen, my joy!" He especially loved children. Once, a young girl said to her friends, "Father Seraphim only looks like an old man. He is really a child like us."

The Elder was often seen leaning on his stick and carrying a knapsack filled with stones. When asked why he did this, the saint humbly replied, "I am troubling him who troubles me."

In the final period of his earthly life St Seraphim devoted himself to his spiritual children, the Diveyevo women's monastery. While still a hierodeacon he had accompanied the late Father Pachomius to the Diveyevo community to its monastic leader, Mother Alexandra, a great woman ascetic, and then Father Pachomius blessed St Seraphim to care always for the "Diveyevo orphans." He was a genuine father for the sisters, who turned to him with all their spiritual and material difficulties.

St Seraphim also devoted much effort to the women's monastic community at Diveyevo. He himself said that he gave them no instructions of his own, but it was the Queen of Heaven who guided him in matters pertaining to the monastery. His disciples and spiritual friends helped the saint to feed and nourish the Diveyevo community. Michael V. Manturov, healed by the monk from grievous illness, was one of Diveyevo's benefactors. On the advice of the Elder he took upon himself the exploit of voluntary poverty. Elena Vasilievna Manturova, one of the Diveyevo sisters, out of obedience to the Elder, voluntarily consented to die in place of her brother, who was still needed in this life.

Nicholas Alexandrovich Motovilov, was also healed by the monk. In 1903, shortly before the glorification of the saint, the remarkable "Conversation of St Seraphim of Sarov with N. A. Motovilov" was found and printed. Written by Motovilov after their conversation at the end of November 1831, the manuscript was hidden in an attic in a heap of rubbish for almost seventy years. It was found by the author S. A. Nilus, who was looking for information about St Seraphim's life. This conversation is a very precious contribution to the spiritual literature of the Orthodox Church. It grew out of Nicholas Motovilov's desire to know the aim of the Christian life. It was revealed to St Seraphim that Motovilov had been seeking an answer to this question since childhood, without receiving a satisfactory answer. The holy Elder told him that the aim of the Christian life is the acquisition of the Holy Spirit, and went on to explain the great benefits of prayer and the acquisition of the Holy Spirit.

Motovilov asked the saint how we can know if the Holy Spirit is with us or not. St Seraphim spoke at length about how people come to be in the Spirit of God, and how we can recognize His presence in us, but Motovilov wanted to understand this better. Then Father Seraphim took him by the shoulders and said, "We are both in the Spirit of God now, my son. Why don't you look at me?"

Motovilov replied, "I cannot look, Father, for your eyes are flashing like lightning, and your face is brighter than the sun."

St Seraphim told him, "Don't be alarmed, friend of God. Now you yourself have become as bright as I am. You are in the fulness of the Spirit of God yourself, otherwise you would not be able to see me like this."

Then St Seraphim promised Motovilov that God would allow him to retain this experience in his memory all his life. "It is not given for you alone to understand," he said, "but through you it is for the whole world."

Everyone knew and esteemed St Seraphim as a great ascetic and wonderworker. A year and ten months before his end, on the Feast of the Annunciation, St Seraphim was granted to behold the Queen of Heaven once more in the company of St John the Baptist, the Apostle John the Theologian and twelve Virgin Martyrs (Sts Barbara, Katherine, Thekla, Marina, Irene, Eupraxia, Pelagia, Dorothea, Makrina, Justina, Juliana, and Anysia). The Most Holy Virgin conversed at length with the monk, entrusting the Diveyevo sisters to him. Concluding the conversation, She said to him: "Soon, My dear one, you shall be with us." The Diveyevo nun Eupraxia was present during this visit of the Mother of God, because the saint had invited her.

In the last year of St Seraphim's life, one of those healed by him saw him standing in the air during prayer. The saint strictly forbade this to be mentioned until after his death. St Seraphim became noticeably weaker and he spoke much about his approaching end. During this time they often saw him sitting by his coffin, which

**YOUR COUNCIL IN ACTION ... (Continued from page 1)**

We count on Fr. John for our spiritual growth and support him in his efforts while the council also works on maintaining the physical component of the parish.

In 2014 we have plans to continue the rebuilding/improvements to St. Timothy's. The projects are listed below.

- Finish remodeling the reception area
- The repairs/remodel wall on Link Rd.
- Landscaping and adding BBQ area

Thank you for helping us have a great 2013. We need everyone's prayers and support to have a successful new year.

In His service,

Mike Haskins  
Parish council president

**MEN'S FELLOWSHIP**

Hello Everyone,

From quiet dinners with Father John to scrambling in and out of huge airplanes to a nostalgic look back at the behemoths of the railroad to guns and explosions in Santa Cruz, 2013 was a great beginning for our men's group! Looking forward, 2014 will bring many new opportunities for us to share, including trips to Father's place in Tahoe, San Francisco, Napa and a monastery. Mix this up with another opportunity to enjoy guns and explosions (more local this time) and many opportunities to continue to beautify our church property and you quickly get the sense that 2014 will be another exciting year!

Mark your calendars for Saturday, Jan 18 for lunch with Father John as we begin our new year together.

Tom

**SISTERS OF ST TIMOTHY**

Sisters of St Timothy,

We have had a wonderful year in 2013! Thank you all for your participation. Psanky eggs, Tea with Father, Alpha Pregnancy Center gifts, lunch at Grand Island Mansion, movie night with "The Island" and the Christmas Tea were some of the wonderful opportunities we had to enjoy together. We have a wonderful group of ladies who always respond generously when asked!

Our next meeting will be Saturday, Jan 18 at Mary Kenney's house for a fun afternoon of bunco and election of officers for 2014. This year has been the beginning of a wonderful new chapter for the ladies of St. Timothy—please consider what role you can play to continue our momentum in 2014!

Your sister in Christ,  
Linda

**THE FATHERS SPEAK ... (Continued from page 8)**

it's beginning here in this life; and it is here that we sow the seeds of eternal torment. Where there is pride there cannot be grace, and if we lose grace we also lose both love of God and assurance in prayer. The soul is then tormented by evil thoughts and does not understand that she must humble herself and love her enemies, for there is no other way to please God.

What shall I render unto Thee, O Lord,  
for that Thou hast poured such great mercy on my soul?  
Grant, I beg Thee, that I may see my iniquities,  
and ever weep before Thee,  
for Thou art filled with love for humble souls,  
and dost give them the grace of the Holy Spirit.

O merciful God, forgive me.  
Thou seest how my soul is drawn to Thee, her Creator.  
Thou hast wounded my soul with Thy love,  
and she thirsts for Thee, and wearies without end,  
and day and night, insatiable, reaches toward Thee,  
and has no wish to look upon this world, though I do love it,  
but above all I love Thee, my Creator,  
and my soul longs after Thee.

O my Creator, why have I, Thy little creature,  
grieved Thee so often? Yet Thou hast not remembered my sins.

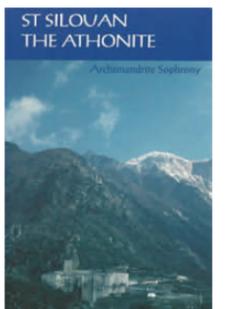
Glory be to the Lord God that He gave us His Only-begotten  
Son for the sake of our salvation.

Glory be to the Only-begotten Son that He deigned to be  
born of the Most Holy Virgin, and suffered for our salvation,  
and gave us His Most Pure Body and Blood to eternal life,  
and sent His Holy Spirit on the earth.

O Lord, grant me tears to shed for myself,  
and for the whole universe,  
that the nations may know Thee and live eternally with Thee,  
O Lord, vouchsafe us the gift of Thy humble Holy Spirit,  
that we may apprehend Thy glory.

**Bibliography**

Archimandrite Sophrony  
1999 *Saint Silouan the Athonite*. Transl. from the Russian by Rosemary Edmonds. Crestwood, NY:  
St. Vladimir's Seminary. Pp. 361ff.



THE FATHERS SPEAK ..... DALE LIID

## St. Silouan: A Man of Tears But A Witness to God's Love and Light!

*And lo, the soul longs to meet God and ask Him, 'Why didst Thou give me life? ...I am surfeited with suffering. Enveloped in darkness. Why dost Thou hide Thyself from me? I know that Thou art good but wherefore art Thou so indifferent to my pain?'*

*Why art Thou so... cruel and merciless toward me?'*

*'I cannot fathom Thee.'*

St. Silouan the Athonite



These were the questions and the heart's cry of a young Russian monk who had come from the world with his godly desires to Mt. Athos. Born in 1866 of devout parents in the most beautiful Tombov region a little more than 250 miles south east of Moscow, St. Silouan began to learn by experience that one overcomes evil with the love and light of Christ. The easiest way to inform you of what St. Silouan taught is to give you a sampling of his words. A great deal more is found in his biography by Archimandrite Sophrony (see the bibliography below).

### Saint Silouan on Love

The soul cannot know peace unless she prays for her enemies. The soul that has learned of God's grace to pray, feels love and compassion for every created thing, and in particular for mankind, for whom the Lord suffered on the Cross, and His soul was heavy for every one of us.

The Lord taught me to love my enemies. Without the grace of God we cannot love our enemies. Only the Holy Spirit teaches love, and then even devils arouse our pity because they have fallen from good, and lost humility in God.

I beseech you, put this to the test. When a man affronts you or brings dishonor on your head, or takes what is yours, or persecutes the Church, pray to the Lord, saying: "O Lord, we are all Thy creatures. Have pity on Thy servants and turn their hearts to repentance," and you will be aware of grace in your soul. To begin with, constrain your heart to love enemies, and the Lord, seeing your good will, will help you in all things, and experience itself will show you the way. But the man who thinks with malice of his enemies has not God's love within him, and does not know God.

If you will pray for your enemies, peace will come to you; but when you can love your enemies - know that a great measure of the grace of God dwells in you, though I do not say perfect grace as yet, but sufficient for salvation. Whereas if you revile your enemies, it means there is an evil spirit living in you and bringing evil thoughts into your heart, for, in the words of the Lord, out of the heart proceed evil thoughts - or good thoughts.

The good man thinks to himself in this wise: Everyone who has strayed from the truth brings destruction on himself and is therefore to be pitied. But of course the man who has not learned the love of the Holy Spirit will not pray for his enemies. The man who has learned love from the Holy Spirit sorrows all his life over those who are not saved, and sheds abundant tears for the people, and the grace of God gives him strength to love his enemies.

Understand me. It is so simple. People who do not know God, or who go against Him, are to be pitied; the heart sorrows for them and the eye weeps. Both paradise and torment are clearly visible to us: We know this through the Holy Spirit. And did not the Lord Himself say, "The kingdom of God is within you"? Thus eternal life has

PASTOR'S NOTES/REFLECTIONS ... (Continued from page 1)

and conscious of not pushing the limits too far and overdoing it, getting ourselves into trouble.

The only saving grace for beating the cold on a winter ride, was the sun. If the sun was out and shining in your face you could tolerate the elements much easier. If it was 28' and overcast and gloomy, there was no joy, and there was no way you were going to survive a 30 mile ride, you'd freeze to death and be miserable. However if it was 28' and sunny, and the shadow lines were infrequent, you could ride for hours with a joyful smile on your face, and not be fazed by the cold. The sun made all the difference. It was really quite simple; with the sun you survived, without the sun you didn't.

The steep inclines of the Pocono's seemed to level out just a bit when the sunshine of the Lord, and His joy was in your heart. In life a truly joyful countenance is hard to crush, even during the most difficult trial. Not that it's always smiles for the Christian, but an inner strength and a resolve that clothes us, through the Holy Spirit, a strong flame of faith, knowing that God is always with us. After all He is the Good Father, and we are His children. He loves us and tenderly comforts us, bringing us His peace, even in times of great trial or sorrow. In the mountainous Poconos even the peddle strokes, on long steep ascents, became easier to endure with His joy flooding ones heart and soul. A song in the heart and on the lips, acknowledging His great goodness, does wonders for lessening the pain of a cold and steep ride.

The Apostle Paul exhorts the Christians in Ephesus to be; "Strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil (Ephesians 6:10-11)."

Part of his heavenly armor is the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit (Ephesians 6:18)."

This is what the Christian speaks, this is what proceeds out of his mouth, out of our mouths, brothers

and sisters, the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He greets the stranger on the street, rich or poor with this joyful message, we do the same. He can't help but proclaim this joyful message even if he wanted to, and either can we. It burns within us, even if by nature we're timid, the hope that dwells within us is going to be revealed from our lips, one way or another. Ultimately God gets us to speak. The Apostle reminds us; "For with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation." It's our duty. The martyrs of old, died willingly for speaking openly about the salvation message of Jesus Christ. They died for the joy that went before them. They couldn't and wouldn't stop proclaiming that joy and the Good News of Jesus Christ, they wouldn't relinquish the "pearl of great price."

A joyous man is strong in a calm restful manner. Whatever happens on the road of life, he is not derailed or disturbed. He is not afraid when trials come, for his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. Within he is quiet, he bides his time, knowing God's faithfulness and the fullness of His strength. He is humble, firm, and steadfast; not carried away with every wind of doctrine, or every breeze that blows, and we know around Fairfield, it can really blow.

Brothers and sisters these virtues represent the man of God, these virtues God instills in us. "Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, **you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy**, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls (1 Peter 1:8,9)."

The joy of the Lord is your strength. May God richly bless each one here at St Timothy's. May He protect and preserve our parish and all the faithful in the Northern California Deanery this coming New Year, 2014. Blessed Theophany to all.

Fr John

## LIVES OF THE SAINTS ... (Continued from page 2)

Then She touched the side of the sick man with Her staff, and immediately the fluid that had swelled up his body began to flow through the incision that She made. After the Molieben, the brethren found that Prochorus had been healed, and only a scar remained as evidence of the miracle.

Soon, at the place of the appearance of the Mother of God, an infirmary church was built for the sick. One of the side chapels was dedicated to Sts Zosimas and Sabbatius of Solovki (April 17). With his own hands, St Seraphim made an altar table for the chapel out of cypress wood, and he always received the Holy Mysteries in this church.

After eight years as a novice at the Sarov monastery, Prochorus was tonsured with the name Seraphim, a name reflecting his fiery love for the Lord and his zealous desire to serve Him. After a year, Seraphim was ordained as hierodeacon.

Earnest in spirit, he served in the temple each day, incessantly praying even after the service. The Lord granted him visions during the church services: he often saw holy angels serving with the priests. During the Divine Liturgy on Great and Holy Thursday, which was celebrated by the igumen Father Pachomius and by Father Joseph, St Seraphim had another vision. After the Little Entrance with the Gospel, the hierodeacon Seraphim pronounced the words "O Lord, save the God-fearing, and hear us." Then, he lifted his orarion saying, "And unto ages of ages." Suddenly, he was blinded by a bright ray of light.

Looking up, St Seraphim beheld the Lord Jesus Christ, coming through the western doors of the temple, surrounded by the Bodiless Powers of Heaven. Reaching the ambo, the Lord blessed all those praying and entered into His Icon to the right of the royal doors. St Seraphim, in spiritual rapture after this miraculous vision, was unable to utter a word, nor to move from the spot. They led him by the hand into the altar, where he just stood for another three hours, his face having changed color from the great grace that shone upon him. After the vision the saint intensified his efforts. He toiled at the monastery by day, and he spent his nights praying in his forest cell.

In 1793, Hierodeacon Seraphim was ordained to the priesthood, and he served the Divine Liturgy every day. After the death of the igumen Father Pachomius, St Seraphim received the blessing of the new Superior Father Isaiah, to live alone in a remote part of the forest three and a half miles from the monastery. He named his new home "Mount Athos," and devoted himself to solitary prayer. He went to the monastery only on Saturday before the all-night Vigil, and returned to his forest cell after Sunday's Liturgy, at which he partook of the Divine Mysteries.

Fr Seraphim spent his time in ascetical struggles. His cell rule of prayer was based on the rule of St Pachomius for the ancient desert monasteries. He always carried the Holy Gospels with him, reading the entire New Testament in the course of a week. He also read the holy Fathers and the service books. The saint learned many of the Church hymns by heart, and sang them while working in the forest. Around his cell he cultivated a garden and set up a beehive. He kept a very strict fast, eating only once during the entire day, and on Wednesdays and Fridays he completely abstained from food. On the first Sunday of the Great Fast he did not partake of food at all until Saturday, when he received the Holy Mysteries.

The holy Elder was sometimes so absorbed by the unceasing prayer of the heart that he remained without stirring, neither hearing nor seeing anything around him. The schemamonk Mark the Silent and the hierodeacon Alexander, also wilderness-dwellers, would visit him every now and then. Finding the saint immersed in prayer, they would leave quietly, so they would not disturb his contemplation.

In the heat of summer the righteous one gathered moss from a swamp as fertilizer for his garden. Gnats and mosquitoes bit him relentlessly, but he endured this saying, "The passions are destroyed by suffering and by afflictions."

His solitude was often disturbed by visits from monks and laymen, who sought his advice and blessing. With

## LIVES OF THE SAINTS ... (Continued from page 6)

the blessing of the igumen, Fr Seraphim prohibited women from visiting him, then receiving a sign that the Lord approved of his desire for complete silence, he banned all visitors. Through the prayers of the saint, the pathway to his wilderness cell was blocked by huge branches blown down from ancient pine trees. Now only the birds and the wild beasts visited him, and he dwelt with them as Adam did in Paradise. They came at midnight and waited for him to complete his Rule of prayer. Then he would feed bears, lynxes, foxes, rabbits, and even wolves with bread from his hand. St Seraphim also had a bear which would obey him and run errands for him. In order to repulse the onslaughts of the Enemy, St Seraphim intensified his toil and began a new ascetical struggle in imitation of St Simeon the Stylite (September 1). Each night he climbed up on an immense rock in the forest, or a smaller one in his cell, resting only for short periods. He stood or knelt, praying with upraised hands, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." He prayed this way for 1,000 days and nights.

Three robbers in search of money or valuables once came upon him while he was working in his garden. The robbers demanded money from him. Though he had an axe in his hands, and could have put up a fight, but he did not want to do this, recalling the words of the Lord: "Those who take up the sword will perish by the sword" (Mt. 26: 52). Dropping his axe to the ground, he said, "Do what you intend." The robbers beat him severely and left him for dead. They wanted to throw him in the river, but first they searched the cell for money. They tore the place apart, but found nothing but icons and a few potatoes, so they left. The monk, regained consciousness, crawled to his cell, and lay there all night.

In the morning he reached the monastery with great difficulty. The brethren were horrified, seeing the ascetic with several wounds to his head, chest, ribs and back. For eight days he lay there suffering from his wounds. Doctors called to treat him were amazed that he was still alive after such a beating. Fr Seraphim was not cured by any earthly physician: the Queen of Heaven appeared to him in a vision with the Apostles Peter and John. Touching the saint's head, the Most Holy Virgin healed him. However, he was unable to straighten up, and for the rest of his life he had to walk bent over with the aid of a stick or a small axe. St Seraphim had to spend about five months at the monastery, and then he returned to the forest. He forgave his abusers and asked that they not be punished.

In 1807 the abbot, Father Isaiah, fell asleep in the Lord. St Seraphim was asked to take his place, but he declined. He lived in silence for three years, completely cut off from the world except for the monk who came once a week to bring him food. If the saint encountered a man in the forest, he fell face down and did not get up until the passerby had moved on. St Seraphim acquired peace of soul and joy in the Holy Spirit. The great ascetic once said, "Acquire the spirit of peace, and a thousand souls will be saved around you."

The new Superior of the monastery, Father Niphon, and the older brethren of the monastery told Father Seraphim either to come to the monastery on Sundays for divine services as before, or to move back into the monastery. He chose the latter course, since it had become too difficult for him to walk from his forest cell to the monastery. In the spring of 1810, he returned to the monastery after fifteen years of living in the wilderness. Continuing his silence, he shut himself up in his cell, occupying himself with prayer and reading. He was also permitted to eat meals and to receive Communion in his cell. There St Seraphim attained the height of spiritual purity and was granted special gifts of grace by God: clairvoyance and wonderworking. After five years of solitude, he opened his door and allowed the monks to enter. He continued his silence, however, teaching them only by example.

On November 25, 1825 the Mother of God, accompanied by the two holy hierarchs commemorated on that day (Hieromartyr Clement of Rome, and St Peter, Archbishop of Alexandria), appeared to the Elder in a vision and told him to end his seclusion and to devote himself to others. He received the igumen's blessing to divide his time between life in the forest, and at the monastery. He did not return to his Far Hermitage, but went to a cell closer to the monastery. This he called his Near Hermitage. At that time, he opened the doors of his cell to pilgrims as well as his fellow-monks.

The Elder saw into the hearts of people, and as a spiritual physician, he healed their infirmities of soul and body through prayer and by his grace-filled words. Those coming to St Seraphim felt his great love and tender-