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HIS LIFE IN CHRIST: PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY PLACES OF ST. JOHN OF KRONSTADT

A century after his repose, the great archpriest St. John of Kronstadt remains an iconic figure: a man of ferocious dedication to God who was graced with a deep and miraculous prayer life, yet manifested a radical sympathy for the poor that still astounds with its creative and vigorous solutions. After an impoverished childhood in Russia's remote Archangelsk region and seminary in St. Petersburg, Fr. John Sergiev was assigned to the tumultuous naval port of Kronstadt, where he not only served daily liturgy and prayed long into the night, but actively worked to alleviate the spiritual and material needs of each person he met. A support for Russia's tsars, clergy, merchants, students, paupers and monastics, he interceded for and assisted everyone who approached him: Russian or foreigner, Christian, Moslem, Jew, or agnostic.

Saint John's wisdom comes to us today through his candid written reflections in *My Life in Christ* and through his intercession, but for the pilgrim fortunate enough to visit Russia and Estonia, there is also a substantial material legacy of his life and ministry, preserved and newly restored through

This article is dedicated to a great pastor of our own time, Rev. Fr. Nicholas Triantafilou, President of Hellenic College/Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Brookline, MA, who serves his students and seminarians in the spirit and love of St. John's own ministry.

Opposite: St. John of Kronstadt.

the selfless labors of many contemporary Orthodox. These holy places are an alternative form of iconography, another form of the “stones crying out,” that they, too, have been touched by grace.

These restored and accessible sites of St. John’s life and labors include the Monastery of St. John the Theologian for women, founded by St. John in his native village of Sura in the Archangelsk region in the far north of Russia; Pühtitsa Convent of the Dormition in the Republic of Estonia, which he nurtured and shepherded through its first decades; St. John’s much-venerated relics in the famous women’s monastery of St. John of Rila in St. Petersburg, Russia; the site of his own Church of St. Andrew in nearby Kronstadt where he served throughout his priestly life—along with a second even larger Kronstadt church, the Navy Cathedral of St. Nicholas, for which he initiated the building and laid the foundation; and finally, Fr. John’s own home, a second-floor apartment in Kronstadt where he lived with his wife Elizabeth for a half century until his repose in 1908.

ARCHANGELSK REGION, RUSSIA

Sura Monastery of St. John the Theologian

The village of Sura on the upper reaches of the Pinega River, in the Archangelsk region of northern Russia, is the birthplace of St. John of Kronstadt. Sura is one of the most ancient villages of the native Chud people, and even today has both pagan activity and Old Believer influences. In the only autobiographical sketch composed by St. John, and published in an 1888 issue of the magazine *Sever* (North), he describes his early childhood:

I am the son of a churchman from the village of Soursk, district of Pinezhsk, province of Archangelsk. From very early childhood, as early as I can remember, at the age of four or five, perhaps even earlier, my parents taught me to pray and by their religious frame of mind made me a religiously-minded boy. At home, in my sixth year, Father brought me a primer, and Mother began to teach me the alphabet; but reading and writing came to me with great difficulty, which was the cause of

Opposite: St. John visiting in Sura, 1891.





no little sorrow to me. I just couldn't master the identity between our speech and writing; in my time reading and writing were not taught as it is now: we were all taught 'Az' (for 'A'), 'Boukee' (for 'B'), 'Vedi,' etc., as if 'A' were one thing and 'Az' a different thing. For a long time did this wisdom elude me, but having been taught by Father and Mother to pray, grieving over my failures in studies, I prayed fervently to God, so that He would grant me understanding—and I remember how, suddenly, it was as if a veil were lifted from my mind, and I began to comprehend studies well. When I was ten I was taken to the Archangelsk parish school. My father, naturally, received a very small salary, so that it must have been terribly difficult to live. I already understood the real position of my parents, and for this reason my inability at school was indeed a calamity. I thought little of the significance my studies would have on my future, and grieved especially over how Father was needlessly spending his last means to support me.

Left in Archangelsk completely alone, I was deprived of my parents and had to arrive at everything myself. Among the boys of my age group in class, I did not find, nor did I seek, support or assistance; they were all more able than I, and I was the last pupil. Anguish took hold of me. Then it was that I turned for help to the Almighty, and a change took place in me. In a short time I moved forward to such an extent that I ceased to be the last pupil. The further I went, the better and better I became in my studies, and by the end of the courses was among the first transferred to the seminary, which I finished first in 1851 and was sent to the Petersburg Academy on a full scholarship...

Father John returned to Sura throughout his life, and after his ordination established a six-year grammar school for the village children. In 1899 he founded an informal women's community, first comprised of a wooden church dedicated to St. John the Theologian and a few monastic cells. This was followed by a beautiful stone church dedicated to St. Nicholas, and after Fr. John's repose, the Dormition Cathedral, built in 1915, about which he correctly prophesied that the church would be built but that no one would serve in it.

The monastery began with two nuns: Barbara, the superior, and Riassaphore Nun Angelina with thirty-three novices that Fr. John had blessed to

Opposite: St. John with Abbess Thaisia, late 19th century.

live in the newly opened community. On July 20, 1900, the wooden church was consecrated in Fr. John's presence and in the fall of the same year the community was officially recognized. Father John instructed the novices through his own teaching and sent them for preparation to the Leushino Convent under the well-known Abbess Thaisia, who directed over 700 nuns. Several letters still survive from Fr. John to Abbess Thaisia about the reception of the novices.¹

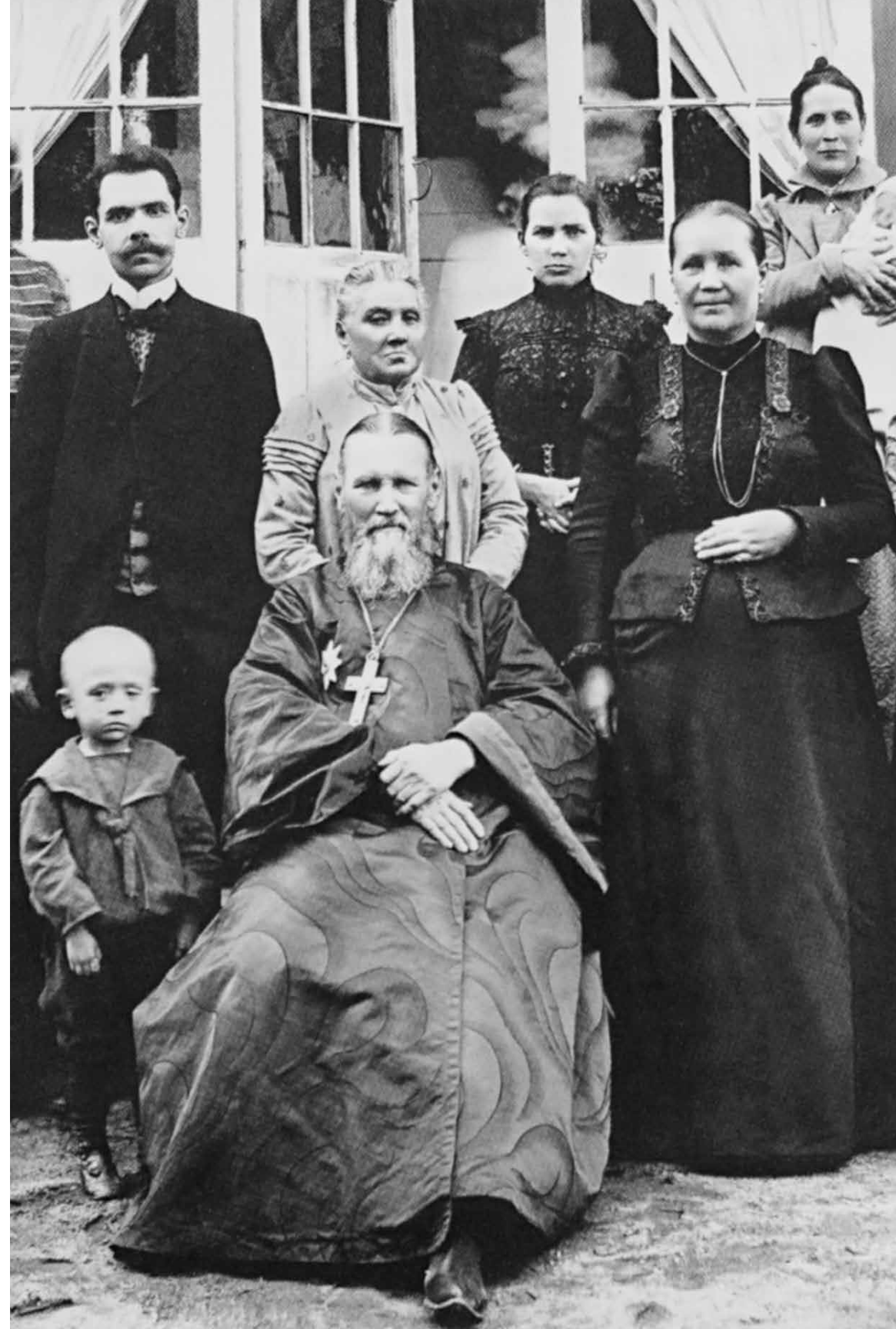
Settling at the site of the monastery, the sisters assisted in the construction work and gardening; they later recalled the particularly hard labors of those early years and the savagely cold winters. In the early 1900s the monastery opened a *podvoriye*, a city outpost in Archangelsk and a second in St. Petersburg that would later become the famous Karpovka Ioannavsky Monastery where Fr. John would be buried.

The convent priest was Fr. Dimitri Fedosikhin, formerly a train engineer who was healed by Fr. John after a revolutionary bombing of his train had left him near death. Father John later encouraged him to accept the priesthood, and Fr. Dimitri became rector of the Archangelsk cathedral and the last spiritual father of the Sura women's monastery. The Sura convent was closed on Dec. 8, 1920 by the local Soviet and the sisters dispersed, arrested and exiled. The newly built Dormition Church was turned into a club, and St. Nicholas Church destroyed. In 1920 Fr. Dimitri was arrested along with 140 other Orthodox, including a number of the nuns, who protested the closing of the monastery. He was sentenced to five years in the gulag camps and the remaining nuns were dispersed and exiled.

On returning to Arkhangelsk in the spring of 1925, Fr. Dimitri petitioned for the reopening of the cathedral, which had been closed after his departure. His request went unanswered and on Pascha he opened the church and served on his own initiative. He was re-arrested, sentenced to three more years in the camps and a further five-year exile in Kazakhstan. In Kazakhstan, he and his wife were tonsured as monastics and he was secretly consecrated to the episcopate as Schema-bishop Peter. On his return from exile Fr. Dimitri traveled from place to place, confessing and serving liturgy for

¹ Abbess Thaisia's memoirs of her conversations with St. John of Kronstadt are included as an appendix to: *Abbess Thaisia of Leushino: The Autobiography of a Spiritual Daughter of St. John of Kronstadt*, St. Herman of Alaska Press, Platina, CA, 1989.

Opposite: St. John with Sura relatives, 1890.





his spiritual children, until he was arrested for the third time in 1941 and sent to the camps again, from which he never returned.ⁱ

On Oct. 31, 1994, the archbishop of Archangelsk blessed the formation of the revived St. John the Theologian Convent in Archangelsk. The initial attempt to regain the property and buildings was unsuccessful, however, and the community relocated to the village of Yershovka, where they organized a new monastery, also dedicated to St. John the Theologian. A local committee of clergy and laypeople, meanwhile, continued to press for the return of the Sura monastery territory and eventually succeeded. In October 2012, the Holy Synod passed a resolution reopening the Sura convent, and naming Nun Mitrofanina (Mikolka) as abbess. A new community of sisters has formed at Sura and begun restoration of the badly damaged buildings.

Future plans include rebuilding the churches and cells, a home for orphaned girls, a domicile for the elderly, a Sunday school, and the revival of local handicrafts. The ruined Dormition church is now being restored, a house-church dedicated to St. John has opened in Sura, and the monastery welcomes pilgrims, most of whom visit from the well-known Monastery of St. Artemy of Verkola, about thirty-five miles away. Pilgrim accommodations will be made available as the monastery is revived.

In the summer of 2013, a cross procession/pilgrimage voyage was held in honor of the 185th anniversary of St. John of Kronstadt's birth. The aim of the event was not only the restoration of pilgrimage to the shrines of the Russian north, but to attract attention to the Sura Convent of St. John the Theologian. Participants in the cross procession sailed 2,000 kilometers along the Neva River, through Lake Ladoga, the Svir River, Lake Onega, the White Sea to Archangelsk, and further down the North Dvina and Pinega Rivers to the village of Sura. This was the same route that St. John would have taken on his own visits to Sura. Prayer services and processions involving local churches and parishioners were held during the frequent stops.

DIRECTIONS:

Getting to the Sura Ioannovsky Monastery is not terribly difficult if you have the time, but neither is it for the faint-hearted. From Moscow to Archangelsk is about 1200 km (21 hours by train). From St. Petersburg it is 25 hours by train. From Archangelsk, take a second train (running every other day) sev-

Opposite: St. John of Kronstadt with wife, Matushka Elizabeth.

eral hundred kilometers to the town of Karpogory. From Karpogory, there may be an infrequent bus to Sura, but the best option is to hire a taxi or private car. Sadly, the river steamboats that St. John customarily took to Sura from St. Petersburg were discontinued after the Russian Revolution.

KUREMÄE, ESTONIA

Pühtitsa Dormition Convent

Pühtitsa's Dormition Convent in the Republic of Estonia is situated near the village of Kuremäe (Stork-mount) between Lake Peipus and the Gulf of Finland, not far from the Russian border. It is located on a site known as *Puhitsetud*, meaning "blessed" or "sacred" in Estonian, and has its own unique story that inspired the monastery's founding and St. John's spiritual and material help.

Byzantine-Russian Orthodoxy was probably the earliest form of Christianity in Estonia, with the baptisms of native Seto and Rus peoples occurring in the 11th-12th centuries, and the first Christian church constructed around the same time in Yuryev (now Tartu).² In Revel (Tallinn) the Russian Church and cemetery of St. Nicholas was established decades before its earliest written documentation in 1371, when it was described as being situated "between the Oleviste (Church of St. Olaf, King of Norway) and the town wall". Viking-era hoards have been found in the region, as Estonia was not only on a trade route, but the site of frequent wars between the Estonians and their Swedish, Danish and German neighbors. By 1228 Estonia was a principality of the Holy Roman Empire, and over the next centuries found its territory divided and re-divided between the Poles, Swedes and Danes, with much of the population subjected to Lutheranism at the Reformation. Coming again under imperial Russian rule in the 18th century, Estonia declared its independence in 1920, retaining its sovereignty until invaded by the Soviets in 1939-40, when it was incorporated into the USSR. Twenty-five

² Yuryev is illustrative of the multi-cultural history and Orthodox influence in Estonia: the first documented record of the area was made in 1030 by chroniclers of Kievan Rus when Yaroslav I the Wise, Prince of Kiev and son of St. Vladimir the Great, built a fort there and named it Yuryev after his own patron saint, St. George. Yaroslav I had strong ties with Scandinavia as he had been in exile at the court of the first Swedish Christian King, Olof Skötkonung, and had married Olof's daughter Ingegard. Ingegard in turn became St. Anna of Novgorod.

Opposite: Pühtitsa Convent of the Dormition, Estonia.





percent of the population was deported or listed as casualties of World War II. The Republic of Estonia finally obtained its sovereignty in 1991.

Pühtitsa Convent was founded on the site of a late 16th-century appearance of the Mother of God to Lutheran shepherds from the nearby village of Kuremäe. The hill where she appeared had been considered a holy place from pre-Christian times, and when they climbed to the summit, the shepherds who had witnessed the appearance found an icon of the Dormition hidden in the fissure of a tree. As Protestants, they no longer venerated icons, but they told their story and gave the icon to local Russian Orthodox, who built a small wooden chapel on the site. The chapel was destroyed several times by Lutheran Swedes, but each time the icon was saved and the chapel rebuilt by native Orthodox who held fast to their miraculous image.

Seventeenth-century Lutheran records preserve the complaints of Protestant pastors about the existence of these Orthodox chapels, and Swedish authorities occasionally resorted to military force to destroy them. According to Estonian historian Jaanus Plaat, “In 1699, the Jõhvi pastor reported that people came to the ‘great heretical party’ held in August [the Feast of the Dormition], from several parishes and even from Russia.”ⁱⁱ During decades of Lutheran iconoclasm, the icon was intermittently sent to the town of Narva for safekeeping until 1818, when a wooden church dedicated to St. Elijah was built in nearby Vasknarva and the icon was transferred there. Ties between the settlements remained close, however, and an annual thirty-kilometer procession was held on the Feast of the Dormition to carry the icon from Vasknarva to the Pühtitsa chapel. According to Metropolitan Kornelius of the Estonian Church, “The [19th-century] procession was onerous. There was no proper road from the village of Vasknarva to Pühtitsa, only a narrow path that went through marshes and forests. The locals said that people went in single-file and waded through mud up to their knees. They took turns carrying the icon, pressing it to their chests.”ⁱⁱⁱ

The tradition continues today, with a procession from Vasknarva to Pühtitsa a few days before Dormition, usually on the 26th of August. A later version of the original wooden chapel now stands in the same spot under the great oak outside the monastery gates, and the icon is enshrined a few hundred meters away in Pühtitsa Monastery’s Dormition Church. Petitions continue to be answered and healings occur five hundred years after the

Opposite: Chapel with old oak where the Pühtitsa Dormition Icon was found.

icon's finding, and a second Dormition procession with the icon is held every August 15/28 from the church to the holy healing spring at the bottom of the hill for a moleben, and then back to the church.

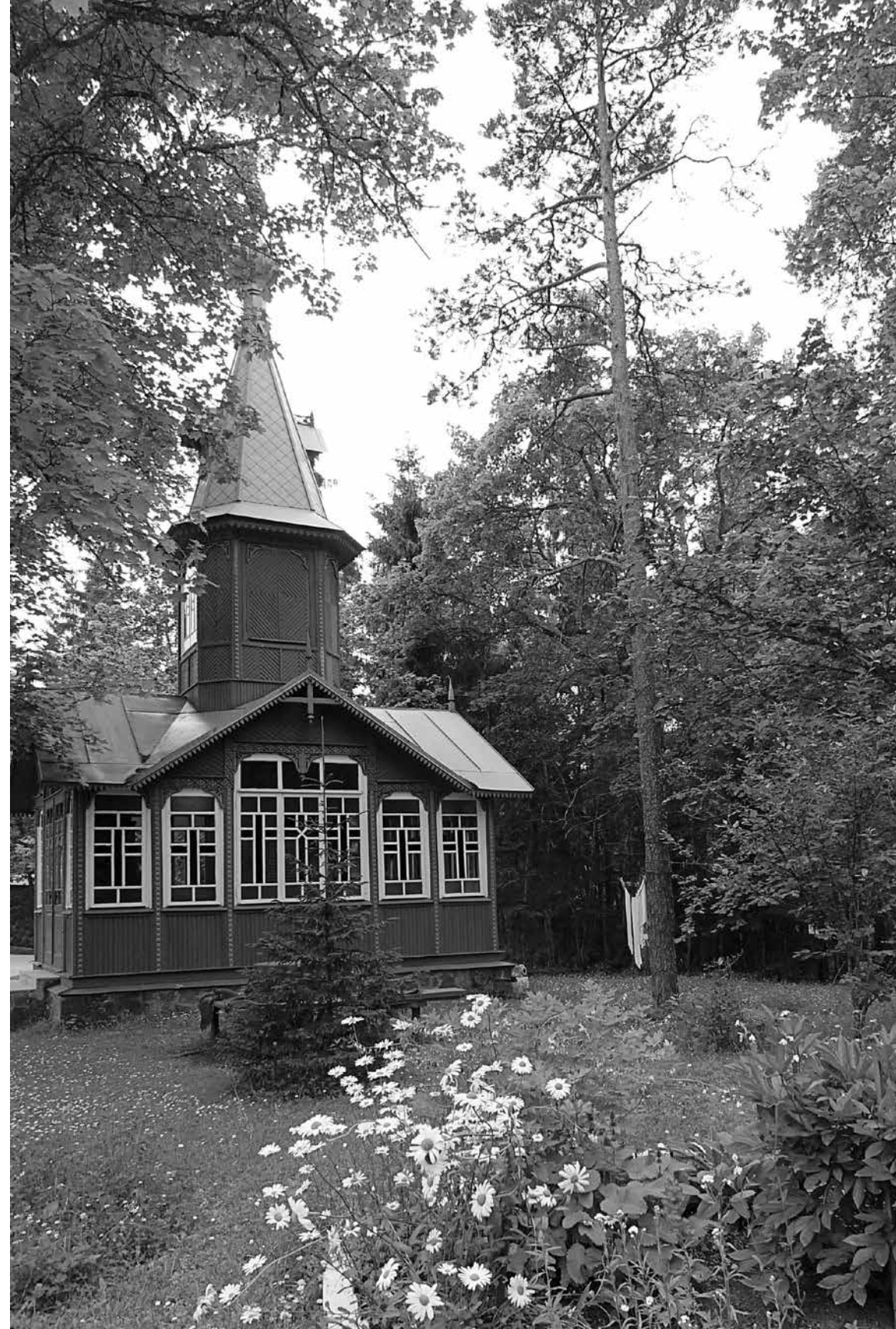
Estonia was remanded to Russian control in 1721 after the Great Northern War, and in 1888 the Russian Orthodox Church sent a nun from Kostroma's Ipatiev Monastery to found a convent in Kuremäe. Overriding objections from local German Lutheran landowners, Prince Sergei Shakhovskoy, the governor-general of Estonia, sponsored the foundation, which was formally established in 1891 as the Pühtitsa Convent of the Dormition of the Mother of God. The convent's main church was designed and built by Mikhail Preobrazhensky in the Russian Revival style. There are six other churches in the monastery, which today resembles a small village.

After the Russian Revolution the newly independent Estonian government confiscated much of the monastery's farm land, and at the outset of World War II Estonia was occupied and annexed to the USSR. Although monasteries were closed throughout the Soviet Union, and in World War II a German concentration camp for Russian, Estonian, Jewish and other prisoners was set up on monastery territory, Pühtitsa was not closed. It is nothing short of a miracle that throughout the persecution and vicissitudes of the Russian Revolution, Estonia's annexation by the USSR, and two world wars, Pühtitsa was one of the very few Russian monasteries to have a continuous monastic presence throughout the 20th century. Thus it is a double treasure for pilgrims, for it is one of a few Russian women's convents, and the only one associated with St. John of Kronstadt, to have an unbroken tradition from before the Russian Revolution.

St. John of Kronstadt and the Founding of Pühtitsa Convent

Saint John not only nurtured the convent's founding, but often came himself to help form the spiritual and community life of the sisters. They in turn trusted him implicitly. As one sister relates, "Even after his repose, when his memory was reviled under a dark cloud of Soviet misinformation, there was not a single cell, or hardly a home in the nearby village where a portrait of "dear Batiushka," as the sisters called him, did not hang next to the icons."^{iv}

Opposite: Belltower chapel, Pühtitsa.



Saint John's commemoration days—Oct.19/Nov.1 (his birthday and translation of the relics of his patron saint, St. John of Rila) and Dec. 20/Jan.2 (the day of his repose)—were celebrated as monastery feastdays even before his canonization.³ Monastery and farm work came to a halt, and after Divine Liturgy and a *panikhida* (memorial service) for Fr. John, a festive trapeza of baked fish, mushroom and potato *piroshky*, and sweet rolls baked in the archpastor's memory was provided for the sisterhood, monastery workers, and guests. Panikhidas for Fr. John and Blessed Xenia of St. Petersburg were served at other times as well, and when the monastery experienced sorrows and difficulties, help always arrived through their intercession.

Walking up the hill towards the monastery entrance, there is a tiny wooden chapel under an old oak tree to the right, which Fr. John called the "Oak of Mamre" and next to which he loved to pray. The chapel commemorates the 16th-century finding of the monastery's great treasure on this site—the miracle-working Dormition Icon of the Mother of God. In the archway (the "Holy Gates") leading into the monastery, the pilgrim is welcomed with frescoes of the finding of the miraculous Dormition icon and of St. John of Kronstadt.

The view from the Holy Gates opens onto Dormition Church, built with the blessing of Fr. John. Returning from the holy spring one day together with Abbess Barbara, he pointed to the monastery, saying, "Matushka Barbara, look at what a beautiful church we have on top of the hill." The new church, which he saw as if it already existed, eventually replaced the original small monastery church dedicated to the Smolensk Icon of the Mother of God.⁴

The holy treasure of the monastery, the miracle-working icon of the Dormition miraculously found in the 16th century, is given central place in the cathedral. As in the time of St. John of Kronstadt, on the Feast of the Dormition August 15/28, an assembly of hierarchs, clergy, sisters, and thousands of pilgrims still process with the icon from the church to the holy spring at the bottom of the hill.

Another icon in the Dormition church associated with St. John is a beautiful miracle-working Vladimir icon of the Mother of God, painted on Mt.

³ St. John of Kronstadt was formally canonized by the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church in 1990. He had previously been recognized as a saint by the hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia in 1964. His feast days are Oct.19/Nov.1 (his birthday and translation of the relics of his patron saint, St. John of Rila) and Dec. 20/Jan.2 (the day of St. John of Kronstadt's repose).

⁴ Another famous icon, that of the Pühtitsa icon of the Smolensk Mother of God gave its name to the original convent church and was highly venerated by St. John and the sisterhood. It still occupies a prominent place in the newer Dormition Cathedral. The foundation of Dormition Cathedral was laid by St. John, but he did not live to see its completion.

Athos as a gift and blessing for Pühtitsa monastery in honor of the fortieth anniversary of Fr. John's ordination to the priesthood in 1895. The large icon (175 x 105 cm.) required a decree from Tsar Nicholas II for its transfer from the Holy Mountain. The cathedral is also graced with a second icon painted on Mt. Athos, at the Russian monastery of Saint Panteleimon in 2000. The icon depicts St. John of Kronstadt and was given by the monastery brotherhood as a blessing for Pühtitsa convent.

A fourth highly-prized icon, the Pühtitsa Icon of the Mother of God "At the Spring", is also connected to the archpastor. In 1894, one of Pühtitsa's sisters painted the icon as a gift for Father John's name day, portraying the 16th-century appearance of the Mother of God. The icon was presented by the sisters with the inscription, "To Archpriest Father John (Ilyich) Sergiev, the work of painters from Dormition Convent on the Holy Mount, Estlyand Province, October 19, 1894." Father John kept the icon until his repose, after which it was cared for by a pious couple in St. Petersburg, and finally by a nun from the then-closed Convent of St. John of Rila in St. Petersburg, also founded by Fr. John. During those dark decades, the nun guarding the icon had a dream in which the Mother of God instructed her to return the image to Pühtitsa. This only became possible after the nun's death in 1946, when the icon was received with great reverence by the sisters.

In 2006, to commemorate the appearance of the Mother of God and the finding of the icon, His Holiness Patriarch Alexei II established the feast of the Pühtitsa Icon of the Mother of God on June 18/July 1, which is celebrated annually at the monastery with ever-growing numbers of pilgrims. On the eve of the feast, an akathist is sung antiphonally by two choirs and after morning liturgy the icon is carried in procession to the site where the Theotokos appeared in the 16th century.

Remembering Saint John

According to the older generation of nuns, when Fr. John came to the convent the sisters decorated the belfry and the guesthouse with colored lanterns. The train from St. Petersburg would arrive at the nearby station at 2:00 AM, and the entire sisterhood along with pilgrims would wait for their spiritual father at the gate, where he was greeted with the ringing of church bells. As he approached, the sisters would begin the Lenten stichera, "Behold, the Bridegroom Cometh at Midnight". Always "cheerful, shining and

infinitely benevolent,” Fr. John would step out of his carriage and bless each person awaiting him, then accompanied by the sisters he would first go to church to serve a moleben before the Dormition icon, and only then retire to his cell for a short rest. By 4:00 am the sisters had gathered in church for the midnight office, and two hours later Father John would arrive to start Matins, always reading the canon aloud himself. After hearing confessions he would celebrate the liturgy, and give Holy Communion to the sisters.

Although Fr. John reposed before the Dormition Church was completed, he did participate in the 1895 hierarchical consecration of the nearby *trapeznaya* Church of Saints Simeon and Anna and served many liturgies for the sisters. One monastery tradition holds that once as Fr. John was preparing the holy gifts for liturgy during the Proskomedia, he cut his finger. When it bled, he prophesied: “This monastery will stand to the end of the ages; blood will be shed for Christ on this mountain, there will be martyrs.” He later predicted both world wars and everything that would happen to the monastery. “Hold to the grass, the enclosure will save,” he said to the first sisters.

Father John also frequently visited the small church dedicated to St. Sergius of Radonezh, built in 1895 over the tomb of the monastery’s first patron, Prince Sergei Shakhovskoy, where he served panikhidas in the presence of the Duke’s wife, Elizaveta Dmitrievna.

St. John’s Memorial Room

A short walk from Dormition Church and across from the trapeznaya is a hospice housing elderly and ill sisters. On the second floor are three small rooms, dedicated to the history of Pühtitsa Convent and containing a number of Fr. John’s personal belongings. As the pilgrim enters the first of these quiet light-filled rooms, the door creaking on its hinges, a standing wardrobe to the right displays two of Fr. John’s *podrazniks*, one a blue velvet and the other an off-white linen *podraznik* for summer. The cabinet is dominated, however, by a large black wool fur-lined winter *ryasa*, so heavy that it is difficult to lift. Much of Fr. John’s ministry was on foot or in sledges or open horse-drawn cabs, and such warmly-lined *ryasas* were indispensable to avoid frostbite in the bitter cold of northern Russia. Next to the cabinet is a portrait of Fr. John wearing the same *ryasa*.

Opposite: Gatehouse, Pühtitsa Convent.





Other of St. John's possessions on display include small personal items such as portraits, letters, a cane, icons, and a carefully-kept Gospel. Here also is his archpriest's mitre, pectoral cross and the Nativity vestments in which he served at Pühtitsa, as well as a cross presented to him by Tsar Nicholas II.

Father John deeply loved Pühtitsa. "Kiss this land," he would say, "it has been blessed by the appearance of the Theotokos." Eventually Fr. John sent over fifty of his spiritual daughters to the monastery to live under the guidance of the Mother Superior Varvara and her successor Abbess Alexia. According to the monastery chronicle, he would often send them off with the exhortation, "Go to Pühtitsa, it is just three steps away from the Heavenly Kingdom." The third Pühtitsa abbess, Rev. Mother Joanna (Korovnikova), was Fr. John's goddaughter and the daughter of his church warden at St. Andrew's Cathedral who had come to Pühtitsa as a young girl. One of the museum's books inscribed by St. John reads: "To the pious maiden Anna Alexeevna Korovnikova with a blessing. Archpriest John Sergiev. October 1, 1890."

In 2008, for the 100th anniversary of the repose of St. John of Kronstadt, the monastery issued its first in-house Russian publication, *Pühtitsa Convent and its Protector, the Righteous Saint John of Kronstadt*. Drawn heavily from the monastery *Chronicles*, the book recounts Fr. John's visits to the convent, including passages of his letters to the convent's first two abbesses, and the memoirs of sisters who knew him.

From the first days of the monastery's existence the sisters provided for themselves and the pilgrims with their own hands by farming and raising animals. They participated in the monastery's construction, and as the sisterhood grew, Pühtitsa eventually supported a community of lay medical nurses (Sisters of Mercy), a free clinic, pharmacy, an orphanage, and a school where girls could be educated to age eighteen. Father highly appreciated the labor of the sisters, and held them up as an example to others, saying: "The sisters in Pühtitsa are walking towards the Heavenly Kingdom with huge steps". In later years, walking around the monastery cemetery where the first nuns were already buried, Fr. John would take off his hat and bow first to one side, and then to the other, saying to the sisters: "You have many relics resting here!"

Father John guided, instructed, and healed the sisters through his prayer. He concerned himself with their everyday needs as well as spiritual guid-

Opposite: Statue of St. John of Kronstadt in house-museum garden.

Святой праведный отец
ИОАНН КРОНШТАДТСКИЙ

ance, and his letters to the first abbesses often ended with such instructions as, "I am sending 500 rubles to buy flour and provisions... and am asking you to take care to provide good nutrition."

Sister Lyudmila's Healing

Next to the wardrobe in the memorial room is a small chair on which Fr. John sat one day when he healed a novice close to death, a story that her spiritual daughter, Nun Ioasipha (Malyarova) repeated for sisters and pilgrims until her own repose in 1990:

My eldress, Nun Lyudmila (Kulikova), who entered the monastery at the age of 16 in 1892, used to recall her miraculous healing by Fr. John from a deadly disease. As a young novice, Sister Lyudmila was given the obedience to bring bricks by boat from the village of Skamyia two kilometers from the monastery on the Narova River. Once, after loading the bricks, she slipped getting into the rowboat and fell into the icy water of the river. It was October and the water near the shore had already begun to freeze. Wet and chilled through, it took her several hours to get back to the monastery, and from the exposure she developed a consumptive lung condition. She was admitted to the hospital, but soon sent home with the words: "Prepare her for the long journey." Father John arrived at the monastery shortly after, and Mother Superior Alexia asked him to bless the sick novice. She was carried to the abbess' quarters, and Fr. John sorrowfully shook his head: "What a sick girl, what a sick girl".

Without turning his gaze away, he touched her chest and drew his fingers together as if gathering up the edges of a piece of fabric. Lamenting and praying, he touched another spot on her chest as if he was closing up invisible wounds, and then blessed the novice, saying simply, "Thank God, you will live and live long!" With the blessing of Fr. John, Lyudmila was carried to church, where she lay behind the harmonium listening to the service. By the end of vigil she was able to sit up, and during the morning liturgy the sisters helped her to approach Holy Communion. After Fr. John gave her Holy Communion, she was able to walk to her cell without help.

Opposite: St. John of Kronstadt.





The following year, the abbess went to Revel (Tallinn), taking Mother Lyudmila to be checked by the doctor who had predicted her death. He was very surprised to see his patient recovered and after examining her X-rays, shook his head saying: “I do not understand this at all. You were sure to die. Your lungs were laced with holes, but some mighty hand repaired it.... A great miracle was accomplished for you.” Mother Lyudmila lived until 1966, dying peacefully at the age of 90.

Schemanun Sergia: Childhood Healing

Schemanun Sergia (Andreeva), who was born in 1900, also told the story of her wondrous recovery from a severe illness through Fr. John’s prayers: “As a child my family lived in Finland, and when I was five, I broke my leg. It was a complex fracture and although my parents took me to different doctors who did what they could, the leg remained weak. After a year I could hardly move, even with crutches. From Finland we went to Fr. John of Kronstadt, who sat me on a little chair. My mother cried out, ‘Father, heal her leg!’ Father moved his hand three times along my injured leg and said, ‘She will walk, but she will not be completely healthy’. Then he brought a prosphora and gave it to me. I was very glad about Father’s gift of prosphora, and we returned home consoled. On the way back, I hardly needed the crutches, and when we arrived home I began walking slowly by holding to the walls. To the great surprise of my parents, I began walking without the crutches and even running. When I turned eighteen Father John blessed me to join the monastery.”

Sister Sergia spent almost seventy years in the monastery at different obediences including caring for the farm animals and as a choir director for the monastery. Before her repose in 1985 she was tonsured into the Great Schema.

Father John spiritually strengthened the community with each visit, and as he wrote to Mother Alexia, the second abbess, “I pray God that in Pühitsa, with the protection of the Heavenly Queen, there will be a blossoming of truth, sanctity and piety amongst the sisters.”

That God did protect the monastery was demonstrated during a visit of a local commissar during the years of Soviet occupation. Telling villagers that he was going to arrest the abbess “and drag her out tied to my horse,” he arrived at the monastery hostile and belligerent. The abbess came out and

Opposite: Former Abbess Varvara with young pilgrim.

received him calmly, upon which he demanded food and drink. The commissar drank so much that he left without doing anything, and on the way home the unfortunate man fell from his horse in his drunken stupor and was himself dragged on the ground until dead.

After World War II, the monastery managed to stay afloat through the last difficult decades of the Soviet period. From 1968 to 2011 the sisterhood flourished under the capable hand of Abbess Varvara, who drew many young Russian and Estonian nuns after the fall of Communism. Today, guided by Pühtitsa's eighth abbess, Rev. Mother Filareta, pilgrims continue to be moved by the legacy and spiritual protection of St. John of Kronstadt, and the sisters apply to him the words of another luminous 20th-century wonderworker, St. John Maximovitch: "Tell the people, even though I died, I am alive!"^v

DIRECTIONS:

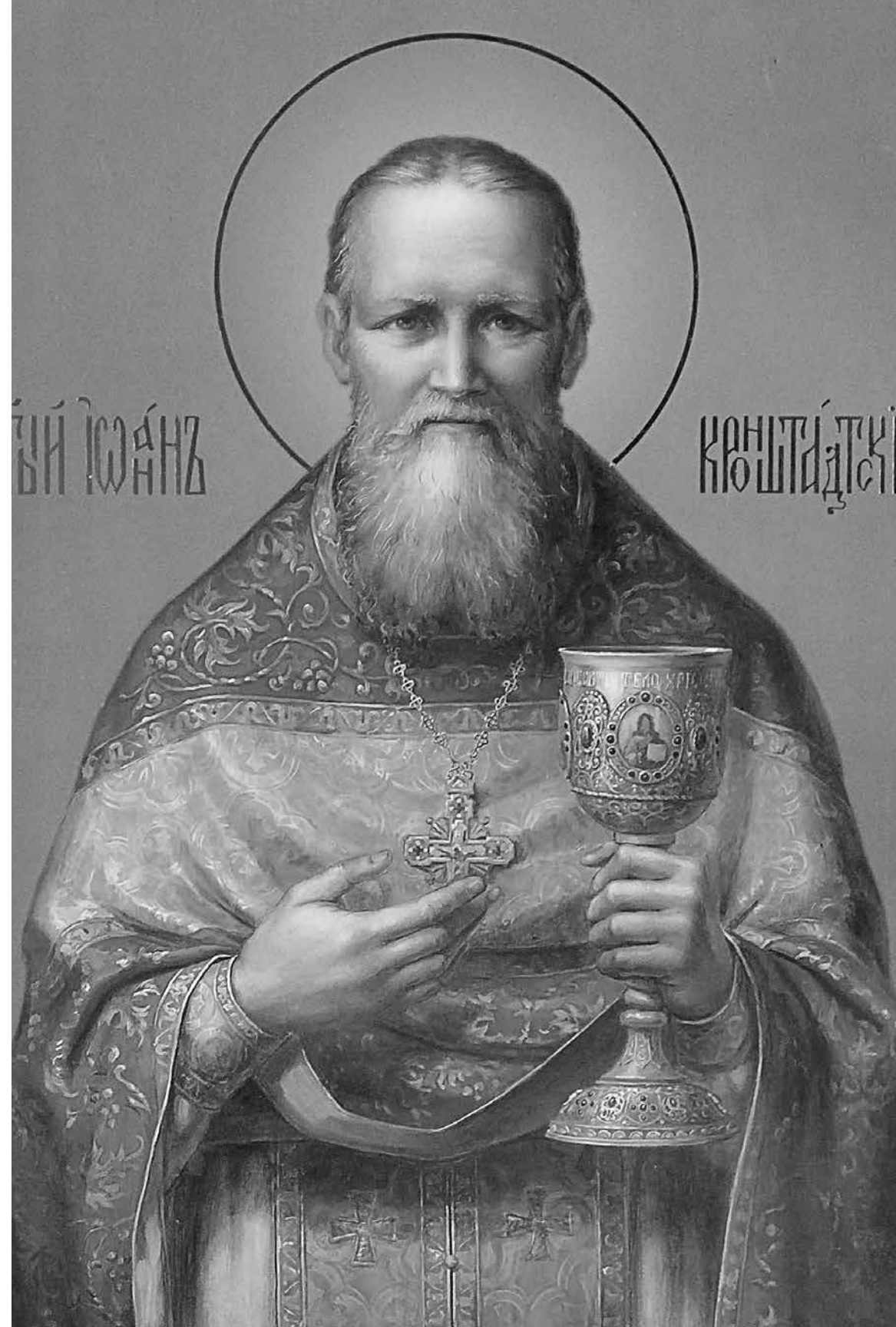
To reach Pühtitsa Monastery by public transport, take a plane or train to Tallinn, Estonia. From Tallinn's central bus station at Lastekodu 46, there is a direct bus to Kuremäe, the village outside the monastery, once a day on Monday and Friday. On other days you can take a bus from Tallinn to Johvi, and then local bus 116 to Kuremäe, which makes the round trip several times a day. Tell the driver you want to get off as close as possible to Pühtitsa Monastery.

ST. PETERSBURG, RUSSIA

St. John of Rila Women's Monastery
(Ioannovsky Monastery)

In 1900, a year after founding St. John the Forerunner Women's Monastery in Sura, Fr. John started a small *podvoriye*, a city outpost for the Sura monastery, in St. Petersburg on the bank of the Karpovka River, that grew quickly into the Women's Monastery of St. John of Rila and his own burial place. In 1901, Fr. John blessed his spiritual daughter Anna Semyonovna Sergeyeva to be tonsured as a nun there with the name of Angelina, and gave her the obedience to direct the building of the impressive monastery complex, which she did in an astonishing two years.

Opposite: St. John of Kronstadt





Designed by Nikolai Nikonov, the five-domed neo-Byzantine Church of the Twelve Apostles which occupies two upper floors of the convent was finished in 1902. Side chapels are dedicated to the Kazan Mother of God and St. Andrew of Crete. Distinctive features included the outer domes and belltower covered with multicolored tiles, and stained glass within the chapel depicting the twelve apostles. When the podvoriye was raised to monastery status in 1903, the dedication of the foundation was changed to that of St. John's own patron, St. John of Rila, and Mat. Angelina was appointed abbess. Because of its location in a large metropolitan center and its connection to Fr. John, the monastery quickly attracted hundreds of nuns, and by 1908, the year of Fr. John's repose, included a five-story residence, infirmary, icon-painting workshops, and a print shop. It eventually supported an orphanage for girls, and during World War I, a hospital, and a nursing school with a residence for two hundred nurses.

Father John sometimes spoke of himself as "Ioann, by the grace of God builder of the monastery," and shortly after its dedication he asked Metropolitan Anthony of St. Petersburg for permission to be buried there. The petition was forwarded in 1904 to Tsar Nicholas II, who wrote: "Of course, the desire of the Honorable John Sergiev will be fulfilled." (Father John was well-known to the royal family, having been in the Crimea in 1894, as priest-confessor to Emperor Alexander III, Tsar Nicholas' father, on his deathbed.) Father John reposed on December 20, 1908 and he was buried in a crypt-chapel below the altar of the main church, dedicated to the Prophet Elijah and Empress Theodora, after whom his own parents were named.

When once asked about a cemetery for the sisters of the monastery, Fr. John replied: "My sisters do not need a cemetery, they will scatter like birds in the world." Sadly the prophecy came true and after the revolution when many women's religious communities were closed, the sisters reregistered themselves as the Karpovsky Women's Labor Community, with Abbess Angelina listed as "Chairwoman". In 1922 she was placed under house arrest on charges of hiding church valuables, and the monastery was formally closed in November of 1923 when all "movable and immovable property" was confiscated by Soviet authorities. The church was given over as a club, and the monastery later housed a technical school; although a few of the sisters and

Opposite: Basement window (lower right) where pilgrims prayed and left flowers and candles during Soviet period when the monastery was closed.

hospital nurses were permitted to live in unused attic and basement rooms of the monastery for several more years.

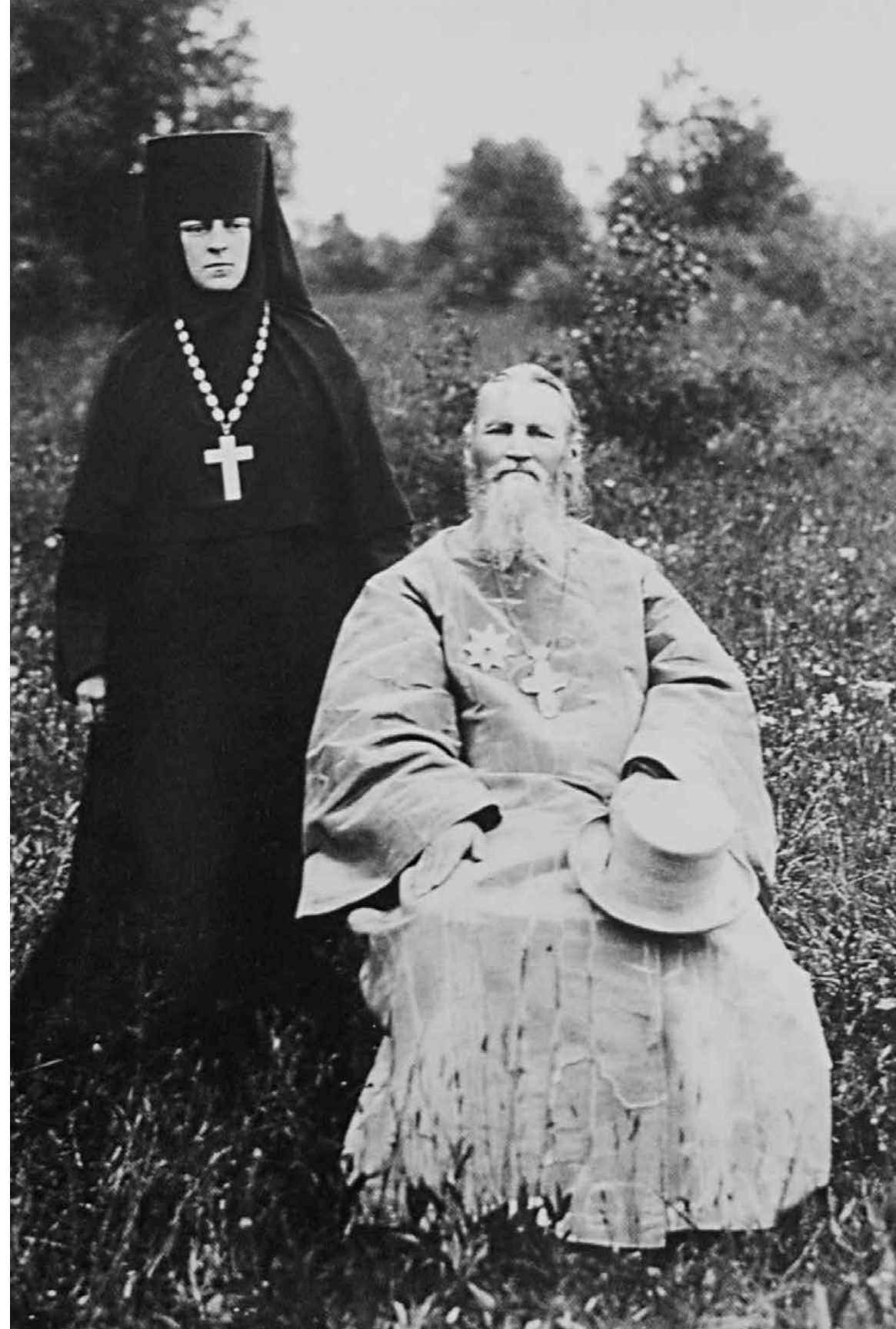
In 1926, the entrance to St. John's tomb was walled up, the shrine destroyed, and his grave covered with a mound of broken concrete and rubble. The following year, Mat. Angelina died shortly before she was to be arrested, and was buried at St. Nicholas cemetery of the Alexander Nevsky Monastery. In 1931 the convent's spiritual father, Archimandrite Ioann Arzhanovsky, and the sisters who had managed to continue living on the territory of the monastery, were arrested and exiled to Kazakhstan. Others continued to live in city apartments. In 1936, Archpriest Igor Ornatskii, who had ministered secretly to those remaining in the city, was also arrested and died in a concentration camp.

During the Soviet period over twenty different organizations occupied the monastery complex, but even in the darkest times believers prayed secretly at a tiny basement window on the outer wall of the monastery, which gave onto the tomb crypt where St. John was buried. Flowers and candles were, and still are, regularly placed on the ledge.

In November 1989, with the fall of communism, the ruined monastery territory was returned to the church and with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Alexei II (then Metropolitan of Saint Petersburg) as a podvoriye of Pühtitsa Dormition convent. Led by Mat. Georgia of Pühtitsa, the sisters set to work restoring worship, community life, and services at the tomb of their beloved spiritual father. The lower church was reconsecrated to St. John of Rila and the monastery was slowly rebuilt, based on old descriptions and photos. In 1990, Patriarch Alexis II and the synod of bishops approved the canonization of Fr. John Ilich Sergiev (of Kronstadt) and the establishment of the podvoriye as a patriarchal stavropegial monastery. St. John's glorification was held on June 14th, 1990 in St. Petersburg. In 1997, the remains of Abbess Angelina were moved to the crypt chapel and placed to the right of the tomb of St. John. Since 1992 the abbess has been Mother Seraphima Voloshin.

The monastery now operates a Sunday school, sells candles, icons and souvenirs inside the monastery, and has a hostel for pilgrims, of which there are hundreds daily.^{vi} The Smolensk cemetery where St. Xenia of Petersburg is buried is not far by the metro subway.

Opposite: St. John of Kronstadt with Abbess Angelina, first superior of Ivanovsky (St. John of Rila) Monastery.



**DIRECTIONS:**

St. John of Rila Women's Monastery: #45, nab. River Karpovki, St. Petersburg, Russia, 197022

A seven-minute walk from the metro subway stop "Petrogradskaya". If asking for directions, ask for "Ioannovsky Monastir". Daily matins, divine liturgy and vespers open to public. The lower church with St. John's relics is open from after liturgy until 5:00 PM. Phone: +7-812-234-24-27

According to the monastery website, pilgrims in St. Petersburg can stay in guest rooms at Metro Sadovaya: +7 (812)702-72-99 or +7 (812) 310-82-42

KRONSTADT, RUSSIA

Site of the Cathedral of St. Andrew, the St. John of Kronstadt House Museum, and the Naval Cathedral of St. Nicholas

The town of Kronstadt on the small island of Kotlin is situated thirty miles west of St. Petersburg, Russia, near the head of the Gulf of Finland. Uninhabited until 1617, the island then passed back and forth between Russian and Swedish jurisdiction until 1704 when Tsar Peter the Great constructed a fortress to guard the approach to the mouth of the Neva River, the site of the new capital of the empire, St. Petersburg. The fortress, Kronslott (the Crown's Castle), was followed by canals, dockyards, merchant harbours, then private houses and public buildings that became Kronstadt (the Crown's Town), the seat of the Russian admiralty and base of the Russian Baltic Fleet.

For Orthodox around the world, the name of Kronstadt is synonymous with its great archpastor. During St. John's time, Kronstadt, as now, was closely tied to nearby St. Petersburg as a great capital and cultural center. For the Orthodox pilgrim, there are several wonderful places to see in Kronstadt: the site of the Church of St. Andrew where St. John served; the Naval Cathedral of St. Nicholas of the Sea, whose foundation was laid by St. John; and St. John's own home, restored as a museum in the late 1990's by Orthodox Christians of Kronstadt and St. Petersburg.

Opposite: St. John of Rila Women's Monastery, St. Petersburg.

Kronstadt, with its broad canal-lined streets surrounded by ocean, is a delightful respite from noisy, bustling St. Petersburg. On a sunny summer day, thousands of stately trees overlooking the canals and sidewalks give an unexpected sense of spaciousness and park-like peace to almost every street.

The Site of the Former Cathedral of St. Andrew, Kronstadt

In pre-Revolutionary Russia, the Cathedral of St. Andrew, with Fr. John of Kronstadt as its archpriest, was one of the most frequented pilgrimage sites in Russia. Built in 1805–1817, and dedicated to St. Andrew the Apostle, the patron saint of the Russian navy, this beautiful and venerable church was destroyed by the Soviet regime in 1932. Today a pleasant plaza with benches and fountains marks the site of the former cathedral (incongruously bordered by Lenin, Karl Marx and Soviet Streets). A small chapel dedicated to the Apostle Andrew and the Tikhvin Icon of the Mother of God has been erected on a corner of the plaza in memory of the much-loved temple that once stood here. Today the plaza is much used: elderly doze on the sun-speckled benches, while mothers rock babes-in-arms and children play under the trees. It is easy to imagine that their grandparents and great-grandparents once came here to worship God and listen to the sermons and exhortations of Kronstadt's renowned pastor. Although we no longer have the church itself, we do have descriptions of Fr. John's daily service there:

St. John got up at 3 a.m. and prepared for serving matins in the cathedral. For a brief while he took a turn around the garden of his parish house, praying silently. Around 4 a.m. he went off to the cathedral. At the gates of his house he was met by a waiting crowd of pilgrims. He could speak individually with only a few of them. The majority were content to just receive his blessing, kiss the hand of the miracle-worker, touch his garments, catch his luminous gaze. At the cathedral St. John was met by hundreds of local beggars, to whom he gave charity according to established custom. At 4:00 a.m. began the matins, which St. John served without curtailing a single hymn and read all the canons himself. Before the beginning of the liturgy there was confession. Afterwards, without leaving the church, St. John began to serve the liturgy. The cathedral, which could hold up to 5,000 people, was usually full

of the faithful, so that Communion took a long time, and the liturgy never ended before noon. During the service letters and telegrams were brought to St. John straight into the altar, and he immediately read them and prayed over them. After the service, surrounded by thousands of the faithful, St. John left the cathedral and often went to St. Petersburg in response to the summons of countless numbers of sick people, from whom he returned home not earlier than midnight, sometimes catching an hour of sleep on the train. At 3 a.m. he got up again. Many nights St. John did not go to sleep at all (he prayed instead), yet no one ever saw him tired or drowsy... only by God's miracle could one live and work thus for decades. Such a life and such labors were above human powers; they were supernatural.^{vii}

We can also glimpse the spirited intensity of a service led by St. John through the following account from Protopriest Pavel Lakhotsky:

It is extremely hard to describe how St. John served the Divine liturgy. He was an ardent flame before God; he represented the complete union of a pure image of God with its Original.... He read the prayers as though he saw the Saviour, or the Mother of God, or the saints right in front of him, and he either prostrated himself in great humility before them, or spoke boldly, as if demanding the fulfillment of his entreaties.... After the transubstantiation of the Holy Gifts he sometimes bowed deeply over the diskos with the Holy Body or the sacred chalice with the Blood of the Saviour, kissed the edge of the sacred vessels, and tears of tenderness streamed abundantly down his face. It was impossible not to notice that immediately after partaking of the Holy Mysteries, St. John's face became illuminated, shone with joy, his usual fatigue and tiredness disappeared, and he became "young" and energetic.^{viii}

After liturgy in St. Andrew's Cathedral, Fr. John would always sit to eat with his co-servers and parishioners, sharing food and drink with those sitting near him. He was also eagerly sought by other clergy to serve on feast days in churches of Kronstadt, Moscow, St. Petersburg, and many parts of the empire. Thus, churches in numerous Russian cities are sites of his ministry and pilgrimage places in their own right. Everywhere he went, crowds of thousands followed.



On the left side of the cathedral plaza, in an unmarked grave whose location is not now precisely known (the graves were desecrated and leveled in Soviet times), are the remains of Elizaveta Constantinovna Sergieva, Fr. John's wife, a faithful and long-suffering sister and helper. Described as loving, full of humility and good humor, she fed and cared for Fr. John and devotedly guarded his short hours of rest. Married for 53 years, she died on May 22, 1909, six months after her husband. At her funeral Archpriest Alexander Popov declared, "Over her grave it would be most fitting to inscribe: 'Here is meekness; here is humility,' and nothing further is needed..." Flowers may be left in her and Fr. John's memory at the small chapel now at the edge of the plaza.^{ix}

Faith and Healing

St. John of Kronstadt prayed for healing for all those who appealed to him, including Moslems, Jews, foreigners from France, Italy, Switzerland, Scandinavia, America, and other countries, and there remains St. John's own description to fellow priests of his first miracle. One day, upon receiving a request for prayer for a sick person; St. John began to pray; and, as usual, "I entrusted the sick one into God's hands, asking the Lord to fulfill His holy will in regard to the sick person." Unexpectedly an old woman named Paraskeva, whom St. John revered for her righteousness, pushed her way into his hearing, demanding that St. John pray for the absolute healing of the sick person. "I remember that I felt almost afraid then," said St. John. "I thought to myself: how can I have such daring? However, the old woman insisted and believed in the power of my prayer. Then I confessed my lowliness and my sinfulness before the Lord, saw God's will in this matter, and began to plead for the sick person to be healed. He became well... Another time the healing occurred again after my prayers. Then I saw in these two cases the direct will of God, a new obedience for me from God—to pray for all those who would ask it of me..."^x

From that moment the miracles gushed forth in a powerful stream The blind began to see, the lame began to walk, the dead returned to life. Soon Fr. John's miraculous healings began to be recorded, with an indication of time and place, the name and address of the person who was healed, and

Opposite: New chapel dedicated to Tikhvin Mother of God and St. Andrew on the site of St. John's former Cathedral of St. Andrew.

confirming documents, particularly physicians' testimonials. The chronicles formed several volumes and finally the miracles reached an unprecedented level: people were healed from a note to him, from a submitted photograph, from a telegram. There are also accounts of Jewish merchants bringing their children to be healed by him, as well as at least one Muslim. When Fr. John was called to the Crimean deathbed of Tsar Alexander III, a Muslim woman appeared at the palace gate one day with her ill husband in a cart, waiting for "the holy man". When he appeared, she begged him to heal her husband. Father John had her kneel with him saying, "You pray in your way and I will pray in mine, and we will ask God to heal him."

He was also known outside of Russia. As early as 1894, the *London Illustrated News* and the *New York Times* ran articles on St. John and his wonder-working ministry, which continues to this day.^{xi}

Relief for the Poor and a House of Industry

While in seminary Fr. John had dreamed of going to the Aleuts in Russian Alaska as a missionary, but at his appointment as a young priest in Kronstadt, he discovered quite as much physical and spiritual poverty as in the Far East. In visiting local families, Fr. John often shared his last kopeck to provide them with food, and sometimes returned home without his outer garments. Church administrators became concerned and began to pay out his modest salary to his wife, presumably so that she could keep food on the table and (literally) clothes on his back. Even this did not stop him from almsgiving. From 1857-82, along with serving at St. Andrew's Cathedral, Fr. John taught at the local secondary school in order to have an income "that he could distribute unimpeded to the poor."^{xii}

One of the projects Fr. John was most well-known for was the *Dom Trudoliubiia*, the House of Industry, which began in 1881 with workers receiving food, a place to sleep and a modest wage for doing simple work such as gluing hat brims or preparing hemp for rope-making. It attracted so many of the poor that although partially subsidized by the tsar and local administrators, providing regular financial support was an ongoing worry that Fr. John mentioned frequently in his letters and journal entries. In the end he embarked

Opposite: St. John of Kronstadt's tomb in the Chapel of Prophet Elijah and St. Empress Theodora, St. Petersburg.





on a sophisticated program of fund-raising—traveling to Moscow and St. Petersburg to raise money with personal appeals to government officials, civic leaders, and the upper class for support. In time, the House of Industry was expanded to include a workshop and shelter for elderly females and younger women who would otherwise be tempted to prostitution to feed themselves and their children. It eventually included training in skills like carpentry, shoe-making, and sewing, and provided a free medical clinic, bookstore, library, public lectures, a day school for children and evening classes for adults, as well as a house church (attendance was not mandatory).^{xiii}

According to Nadieszda Kizenko, Fr. John supported a host of other causes and institutions outside of Kronstadt, such as the Red Cross, temperance societies, organizations for wounded veterans, seminarian scholarships, orphanages, hospitals, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and even “an association offering ‘Brotherly Aid to the Armenian Victims of the Turks’.” Kizenko remarks that while Leo Tolstoy, the left-wing Fr. Georgii Petrov, and others “...spoke of helping the poor, the letters to Fr. John claim that he was the only one who regularly did so.”^{xiv}

Viktor Trostnikov, a near-contemporary, has written that in later decades when Fr. John was better known, donations were more forthcoming and he gave as freely as ever:

Together with glory and honor, large sums of money flowed to St. John for the purpose of charity. The amounts can only be guessed as everything was immediately given away.... According to people close to St. John, a good million rubles a year passed through his hands. He took in with one hand and gave out with the other. There were cases like the following: once, in the midst of a huge crowd, St. John received a packet from a merchant’s hands and without opening it, immediately passed it into an outstretched hand of a beggar. The merchant became agitated: “Batiushka, there are a thousand rubles there!”—“His luck,” calmly replied St. John. Sometimes, however, he refused to accept donations from certain people. There is the well-known case where he did not accept 30,000 rubles from a wealthy widow. This case was a prime example of St. John’s clairvoyance, since the woman had come by this money in a tainted manner, for which she subsequently repented.^{xv}

Opposite: Icon over tomb of St. John of Kronstadt.

One recipient of his charity recalled:

“At that time I was 22-23 years of age. Now I am an old man, but I still remember well the first time I saw Batiushka. I had a family, two children. I worked and drank. The family went hungry. My wife quietly begged on the side. We lived in a ramshackle hut. One day I came home not too drunk and saw a young priest sitting inside, holding my son in his arms and saying something to him very lovingly. The child listened to him quite intently. It seemed to me that Batiushka looked like Christ in that picture called *The Blessing of the Children*. At first I wanted to curse: why was he hanging around here?... but Batiushka’s loving and solemn eyes stopped me: I felt ashamed. I lowered my eyes, while he continued to look at me, looking straight into my soul. He began to talk. I cannot even hope to reproduce all that he said. He spoke about my hut being like paradise, because wherever there are children, all is light and warmth there, and that I should not trade this paradise for the smoky atmosphere of a bar. He did not accuse me,—no, he kept excusing me, only I did not feel like being excused... He left, while I just continued sitting there quietly... I didn’t cry, although my soul was on the brink of tears. My wife kept looking at me... And ever since that time I became a decent man again...”^{xvi}

Cathedral of St. Nicholas of the Sea

The Naval Cathedral of Saint Nicholas in Kronstadt is the main church of the Russian Navy, founded in 1902 by decree of Emperor Nicholas II in honor of the 200th anniversary of the founding of the Russian Navy by Peter the Great.

After touring Constantinople, the Neo-Byzantine architect, Andrei Kosykov, submitted a proposal with his brother Georgy for the new naval cathedral, echoing the majestic proportions of Hagia Sofia. The two brothers were only in their twenties but had studied Byzantine architecture extensively in Greece and Asia Minor, and Andrei oversaw the architecture of the church building, while his brother designed the interior. Their plans were submitted to and approved by Tsar Nicholas II. The base and columns of

Opposite: St. Nicholas Cathedral, Kronstadt.





the building were hewn from black granite, and the church façade of yellow brick with terra cotta inserts. The four entryways were decorated with mosaics of the Theotokos, St. Nicholas, Sts. Peter and Paul, St. John of Rila (Fr. John of Kronstadt's patron saint) and St. Mitrofan of Voronezh. As in Hagia Sophia, aisles on the ground floor were matched with upper galleries, and Russian-style, there were three altars, dedicated to St. Nicholas, Sts. Peter and Paul, and St. John of Rila, with an iconostas of marble from the Urals. Beautifully-executed paintings and portable icons adorned the original interior. A marble tablet running the entire length of the narthex walls was inscribed with the name of every seaman who had ever died in the waters of Kronstadt or given their lives in battle, whether Orthodox or not. (Destroyed by the Soviets, these memorial plaques have now been replaced.) The cathedral was also equipped with an independent central heating and cleaning system run by a complex network of pressurized manifolds and valves. The entire edifice was so large that the electrical lighting, including the massive chandeliers, required five thousand light bulbs, and could accommodate as many worshippers.

While the cathedral was heavily financed by the Russian state treasury, it was also supported with donations by the Navy itself: each sailor gave 1/400th of his salary, and many took part in soliciting donations. Seamen's wives labored over embroidered church banners and linens. The cathedral ground-breaking was held in 1901 with a liturgy and blessing attended by St. John and the 14,000 member garrison. A similar ceremony in 1903 marked the erection of the walls, with Tsar Nicholas II and St. John in attendance. Although the tsar and his family were present at the cathedral's consecration in 1913, St. John was not, having passed away five years earlier.

Fr. John's participation was not limited to the ground-breaking; in a vigorous letter of 1898 he had, in fact, instigated the church's building:

Bless, O Lord

Your Excellency, Much-Respected Vladimir Pavlovich,

I have learnt from the newspapers that the construction of the Naval Cathedral in Kronstadt has been put on the back burner, that is, until

Opposite: Interior of St. Nicholas Cathedral, reminiscent of Hagia Sophia.

the life of this city comes to an end or the end of time draws near. There is no other way I can understand this. We are building multi-million ruble war ships, the treasury has allocated 25 million rubles to fortify Kronstadt, the Naval forces have been given excellent supplies, and living premises for high-ranking Navy officers are spacious, fancy, clean, and full of light, while the Naval church that ought to be the glory of Russia and its Navy—as well as the testimony of the faith and piety of Russia’s victorious warriors—looks like a profoundly poverty-stricken village church or even a wooden kennel.

Quite nearby, stone-built Lutheran churches proudly raise their rooftops but the Orthodox church stands in utter humiliation. Might this be the reason why the Lord is humiliating our fleet, sending our war ships deep to the bottom of the sea? Might this be the cause of our frequent misfortunes at sea? Or why the multi-million ruble rope factory blew up in broad daylight in plain view of the public? Have we not learned our lessons taught by God? We Russians are ashamed to show foreigners our Navy holy place, I mean the church. God be with you, sirs! How long will this last?

I myself, a stranger to all this, have joined forces with a group of seamen who want a beautiful church. I initiated this, wishing to help start the holy cause moving, if even a little bit— and alas, it has failed!

We must hurry to build the church as you hurry to build war ships. The church is also a ship navigated by the Lord Himself with the Father and the Holy Spirit, and He can guard not just the fleet, but all our military forces and all of Russia.

Receive my apology for my openness and zeal. I write to you as to an old friend from my youth, and as a man with whom I used to pray. You have a prominent position and can do much to help this holy cause. I say this to you as well as to the Head of the Ministry. But fare you well. I need to go serve a moleben.

*Ioann Sergiyev, Protopriest of the Kronstadt Cathedral,
Your Excellency’s obedient servant and humble man of prayer*

Saint John’s efforts were successful, but in 1929 the newly-built cathedral was closed by the Soviet authorities and turned into a cinema, then later an

Opposite: Kronstadt Canal near the Sea Cathedral.





officer's club, naval museum, and finally a concert hall, with the altar as a stage. However damaged and desecrated, the structure was not totally ruined, and in 2009 a board of trustees was established to restore the cathedral in time for the 100th anniversary of its first consecration in 2013.

In May of 2011 Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople and Patriarch Kyrill of Moscow and All Russia toured the successful restoration efforts along with Russian First Lady Svetlana Medvedeva, and the consecration of the beautifully renewed church in 2012 was attended by President Medvedev, who addressed the dignitaries and Naval officers present for the ceremony:

Your Holiness, Residents of Kronstadt, Friends,

Today is a great day in the history of Kronstadt and our country: the Naval Cathedral of Saint Nicholas has just been consecrated. I am very glad that it happened during Bright Week, and I would like to sincerely congratulate all of you on this very important event.

The Naval Cathedral has a very complicated history, in which, as in a drop of water, the dramatic 20th-century history of our nation is reflected. It was built and consecrated at the beginning of the century; this was done by popular demand of sailors, who were personally involved in collecting donations and who contributed to the construction of the cathedral in cooperation with the Admiralty. St. John of Kronstadt also participated in the cathedral's consecration. Unfortunately, because of subsequent events, the cathedral was desecrated and for a long time the building was used for other purposes. But a city like Kronstadt, a city that is home to Russia's naval base, must have its own large naval cathedral.

I am truly happy that through the blessing of the Patriarch, the hard work of so many people and the substantial donations, this pearl of Russian ecclesiastical architecture has been restored to its original glory. I will say even more: as His Holiness and I have just noted, the cathedral looks better than it did 100 years ago. And that is wonderful because Kronstadt has its own, special naval traditions. Our naval base is located here, our sailors live here, and everything breathes the history of the great Russian

Opposite: St. John's House-Museum today, with flowered balcony fronting his second-floor flat.

fleet. Therefore, immediately after the consecration, the sailors will be able to come to the cathedral to pray and remember their comrades, and to receive blessings for future feats of arms. Nothing strengthens the army and navy as much as spiritual unity.

Citizens of Kronstadt, friends, for decades we looked at the cathedral and thought to ourselves: when will it again become as beautiful as it used to be? Now it has happened. Thank you to everyone who took part in this initiative. My heartfelt congratulations to you on this historic occasion.

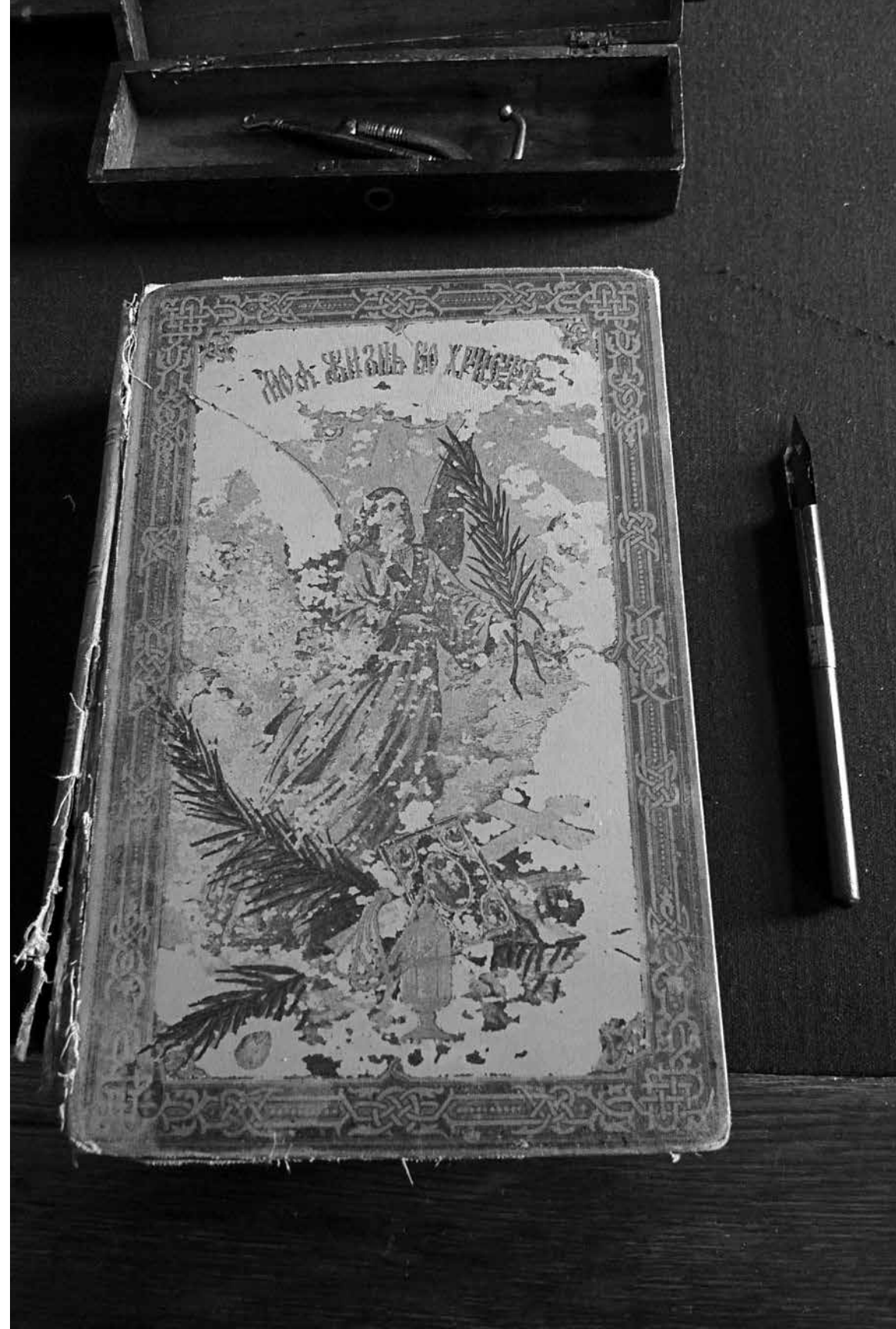
The St. John of Kronstadt Apartment

On the corner of Pasadskaya and Andreyevska Streets, a single long block from the site of the former Cathedral of St. Andrew, is the old church-house of Andreev Cathedral, where Fr. John lived in a modest second-floor apartment for more than fifty years from 1855 to his repose in 1908. During Fr. John's lifetime the address of this house was known to all Russia. Tens of thousands of letters and telegrams asking for prayers were sent here. Church hierarchs visited Fr. John as well as nobles, fleet commanders, wealthy merchants, simple believers and close spiritual children, some of whom have now been glorified by the Russian Church as new martyrs of Russia including Metropolitan Kyrill Smirloff, Met. Seraphim Chichagoff, Protopriest Filosoph and his brother Ioann Anatsky. The well-known Abbess Thaisia of Leushino also visited during the decades she assisted Fr. John with his women's monasteries in Sura, Archangelsk and St. Petersburg.

This small apartment was the refuge where Fr. John could find solitude for prayer, for reflection, and a little rest. One of his spiritual children described the space as follows:

Father John lived in this simple flat throughout his many years of priest's service at Andreevsky Cathedral. It differed from others only in that every corner was covered with icons given to him as gifts from all over Russia. On one sill was a dovecote, and in front of the window hung cages of canaries that never stopped singing. All of this—the collected holy icons, the scent of flowers, birds singing—gave this flat an extraordinary spirit of the joy of paradise, of the kingdom of quiet

Opposite: Early edition of My Life in Christ, with St. John's pen.



light. The hostess of this refuge was Fr. John's matushka, Elizabeth Konstantinovna, who watched over their home and Fr. John's hours of quiet—her “brother-in-Christ” as she called him. Although he had the opportunity to live anywhere in Kronstadt or Petersburg, Fr. John so loved this grace-filled home that he had prayed in for so many years, that it is not surprising that he never moved from these quarters. I believe that dear Batiushka does not leave them even now, but blesses everyone who comes to visit him.

The heart of the apartment was Fr. John's study which served for work, prayer, and sleep. Here Fr. John wrote his sermons and his spiritual diary, which later became the well-known book, *My Life in Christ*. Within these walls, Fr. John had his miraculous vision of the Mother of God, who spoke words of consolation to him, and here Fr. John reposed on Dec. 20/Jan 2, 1908.

The flat however, was not always a refuge; it was also a window onto a needy world. One museum volunteer told us the following story:

One evening, when Father John had come home for supper after visiting many sick people, he heard a woman weeping by the side of the house. Since he had arisen before five in the morning, Matushka asked him to have his supper first and a small rest before going to see what the problem was. But Fr. John insisted on going out and found the woman had slumped to the ground from weakness. Her husband was dying, and she and her five children had had nothing to eat for two days. He helped her up and on the way to her house, he gave her what he had in his pocket, a mere twenty kopeks—enough, though, to buy eggs and bread

When they got to her one-room flat, he saw the husband gazing lifelessly into space. The children were filthy and moaning from hunger. Father John and their mother fed the children, then cleaned them up as well as cold water brought in from the pump in the courtyard permitted. Then they knelt in the icon-corner, and Fr. John prayed, making the woman repeat the words after him. Finally, he remained silent a long time, bowing his head. Before returning home, he said: “Come and see me tomorrow at church.”

The next day, at the end of the Liturgy, the woman was waiting outside the church and Fr. John gave her over a thousand rubles, in vari-

ous envelopes which had been given to him as donations that morning. With proper medical care, the woman's husband recovered, did well in business, and some years later sent Fr. John 10,000 rubles to give to people in need.

In 1918, ten years after Fr. John's repose, Patriarch (St.) Tikhon visited this apartment and blessed the creation of a chapel here in honor of the Life-Giving Trinity, which allowed the apartment to stay intact until 1930. In 1931 St. Andrew's Cathedral was closed by the Communist authorities and the memorial apartment turned into living premises for workers. In the 1960s several more floors were built above the house and the apartment was divided into five separate flats.^{xvii}

In 1995 a group of Orthodox devoted to St. John's memory headed by Priest Gennady Belavolov began to work on the return of the apartment of the pastor of All-Russia. Their aim was to restore the flat and make it available for the many pilgrims who honor St. John. Within four years, two rooms of the former flat were made free, their occupants given other apartments, and in 1999, with the blessing of Patriarch Alexei II and Met. Vladimir of St. Petersburg and Ladoga, the memorial museum was registered.

Restoration was completed on the former study and parlor in time for the 100th anniversary of the memory of St. John of Kronstadt. On September 22, 2008 the small museum was visited by Patriarch Alexei II of Moscow and All Russia, who presided over the opening of the museum with the wife of the president of Russia, Svetlana Medvedeva. In 2009 and 2010 the memorial apartment was visited by Patriarch Kyrill.

Descendants of close relatives of Fr. John of Kronstadt who still live in St. Petersburg and Moscow also took an active part in the restoration and substantial help in re-creating the study was given by opera soprano Galina Vishnevskaya and cellist Elena Rostropovich, the wife and daughter of the late cellist and conductor, Mstislav Rostropovich. Local Orthodox hope to eventually obtain the entire apartment space and to restore St. John's Holy Trinity chapel within it.^{xviii}

The museum today consists of a small ground floor entry-room and two restored upper rooms, originally Fr. John and Mat. Elizabeth's guest parlor for visitors, and his large office in which he prayed, slept and worked. In the guest room overlooking the balcony is a divan and two chairs that were the couple's own furniture. The clock in the guestroom (not an original) is

stopped at 7:40, the hour he died. In the center of the room is a cross on a reading stand, and several years ago, after a visiting hieromonk stood praying before it, the cross began gushing myrrh.

The office contains some of Fr. John's original belongings, including the desk, chair, and a second smaller chair. On the desk is an original first edition copy of *My Life in Christ*, and a pen that Fr. John used. Other objects on the desk are of the period, but not his own. This is the room in which the Mother of God appeared to him four times, and where he reposed.

Also present here are several oil paintings of the saint, one of which has a remarkable story told to us by a museum volunteer, Elena Belozerskaya:

During St. John's lifetime, a Kronstadt resident lost a large sum of money while playing cards, and with no way to repay it, decided to throw himself into the canal. As he stood on the edge, a man came up to him saying, "You've lost your wallet." When he opened it, this wallet contained the exact sum that he owed. It was St. John of Kronstadt. Considering St. John a miracle-worker, the man began going to church and sometime later was given a portrait of St. John by a nun who knew how much he loved the saint. After the Revolution, he kept the portrait rolled up in the attic for fear that Soviet neighbors would see it, but at his death, his granddaughter, who had inherited his belongings, opened the portrait and put it up in her room. When the apartment became available, she brought it to be given to Fr. Gennady and the house-museum. Still living in St. Petersburg, she is pleased that the portrait has been beautifully restored.

Finally, off of the study is a small inner room where Fr. John used to eat, and on the dining table are some period plates. The knife and fork accompanying them belonged to him and his wife; the provenance of the plates is uncertain. With the plates is a pre-Revolutionary memorial mug with a picture of Fr. John without a halo, found in a Novgorod antique shop by Road to Emmaus staff in 1996, and given to Protopriest Artemy Vladimirov of Moscow, who in turn donated it to the museum. An elegant bronze statue of Fr. John graces the front garden of the house. Staffed by volunteers, the apartment is open in the afternoon daily except Tuesday. A daily akathist to St. John of Kronstadt is read in the house-museum and prayer requests and names are accepted.

DIRECTIONS:

From St. Petersburg to Kronstadt:

It is about a forty-five minute drive to Kronstadt over the bridge by the Ring Road by taxi or private car if there is light traffic. Buses and shuttle vans are frequent and may be taken from the following metro subway stations: "Chernaya Rechka"—shuttle K-405; "Staraya Derevnya"—shuttle K-510 and bus 101; "Prospect Prosvescheniya"—shuttle K-407, bus from rail station "Oranienbaum"—Bus 175. There is no train service.

Within Kronstadt:

St. Nicholas Cathedral:

The Naval Cathedral of St. Nicholas (also known as the More Kram, the "Sea Cathedral") is along the canal on Sovetskaya Street. From the plaza of St. Andrew's Church walk down Sovetskaya Street, with the canal on your right. Within ten minutes you will see the Cathedral of St. Nicholas on the other side of the canal.

Plaza site of the Church of St. Andrew:

The plaza where the Church of St. Andrew once stood is at the corner of Sovetskaya Street and Karl Marx Street. The Sovetskaya Street canal turns 90 ° at the plaza. From the Naval Cathedral of St. Nicholas turn left from the grounds and walk with the canal on your left. Within ten minutes you will see the plaza at the end of the canal.

St. John's House Museum:

The apartment is on the corner of Andreevsky and Posadskaya Streets, a block west from the plaza where St. Andrew's Church once stood. Andreevsky Street leads off of the plaza. The address of St. John's house museum is Apt. 12, #21 Posadskaya St., Kronstadt, St. Petersburg, 189611. Tel: +7 (812) 311-77-45 or 311-87-02. The house museum is open daily from 12 to 5:00 (closed Tuesday). Entrance is free.



And so ends our pilgrimage tour of places and physical artifacts bound up with the life of St. John—most importantly, his relics in St. Petersburg,

his home in Kronstadt, and the living tradition of the monasteries that began and still continue under his guidance. May pilgrims to these holy sites be blessed with the warm hospitality of those who selflessly care for them and by the intercession of our righteous father and pastor, St. John of Kronstadt. ✠

With thanks to Abbess Filareta and her nuns at Pühtitsa Dormition Convent, Kuremäe, Estonia, especially Mat. Tikhona and Mat. Danila, for their warm hospitality and generosity in sharing the sisterhood's memories, traditions, and photos of St. John of Kronstadt. Thanks also go to Fr. Gennady Belavolov and the volunteers at St. John's House-Museum in Kronstadt, Russia, especially Elena Belozerskaya, all of whom give of their time and energy to keep the house open for pilgrims. Thanks also to Tatiana Gerasimova, long-time friend and fellow-pilgrim.

Books by and about St. John of Kronstadt:

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2. St. John of Kronstadt, ed. W. Jardine Grisbrooke, *Spiritual Counsels: Select Passages from "My Life in Christ"*, SVS Press, 1967.
3. St. John of Kronstadt, ed. W. Jardine Grisbrooke, *Counsels on the Priesthood: Selected Passages from "My Life in Christ"*, SVS Press, 2004.
4. Archimandrite Constantine Zaitzev, *A Spiritual Portrait of St. John of Kronstadt*, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.
5. Isaac Lambertson, trans. *St. John of Kronstadt: Life, Service and Akathist Hymn*, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN
6. Nadieszda Kizenko, *A Prodigal Saint: Father John of Kronstadt and the Russian People*, Penn State Press, University Park, PA, 2000.
7. G.P. Fedotov (ed.) *A Treasury of Russian Spirituality*, Sheed and Ward, 1950.

i. Dr. Vladimir Moss, "Schema-Bishop Peter (Fedosikhin)", accessed on Aug. 9, 2013 at: <http://www.metanthonymemorial.org/VernostNo148.html>

ii. Jaanus Plaat, "Orthodoxy and Orthodox Sacral Buildings in Estonia from the 11th to the 19th Centuries", *Electronic Journal of Folklore*, Vol. 47, Accessed July 3, 2013, at: <http://www.folklore.ee/folklore/vol47/plaat.pdf>, esp. Footnote 30.

iii. Ibid. pg. 27.

iv. Russian text and information provided to the author by the nuns of Pühtitsa Convent on a visit in July, 2012. Russian text trans. by Daria Piño, March, 2013.

v. Ibid.

vi. In Russian, "Иоанновский монастырь", accessed on Aug. 3, 2013 at: <http://imonspb.ru/>

vii. "Great Luminary of Russia and the World," Life of St. John of Kronstadt, accessed from http://www.holy-transfiguration.org/library_en/saints_kronst.html, July 29, 2013.

viii. Protopriest Pavel Lakhotsky, "St. John of Kronstadt as Server of the Divine Liturgy", accessed from http://www.holy-transfiguration.org/library_en/saints_kronst4.html, Aug. 7, 2013.

ix. From the reminiscences of R. G. Shemyakina, reprinted in *Otets Ioana Kronshtadtsky* by P.M. Chizhov, Jordanville, 1958, English trans. "A Real Matushka: Elizabeth Constantinevna Sergiev", *Orthodox America*, accessed at: <http://www.roca.org/OA/96/96g.htm>

x. "The Life of the Pastor of Kronstadt," accessed at http://www.holy-transfiguration.org/library_en/saints_kronst.html, August 12, 2013.

xi. The article about Fr. John in the *New York Times*, Dec. 9, 1894 may be read online at: http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?_r=1&res=9FoDE2DC1231E033A2575ACoA9649D94659ED7CF

xii. Nadieszda Kizenko, *A Prodigal Saint: Father John of Kronstadt and the Russian People*, Penn State Press, University Park, PA, 2000, pg. 81.

xiii. Ibid., pgs. 76-77.

xiv. Ibid., pg. 78.

xv. Viktor Trostnikov (Reprinted from *Argumenty i fakty*, No. 44) accessed at http://www.holy-transfiguration.org/library_en/saints_kronst8.html 8/8/2013.

xvi. Accessed from: http://www.holy-transfiguration.org/library_en/saints_kronst.html

xvii. "Святая Квартира", Russian-language pamphlet from the Memorial House Museum of St. John of Kronstadt, St. Petersburg, 2010.

xviii. Ibid.