

# HERMITAGE

June 2018

The Newsletter of the Hermitage of the Holy Cross



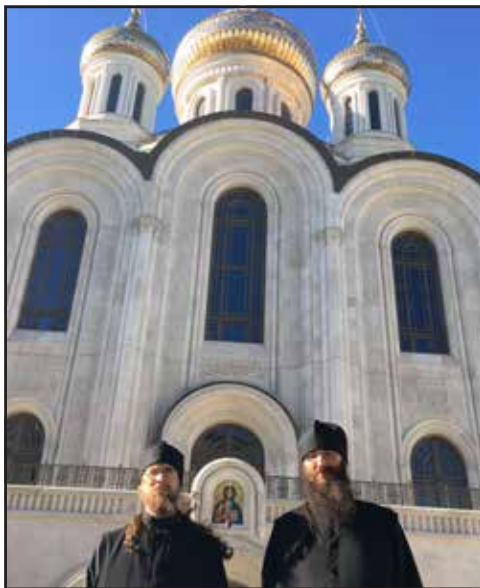
## A Pilgrimage to Optina Monastery

BY the grace of God, two Hermitage monks have been given the opportunity to make a pilgrimage this summer to Russia. They departed from the U.S. on May 31<sup>st</sup>, and spent their first weekend in Moscow visiting the holy sites there. Following this, they travelled to Optina Skete where they spent several weeks living the monastic life there alongside the brethren.

This is a great gift of God, not only for our two monks but for the entire Hermitage brotherhood. Optina Monastery and its Skete hold an extremely important place in the history of monastic life in the Russian Church. It was at Optina that the 19th-century reflowering of monasticism chiefly occurred, due to their emphasis on the inner life as well as their unbroken succession of “startsii”—God-bearing elders capable of spiritually directing not only the monks, but also the countless thousands of laypeople who

flocked to Optina from all corners of the Russian land.

Here at the Hermitage, all novices read the lives and counsels of the Optina Elders as a vital part of their monastic formation. This is especially important for us



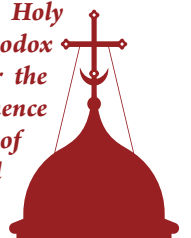
because the Optina Elders lived during times not so dissimilar to our own, when Russian society had become quite worldly and the apostasy of the modern world was already becoming rooted in the hearts and minds of even those Russians who sought the life of piety and obedience to God. Therefore the monks living at Optina struggled with many of the same thoughts and temptations that we ourselves are faced with when we begin to live the monastic life, and the God-enlightened counsels of the Optina Elders to their spiritual children also resonate deeply in our own hearts.

Though we already feel a special close-

ness to Optina for these reasons, as well as the presence in our church of the relics of many of the Optina Elders, nevertheless for many years it has also been our desire to form a relationship with the Optina of today. We are therefore tremendously grateful to God for this chance to get to know the brotherhood there, to live for several weeks alongside them, and most importantly to struggle together with them in the monastic arena and to learn from their wisdom and experience. May God grant that this seed takes root and grows, so that the flower of Optina’s spirituality may also bloom here in the desert of America.



*The Hermitage of the Holy Cross is a Russian Orthodox Men’s Monastery under the omophorion of His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion of Eastern America and New York. The Abbot and Confessor of the monastery is Archimandrite Seraphim.*



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## From the Holy Fathers

“But the sum of all is that God the Lord surrendered His own Son to death on the Cross for the fervent love of creation. ‘For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son over to death for its sake.’ This was not, however, because He could not have redeemed us in another way, but so that His surpassing love, manifested hereby, might be a teacher unto us. And by the death of His only-begotten Son He made us near to Himself. Yea, if He had had anything more precious, He would have given it to us, so that by it our race might be His own. Because of His great love for us it was not His pleasure to do violence to our freedom (although He is able to do so), but He chose that we should draw near to Him by the love of our understanding.”

-St. Isaac  
the Syrian

## Successful Surgeries for Abbot Seraphim

IN March of this year our abbot, Archimandrite Seraphim, underwent back surgery (a laminectomy on his L1 and L2 vertebrae) to address the severe pain he had been experiencing for some time. We had been told that Fr. Seraphim might need a spinal fusion, but thankfully this has proved to be unnecessary. The laminectomy was very successful and has helped him tremendously.

Additionally, Fr. Seraphim had his right knee replaced just a few weeks ago. He is recovering very well, although the intensive physical therapy needed after such a surgery has been challenging. He will likely need his left knee to be replaced as well at some point in the future, but for now he is focusing on completing his current program of recovery. He has already been able to rejoin the brotherhood for some meals and church services, and hopes to return to these activities full-time in the near future. He is tremendously grateful to our patron, Saint Panteleimon, and to all our friends for their prayers and support.

## Tonsures to the Riassa

AT the conclusion of the Vigil for Ascension (Thursday, May 17<sup>th</sup>), two of our novices, Br. Edward and Br. Michael, were tonsured to the riassa. This second step in the monastic journey is a significant one; though final vows are not yet taken, the rank of riassophore nevertheless indicates a permanent intention to continue on the monastic path and to remain steadfast in the face of the accompanying temptations. Whereas the novice is in the process of discerning whether or not he has a monastic vocation, the riassophore has made a firm resolution to take up the cross of the monastic life. If he proves persevering in this resolution, he will later be granted the opportunity to take his final vows.

The monastic effort is both hazardous and rewarding, as we confront both our fallen selves as well as the invisible enemies which wage war against us. We rejoice with our two brothers, now



called Fr. Edward and Fr. Michael, as they continue forward in our Lord's service. Please remember them in your prayers, asking that God's grace be given to them abundantly and that we, the rest of the Brotherhood, offer all necessary support and love through our own repentance.







## Announcing the Annual Celebration of the Feast of St. Panteleimon at the Hermitage August 8<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018

**T**HE Hermitage of the Holy Cross invites you to celebrate the feast of the Holy Great Martyr and Healer Panteleimon with the brotherhood and fellow pilgrims of the monastery. Saint Panteleimon is the patron and protector of the Hermitage, and in recent years his Feast has become a secondary day of pilgrimage for us (after our main Pilgrimage Weekend—see below). His Grace Bishop Nicholas of Manhattan will preside for the feast. A Festal Vigil will be served on Wednesday evening, and on Thursday morning there will be a water blessing and Hierarchal Divine Liturgy, followed by a Moleben to Saint Panteleimon.

During the Divine Liturgy, Vladyka Nicholas will ordain Hierodeacon Macarius to the holy priesthood and Riassophore-monk Justin to the holy diaconate (Fr. Justin will take his final vows and receive the Small Schema some time prior to the ordination).

At the Festal Moleben, and for seven days thereafter, we will commemorate names of the sick and suffering (both Orthodox and non-Orthodox) who are in need of St. Panteleimon's aid. We are including a commemoration slip and remittance envelope, with which you may submit names together with any alms, before the August feast.

**Wednesday, August 8<sup>th</sup>**

**6:30 p.m. Festal Vigil with Litia & Akathist**

**Thursday, August 9<sup>th</sup>**

**8:00 a.m. Water Blessing, 9:00 a.m. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy with Moleben for the Sick & Suffering**

## Holy Cross Monastery Pilgrimage Weekend September 29<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018



**W**E invite everyone to join us for the 2018 Pilgrimage Weekend. His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion, First Hierarch of the Russian Church Abroad, will preside at the Divine Services, and the Myrrh-Streaming Hawaiian Iveron Icon will also be present with us throughout the weekend. Visiting clergy are invited to celebrate at the hierarchal services.

After Sunday morning's Divine Liturgy, a festive banquet will be held in the spacious hall of the Holy Spirit Orthodox Church in Huntington. Following the banquet, one of the monastery hieromonks will give a talk on the significance of monasticism and pilgrimage for laypeople in the 21st century. All are welcome to attend.

Many come to Pilgrimage Weekend every year from all over the country to join with the monks and with one another in liturgical worship and fellowship. Over the years, friendships have formed amongst fellow pilgrims, thus making Pilgrimage Weekend a reunion for old friends, a spiritually enriching experience for newcomers, and most importantly an occasion to partake of the Holy Mysteries and to strengthen one's faith.

Please see the enclosed "Pilgrim's Guide" for information on how to reach the Monastery, details regarding possible accommodations, and other guidelines for visitors.

### SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

#### **Saturday, September 29<sup>th</sup>**

- 2:30 p.m. Great Procession from the Monastery Church to the Outdoor Chapel of the Mother of God of the Sign with the Myrrh-Streaming Hawaiian Iveron Icon and Holy Icons and Relics of the Monastery, with Moleben and Anointing
- 4:30 p.m. Buffet supper for pilgrims
- 6:00 p.m. Vigil with Litia

#### **Sunday, September 30<sup>th</sup>**

- 9:00 a.m. Hours & Hierarchal Liturgy at Outdoor Chapel of the Mother of God of the Sign

**Banquet Following at the Hall of Holy Spirit Orthodox Church, Huntington, WV**





*Farm & Garden*

