

Saint Maria of Paris

Mother Maria was born in Latvia in 1891. She was an atheist who converted to Christianity in Paris, where she was tonsured an Orthodox nun, and devoted herself to a life of service to the poor in the inner city. With a small community of fellow-believers in Paris, France, she established “houses of hospitality” for the poor, the homeless, the alcoholic.

When the Nazis took Paris in 1940, Mother Maria, her coworker, Fr. Dimitry, and others in the community chose to remain in the city to care for those who had come to count on them. As Nazi persecution of Jews in France increased, the Orthodox community’s work expanded to include protection and care of the most helpless. This work led to the arrest of Mother Maria, Fr. Dimitry, and their associates.

Mother Maria was sent to Ravensbruck concentration camp, while Fr. Dimitry was sent to Buchenwald. After great sufferings, they both perished, along with others from their community who followed them.

It is believed that Mother Maria’s last act was to take the place of a Jewish woman who was being sent to death in the gas chambers, voluntarily dying in her place.

Mother Maria and her companions were glorified by the Patriarchate of Constantinople in 2004.

Feast Day: July 20th

She can be prayed to during times of temptation, doubt, faithlessness, and persecution for our faith.





Saint Elizabeth

New-Martyr

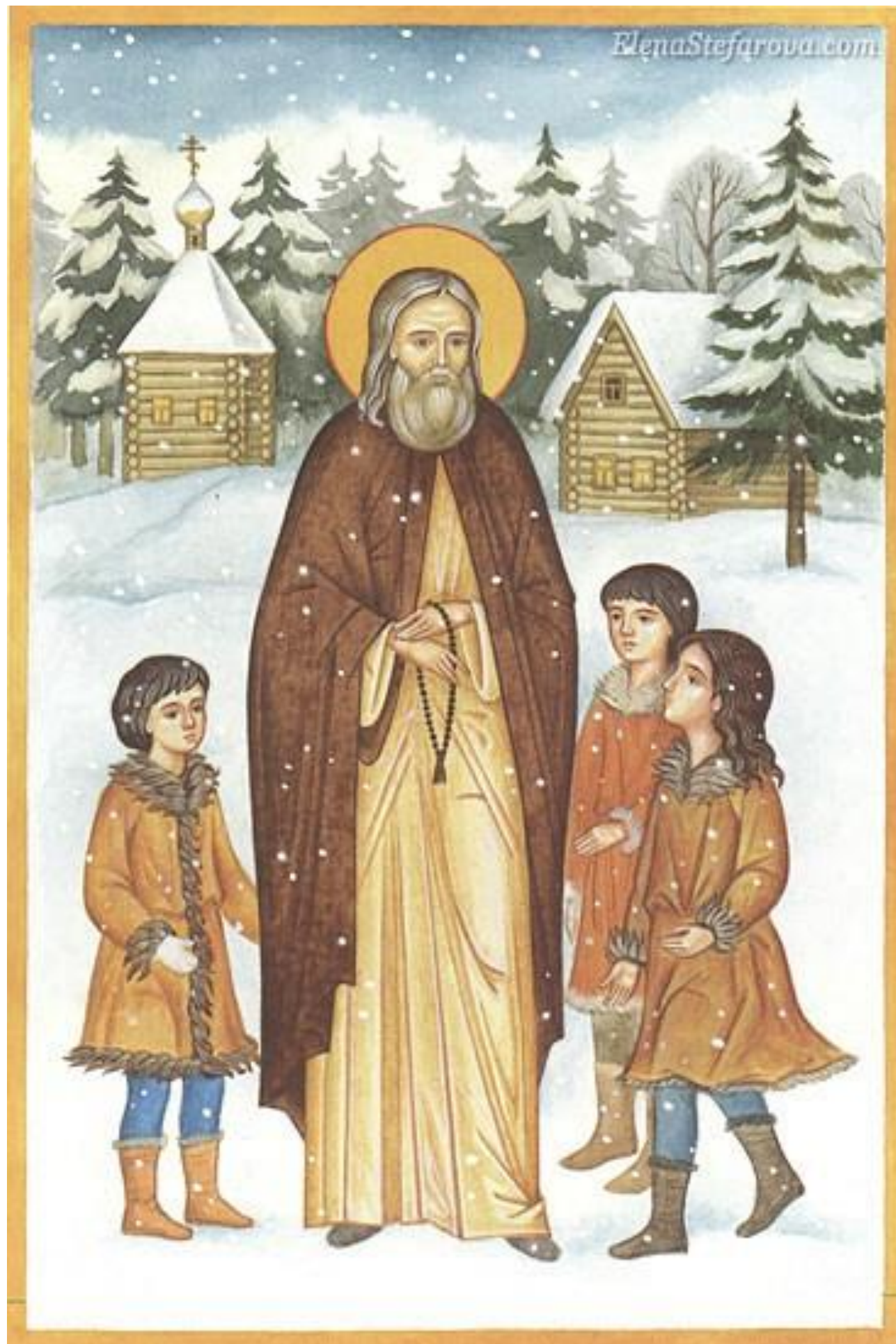
Elizabeth was born February 24, 1864; the second child and daughter of Grand Duke Louis IV of Hesse and Princess Alice of the United Kingdom, a daughter of Queen Victoria. She was also the elder sister of Alexandra Fyodorovna, the last empress of Russia. She married Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich and willingly converted to the Orthodox Faith. Following the assassination of her husband, she became a monastic, converting her wealth to open the Martha and Mary Home in Moscow to foster a life of prayer and charity for devout women. This diaconal ministry combined intercessory prayer and active works of mercy in the heart of great need and disorder. In April 1909 Elizabeth and seventeen women were dedicated as Sisters of Love and Mercy. Their work flourished: soon they opened a hospital, and a variety of other philanthropic ventures arose.

She was violently killed by the local Bolsheviks on July 18, 1918, along with Nun Barbara and others. They were herded into the forest, pushed into an abandoned mineshaft, into which grenades were then hurled. An observer heard them singing Church hymns as they were pushed into the mineshaft. After the Bolsheviks left, he could still hear singing for some time. The last thing Elizabeth did as she lay dying in the mineshaft was to bandage the wounds of Prince Ioann with her handkerchief. Later the White Army briefly recaptured this area, and her relics were recovered and the account of the person who witnessed it recorded. Her relics were first taken by the White Army to Beijing and placed in the Church of St. Seraphim of Sarov, and then they were taken to Jerusalem and placed in the Church of St. Mary Magdalene, which she and her husband had helped to build.

She was glorified by the Russian Orthodox Church in 1992.

Feast Day: July 18th

She is also commemorated on the feast of the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia, celebrated on the Sunday nearest to January 25, which was the date of the martyrdom of Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev, the first of the new martyrs.



Saint Herman of Alaska

Little is known of St. Herman's early life, but that he was born around 1750. He entered monastic life as a young man and was a novice at Sarov monastery, later tonsured at Valaam Monastery. He arrived as a missionary in Kodiak, Alaska on September 24, 1794. St. Herman and the monks with him baptized more than 7,000 natives in the Kodiak region, and set about building a church and monastery. He was assigned in the bakery and acted as the mission's steward. He cared for the native people and instructed the children as well as sharing with them in the joy of the kingdom of God.

The Elder was concerned for the moral growth of the Aleuts. With this end in mind a school was built for children—the orphans of the Aleuts. He himself taught them the Law of God and church music. For this same purpose he gathered the Aleuts on Sunday and Holy Days for prayer in the chapel near his cell. Here his disciples read the Hours and the various prayers while the Elder himself read the Epistle and Gospel. He also preached to them. His students sang, and they sang very well. The Aleuts loved to hear his sermons, gathering around him in large numbers. The Elder's talks were captivating, and his listeners were moved by their wondrous power. He taught: ***'Then, for our good and for our happiness, let us all make a vow: at least from this day, this hour, this very minute, we should strive to love God above all else and do His will!'***

Herman dedicated himself fully for the Lord's service; he strove with zeal solely for the glorification of His Most Holy Name. Far from his homeland in the midst of a variety of afflictions and privations Father Herman spent several decades performing the noblest deeds of self-sacrifice. He was privileged to receive many supernatural gifts from God.

He died in blessedness, he passed away in the sleep of a righteous man in the eighty-first year of his life of great labor the 25th day of December 1837. He was glorified by the Orthodox Church in America on August 9, 1970.

Feast Day: August 9 and December 13

He is also commemorated on the Second Sunday after Pentecost, the Feast of All saints of North America.



Chapel of All Saints of North America

St. Alexis of Wilkes Barre
St. John of Chicago
St. Alexander of New York
St. Jacob of Alaska
St. Mardary of Libertyville
St. Nicholas of S. Canaan
St. Barnabas of Indiana
St. Innocent of Alaska
St. Tikhon of New York
St. John of San Francisco
St. Sebastian of Jackson
St. Juvenaly of Alaska
St. Peter The Aleut
St. Herman of Alaska
St. Raphael of Brooklyn



Our Devotion to Mary, the Mother of God

The veneration of Mary plays a major role in the preservation of Orthodox Christian doctrine, because the honor paid to her is an expression of the Christology or doctrine concerning Christ. Mary's most important title is "Theotokos," which means "God Bearer," or "Birthgiver of God." This term, endorsed by the Third Ecumenical Council, the Council of Ephesus in 431, expresses the belief that the son of the Virgin was God from the very moment of his conception. This eliminates such false teachings as Adoptionism, which held that Christ was a good man adopted by God to be his son, and Nestorianism, which came close to teaching that Christ was only an inspired man. As St. John of Damascus wrote, "... she is truly Mother of God who gave birth to the true God who took flesh from her ... For the holy Virgin did not give birth to a mere man, but to true God and, not to God simply, but to God made flesh."

St. John declares in his Gospel "... the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father." Jesus Christ is really the Son of God, not a divinely inspired man accepted by God because of his own righteousness. Through the virgin birth, God really became human, not just metaphorically or symbolically, but actually. In Christ, God became physical, as humans are physical. This is important because Orthodox believe, as St. Gregory Nazianzen wrote, "that which is not assumed is not healed." From Mary, God assumed all that is human, to perfect that which is human and to unite humanity to Himself. On the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lady, September 8, Orthodox Christians proclaim that, through the incarnation, "... the creation of us earthly beings was renewed, and we ourselves were renewed from corruption to life immortal." In another hymn sung during Saturday evening Vespers in Tone Six, Orthodox Christians honor Mary with the words, "For the only Son rising timelessly from the Father, himself did come incarnate from thee in an inexplicable way. He, who while God by nature, became for our sakes Man by nature, not divided into two persons, but known by two natures without mixture or confusions." Another hymn to Mary proclaims, "Thou art the preaching of the Prophets, O virgin Theotokos, the glory of the Apostles and pride of the Martyrs, the renewal of the whole race of earthly ones. For through thee we are reconciled to God."

Feast Days: September 8, March 25, August 15

More honorable than the cherubim, and more glorious beyond compare than the seraphim; without corruption she gave birth to God the Word.