



On the occasion of glorification of Saint John of Kronstadt
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by Archbishop John Maximovich

Holiness is not simply righteousness, for which the righteous are deemed worthy of the enjoyment of blessedness in the Kingdom of God; but rather, it is such a height of righteousness that men are so filled with the grace of God that it flows from them even onto those who associate with them. Great is their blessedness, which proceeds from their direct contemplation of the glory of God. Being filled also with love for men, which proceeds from love for God, they are responsive to men's needs and to their entreaties, and they are mediators and intercessors for them before God.

Such, first of all, were the righteous of the Old Testament, who were freed by Christ from Hades and led into paradise, and John the Baptist, "the greatest of those born of women". Then the Apostles and their immediate successors became such. None of the Christians doubted their sanctity, and after their decease the greater part as martyrs they immediately began to venerate them and to invoke them in prayer. During the time of lofty spiritual ardor in the first centuries of persecutions against Christians, such also were the martyrs. A martyr's death was itself a door to the Mansions on high, and Christians began immediately to invoke them as holy men pleasing to God. Miracles and signs confirmed this faith of the Christians and were a proof of their holiness. Likewise, later on, the great ascetics began to be venerated. No one decreed that Anthony the Great, Macarius the Great, Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, Nicholas the Wonderworker and many others like them be venerated as saints, but East and West alike revere them, and only those who do not believe in sanctity can deny their sanctity. The assembly of Godpleasers grew without ceasing; in every place where there were Christians, its new ascetics appeared as well.

However, the general life of Christians began to decline; spiritual ardor began to lose its luster; no longer was there that clear sense of what Divine righteousness is. For this

reason the general consciousness of the faithful could not always determine who was actually righteous and pleasing to God. In some places there appeared dubious persons, who, by means of supposed ascetic feats, allured part of the flock. For this reason the ecclesiastical authority began to watch over the veneration of saints, taking care to guard the flock from superstition. They began to investigate the life of

ascetics venerated by the faithful, and to verify the accounts of their miracles. Towards the time of the Baptism of Rus' it had already been established that the recognition of a new saint was to be performed by the ecclesiastical authority. The decree of the ecclesiastical authority was, of course, disseminated throughout the region under its jurisdiction; however, usually other places also recognized a glorification performed elsewhere, although they did not enter it into their own menology. After all, the ecclesiastical authority merely attested to sanctity. The righteous became saints not by the decree of the earthly ecclesiastical authority, but by the mercy and grace of God. The ecclesiastical authority merely approved the extolling of the new saint in church and his invocation in prayer.

Just what authority should and could do this was not precisely determined; it was, in any case, an episcopal authority. There were glorifications performed by the higher ecclesiastical authority of an entire local Church; the names of the newly glorified were then entered into the church menologies of that entire Church; others were glorified in one locality or another, and their veneration gradually spread to other places. Usually the glorification was performed in that locality where the saint lived or suffered. But it also happened otherwise. Thus, the youth George, from the town of Kratov (Serbia), who suffered in 1515 at the hands of the Turks in Sofia (Sredets, Bulgaria), was glorified already within fourteen years in Novgorod. In spite of the fact that his fellow citizens also venerated him as a new martyr and that a Church service to him had even been composed by his spiritual father, they did not dare to show this openly, fearing the Turks; and therefore, in Novgorod, which had commercial relations with those places, by direction of the Archbishop, a service was composed and the memory of the martyr George the New began to be venerated, whence it spread throughout all Russia.

When Serbia and Bulgaria were liberated from bondage to the Turks, they began to use the service composed in Russia, while the service originally composed in Sofia remains to this day the property of a library. In last two centuries, when Russia lived in glory and prosperity, the glorifications of new saints were usually performed very solemnly by decree of the Supreme Authority, sometimes (but not always) taking place throughout all Russia, but especially in the locality where the wonderworking relics were found.

However, this does not alter the general order in the Church; and if, under the oppression of the godless authority, the Russian people cannot openly extol and invoke a Saint of

God, glorified by God, it is the duty of that part of the Russian Church which is free from the oppression of the godless to publicly venerate and invoke the Wonderworker, like unto the holy Hierarch Nicholas, who is now revered throughout the whole world, and to pray to the holy, righteous John for the correction of our life and for the cessation of the calamities which, in accordance with his prophecy, have befallen our Fatherland.

May the Lord grant the coming of that longed for day, when from the Carpathians to the Pacific Ocean will thunder out: *We magnify thee, O righteous Father John, and we honor thy holy memory, for thou dost entreat Christ God for us!*