

## *St. Silouan the Athonite*

*The Holy Spirit dwells in the humble soul, bringing freedom, peace, love and blessedness.*

St. Silouan the Athonite

He was born in 1866, of devout parents who came from the village of Sovsk in the Tambov region. His worldly name was Simeon Ivanovich Antonov. At the age of 27 he received the prayers of St. John of Kronstadt and went to Mt. Athos where he became a monk at the monastery St. Panteleimon (Russian / „Rossiko“). He received from the Mary, the Mother of God, the gift of unceasing prayer, and was given the vision our Lord Jesus Christ, in glory, in the church of the holy Prophet Elijah adjoining the mill of the monastery. After the withdrawal of that first grace, he was oppressed by profound grief and great temptations for fifteen years, after which he received from Christ the teaching, **"Keep thy mind in hell, and despair not"**:

*It was fifteen years after the Lord had appeared to him, and Silouan was engaged in one of these nocturnal struggles with devils which so tormented him. No matter how he tried, he could not pray with a pure mind. At last he rose from his stool, intending to bow down and worship, when he saw a gigantic devil standing in front of the ikon, waiting to be worshipped. Meanwhile, the cell filled with other evil spirits, Father Silouan sat down again, and with bowed head and aching heart he prayed,*

*'Lord, Thou seest that I desire to pray to Thee with a pure mind but the devils will not let me. Instruct me, what must I do to stop them hindering me?'*

*And in his soul he heard,*

*'The proud always suffer from devils.'*

*'Lord,' said Silouan, 'teach me what I must do that my soul may become humble.'*

*Once more, his heart heard God's answer,*

*'Keep thy mind in hell, and despair not.'*

(From „St. Silouan the Athonite“, pages 42)

After long years of spiritual trial, he acquired great humility and *hesychia*, inner stillness. He prayed and wept for the whole world as for himself, and he put the highest value on love for enemies. Thomas Merton has described Silouan as “the most authentic monk of the twentieth century.” St Silouan reposed on September 11/24, 1938. His memory is celebrated on September 11/24.

He left behind his writings which were edited by his disciple and pupil, the [Elder Sophrony](#). Father Sophrony has written a complete life of the Saint along with the record of Saint Silouan's teachings in the book [Saint Silouan the Athonite](#).

## **Saint Silouan on Love**

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

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

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

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

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

Understand me. It is so simple. People who do not know God, or who go against Him, are to be

pitied; the heart sorrows for them and the eye weeps. Both paradise and torment are clearly visible to us: We know this through the Holy Spirit. And did not the Lord Himself say, "The kingdom of God is within you"? Thus eternal life has its beginning here in this life; and it is here that we sow the seeds of eternal torment. Where there is pride there cannot be grace, and if we lose grace we also lose both love of God and assurance in prayer. The soul is then tormented by evil thoughts and does not understand that she must humble herself and love her enemies, for there is no other way to please God.

What shall I render unto Thee, O Lord,  
for that Thou hast poured such great mercy on my  
soul?

Grant, I beg Thee, that I may see my iniquities,  
and ever weep before Thee,  
for Thou art filled with love for humble souls,  
and dost give them the grace of the Holy Spirit.

O merciful God, forgive me.

Thou seest how my soul is drawn to Thee, her  
Creator.

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

O my Creator, why have I, Thy little creature, grieved  
Thee so often?

Yet Thou hast not remembered my sins.

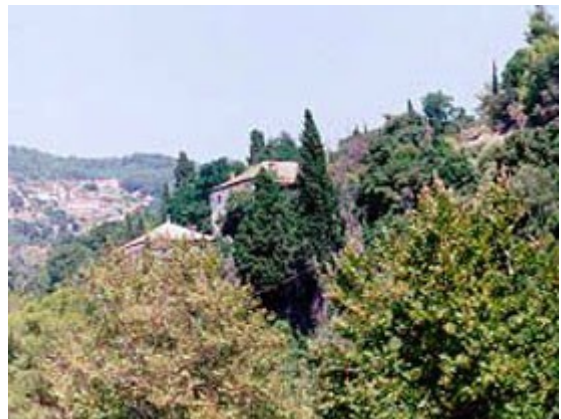
Glory be to the Lord God that He gave us His Only-  
begotten Son  
for the sake of our salvation.

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

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



The house in which St Silouan's cell was located



The mill in which St Silouan worked for many years



## From the Synaxarion

On this day we keep the memorial of our sacred father Silouan whom God inspired, who lived the monastic life upon the Holy Mountain in the Russian Monastery of the holy and great martyr Panteleimon, and who died godly in the Lord on the twenty-fourth day of September in the year of our salvation 1938.

Once, in this life, thou didst see Christ, O Saint;  
And now thou beholdest Him face to face,  
Not darkly as in a glass.  
Thine earthly country delights that thou wast born in her;  
Athos rejoices in the Spirit; for in thee she nurtured a saint;  
And from that sylvan mountain heaven has now received thee.

Saint Silouan, that citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem, was born of pious parents in the land of Russia in the village of Shovsk in the diocese of the Metropolitan of Tambov. He came into the world in the year of our Lord 1866, and from a young man was called to repentance by the all-praised Mother of God and ever-Virgin Mary.

When he had reached his twenty-seventh year, he renounced the things of this life, and, with the prayers of Saint John of Kronstadt to speed him on his way, he set forth for Greece and the illustrious Holy Mountain. Here, in the cloister of the holy great martyr and physician Panteleimon, he took upon him the yoke of the monastic life.

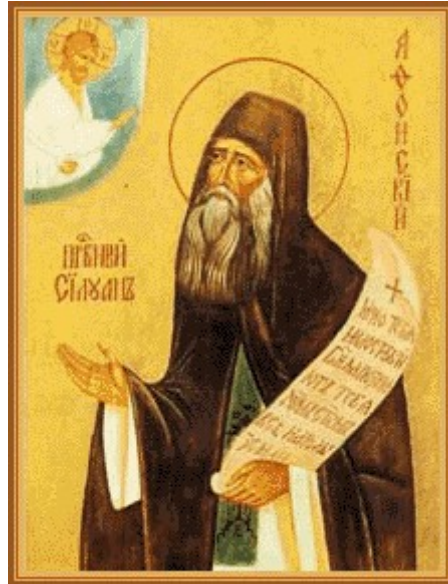
Thus he gave himself to God with all his soul, and in a brief while he not only received the gift of unceasing prayer from the most holy Mother of God, but was also granted ineffably to see the living Christ in the chapel of the holy prophet Elijah that was next to the monastery's flour mill.

But this first grace was taken away, and the saint was constrained by anguish and great grief, and with God's permission for fifteen years he was given over to manifold temptations of spiritual foes, and so he followed in the footsteps of Christ, having offered up prayers and strong supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save him from death (Heb. 5:7), being taught by God through a voice from above that gave him this commandment: Keep thy mind in hell, and despair not. This he observed as an infallible rule, and so ran the way of Antony, Macarius, Pœmen and Sisoës, and the other celebrated preceptors and fathers of the desert, to whose measure and spiritual gifts he also attained, and was manifested an apostolic and inspired teacher both living and after death.

The saint was wondrously meek and lowly in heart, a fervent advocate before God for the salvation of all, and unequalled among teachers: For he says that there is no surer proof that the divine Spirit dwells within us than that we love our enemies.

This blessed Saint Silouan passed over from death to life, full of spiritual days on the twenty-fourth day of September in the year of our Lord Jesus Christ 1938: To Whom be glory and might forever and ever. Amen.

At his prayers and those of all Thy saints, O Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us. Amen.



By prayer thou didst receive Christ for thy teacher in the way of  
humility, and the Spirit bore witness to salvation in thy  
heart. Wherefore all peoples called unto hope,  
rejoice in this day of thy memorial,  
O sacred Father Silouan. Pray  
unto Christ our God  
for the salvation  
of our souls

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