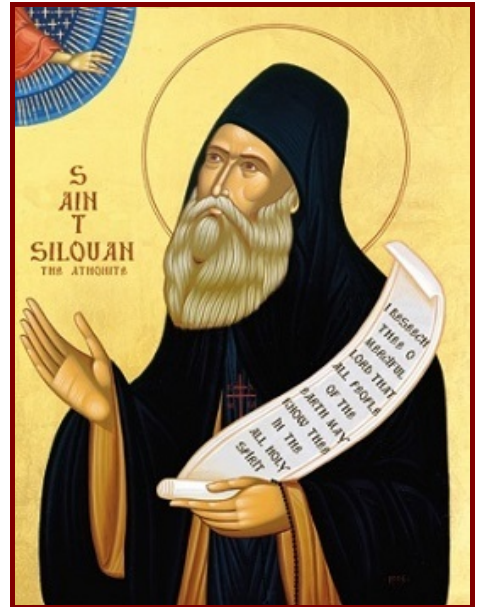


ST. SILOUAN OF MT. ATHOS

(1866-1938)

Feast Day: September 24th



St. Silouan is a modern-day saint who is quite different from many other saints, for he was neither scholar, priest nor bishop. His life-long spiritual warfare speaks to those today who are weary of their own struggles and tempted to despair. Especially when young, at times his darkness so engulfed him, that he felt lost and abandoned by God. On the worst day of all, when he felt he could bear it no longer, during Vespers he was granted an overwhelming vision of the living Christ, in which the Holy Spirit set his soul on fire. This vision was the young monk's spiritual turning point. From then on, the abiding Presence of God was so intense, that eventually—after 30 years of spiritual warfare—it produced in him a profound humility and love for the whole of God's creation. Father Silouan is an inspiration to those who feel discouraged that they are too far from God to try to know Him, or believe they don't have what (they think) are the "necessary" educational, intellectual, moral or spiritual gifts to become "spiritual Olympic champions." We don't know how many simple and humble saints like Father Silouan there have been, known only to God. God has blessed us to know of this saint, so that we can gain inspiration and hope in our own spiritual struggles, because one of his disciples, the Elder Sophrony, wrote a book about Schemamonk Father Silouan's life, called *Monk of Mt. Athos*. He also collected St. Silouan's own words, written on scraps of paper found in his cell after his repose, and published them as *Wisdom from Mt. Athos*.



Unlike many other saints known to us, St. Silouan was not from the nobility, but was born into a simple Russian peasant family, and grew up in the rough world of hard manual labor that was the life of rural farmers in Russia. His father was illiterate, but was blessed with a simple piety that had a profound influence on Silouan as a boy. The future saint was big, strong and handsome, and as a teenager and young soldier, at times he was overcome by sexual temptations, and once nearly killed a man in a fight. He agonized for years in his inner battle between the robust energies of a young peasant boy, and the other side of him that wanted to be a simple and humble monk. Finally, he grew disgusted with the worldly pursuits of his companions, and set off for Mt. Athos, strengthened in his resolve by the encouragement and prayers of Father John of Kronstadt. The battles were just beginning. For 46 years he lived in the St. Panteleimon Monastery on the "Holy Mountain," struggling to overcome the passions of his lower self, and to live the transfigured and resurrected life of love, prayer, simplicity, peace and humility, which is the calling of all Christians.

The Patriarchate of Constantinople glorified/canonized the Russian Staretz, Schemamonk Silouan, who had lived in Greece on Mt. Athos for 46 years, in commemoration of the 1988 Millennium of Russian Christianity.

(The icon to the left, above, was painted/written by Fr. Theodore Jurewicz of Erie, PA,

and is located on the nave wall of St. Innocent Orthodox Church in Redford, MI.)

By: **Sister Ioanna**, St. Innocent of Alaska Monastic Community, Redford, MI

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TROPARION (Tone 8)

The barren wilderness thou didst make fertile with the steams of thy tears; /
And by deep sighing thou hast given fruit through thy struggles a hundredfold. /
Accordingly, thou hast become a star for the universe, sparkling with miracles. //
Therefore, O righteous Father Silouan, intercede with Christ God to save our souls.