

Fr Seraphim Rose: Praxis and Teaching

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When we speak about the sanctity of a reposed Orthodox Christian, we have the responsibility to examine carefully all aspects of their life and teaching. In the case of Hieromonk Seraphim Rose, due to complexities in the life of the Church during his lifetime, people will continue to examine his life from different angles.

With the collapse of the Iron Curtain in Eastern Europe and the explosion of interest in the Orthodox Faith in the West, Hieromonk Seraphim enjoyed great renown, both on account of his way of life and because of the popularity and timing of his writings. Interest in his writings surged with the publication in 1993 of his biography, *Not of This World*.¹ To the degree that Father Seraphim comes to be honored as a righteous man or saint, his life and writings will be subject to every possible criticism, for we hold teachers of the Church to a higher standard.

One aspect of his life and thought to be scrutinized, will be that of his teaching on the Church, his ecclesiology. Both those that knew him and people that have never met him cite his life and teaching to find support for their assessment of contemporary problems in the Church. By carefully examining his life and teaching, we allow subsequent iconography, hagiography, and hymnography to paint with true colors the real Father Seraphim Rose.

A. Praxis

¹ Christensen, Monk Damascene, *Not of This World: The Life and Teaching of Fr. Seraphim Rose: Pathfinder to the Heart of Ancient Christianity* (Platina, CA: St Herman of Alaska Press, 1993). Damascene [Christensen], Hieromonk, *Father Seraphim Rose: His Life and Works*, 3rd ed. (Platina, CA: St Herman of Alaska Press, 2010).

On one level, that is, how he lived and how he prayed, it is very easy to do. He spent his entire life as a communicant of one diocese, the Diocese of Western America of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR). Geographically and ecclesially, he lived, taught, and had fellowship within the sole confines of the territory of his ruling bishop. The Russian Orthodox Archbishop of Western America and San Francisco was always his bishop. Throughout his lifetime as an Orthodox Christian, this never changed, and this illustrates his ecclesiology in practice. Archbishop John (Maximovitch) not only liked but blessed the plan of the newly formed Father Herman Brotherhood to move to the wilderness and to establish a hermitage.²

As reflected in some of his letters, there was a brief period of some foreboding that their new Archbishop, Archbishop Anthony, might not respect or grasp the meaning and purpose of their move to the wilderness. Some latent fear or suspicion circulated that the archbishop was conspiring to ordain the monks and send them away to serve in parishes in order to fill vacancies in the diocese. Such an event never happened, nor is there much substance to speculate that the archbishop ever seriously planned such a move.

On a more serious note, shortly after the repose of Archbishop John in 1966, Fr Seraphim, then Eugene, and Gleb formed a very strong, trustful relationship with Bishop Nektary (Kontzevich) of Seattle. By the time of Archbishop Anthony's arrival in San Francisco, their relationship with Bishop Nektary had grown strong; he became a close confidant of their dreams, plans, and intentions. Bishop Nektary himself dreamed of establishing and nurturing his own monastic brotherhood in Alameda, but he sympathized with their longing to form a monastic

² The expression: "preserve the blessing of Archbishop John," came to be interpreted as an established blessing on their work, seemingly displacing the need to seek the blessing or approval of Archbishop Anthony, the ruling hierarch of the Diocese of Western America.

brotherhood and skete in the wilderness. His own childhood formation, under the guidance of the elders of Optina Monastery, had sustained him his whole life. His close relationship with his own natural brother, Ivan M. Kontzevich, upheld this mindset. These men helped shape, guide, and protect the monastic pursuit of Eugene and Gleb and to uphold their ecclesial formation.

B. Teaching

In the case of Hieromonk Seraphim Rose, how are we to assess his teaching? As we read the writings of Hieromonk Seraphim, we will notice at many points, while articulating the Church and Orthodox ecclesiology, the heavy influence on his thought from Church events during the 1960's through early 1980's. In the first issue of *The Orthodox Word*, then layman Eugene Rose, articulates their mission through the printed word:

The editors are members of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia and obedient to the Synod of that Church; but our collaboration will include members of other Orthodox Churches who are concerned to preserve Orthodox truth and tradition in their fullness. Outwardly, it is true, the Orthodox Churches present a divided front to the world.³

He demonstrates an awareness of his relationship to the Church through communion with his bishop and the fact that in the United States the unity of the Orthodox Church and its faithfulness to its own ecclesiology is problematic. Nevertheless, he writes: "The Orthodox Church of Christ is one and indivisible in all her members who have remained faithful to the truth which each local Church has possessed from its foundation."⁴ He is fully aware that:

The position of Orthodoxy in the world, her relations with other Churches, and even the relations of Orthodox Churches among themselves are quite complicated and they must be viewed critically and soundly interpreted in the light of Orthodox truth and tradition, with the intention of remaining absolutely faithful to these, in spirit as well as letter.⁵

³ *The Orthodox Word* Vol I, No. I 1965.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

Father Seraphim rarely focused exclusively on ecclesiology. He spoke about the Church primarily in response to remarks of over-zealous faithful or irresponsible leadership. He rarely expressed thoughts on sacramental theology. Nevertheless, Fr Seraphim was quite capable of expressing his view on sacramental life in the Orthodox Church:

Orthodoxy is the Church founded by Christ for the salvation of mankind, and therefore we should guard with our life the purity of its teaching and our own faithfulness to it. In the Orthodox Church alone is grace given through the sacraments (most other churches don't even claim to have sacraments in any serious sense). The Orthodox Church alone is the Body of Christ, and if salvation is difficult enough within the Orthodox Church, how much more difficult must it be outside the Church!⁶

Until they are united to the Orthodox Church they cannot have the fullness of Christianity, they cannot be objectively Christian as belonging to the Body of Christ and receiving the grace of the sacraments.⁷

By examining the events of Church life in the 1960–1970's, we see how these influenced what he wrote about the Church and why he wrote in defense of the Church influences in his time carefully, we perceive more clearly what and why he wrote about the Church.

1.) **Roman Catholicism**

During the middle of the 1960's a new era in Roman Catholicism elicited various responses from Orthodox figures. The summoning of the Second Vatican Council as well as the mutual lifting of the Anathemas by Patriarch Athenagoras and Pope John Paul VI in 1965 produced responses both hopeful and sour from many Orthodox writers at the time. Some Orthodox interpreted the actions of the Ecumenical Patriarch as a betrayal of Orthodox tradition and an indication of a new ecclesial path by the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

2.) **Greek Old-Calendar bodies**

⁶ Letter of Father Seraphim Rose, November 27, 1980, in Damascene [Christensen], Hieromonk (2010), 813.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 814.

If there was to be any doubt about this betrayal, the transfer of Archimandrite Panteleimon of the Holy Transfiguration Monastery into the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia would gradually confirm their worst fears. During the 1960's and 1970's, priests from various so-called "Old Calendar" groups helped widen a real chasm between the sister Orthodox Churches. Under the influence of Fr Panteleimon, a series of Greek Orthodox priests, many of whom had left their own bishop without an ecclesiastical release, caused a significant rupture between whatever was left of the relations between ROCOR and the Ecumenical Patriarchate. This movement seriously impacted the ecclesiology of ROCOR and, in turn, the writings of Hieromonk Seraphim.

Yet it was to take several years for Hieromonk Seraphim to clearly grasp that the reception of these priests into the Russian Orthodox Church exercised a very negative influence on how the Russian Orthodox Church expressed itself, specifically in the English language. His awareness took shape as these zealous priests began to attack in letter and in writing various figures whom both Hieromonks Herman and Seraphim held in great esteem. "Such presumption," wrote Fr Seraphim to Alexey Young, "can only do harm to the real cause of renewing Orthodox life by drawing from the fresh springs of Orthodox tradition."⁸ Father Seraphim seriously began to question the ecclesiastical "positions" introduced by Fr Panteleimon and his followers.

Chief among these was the claim that other Orthodox Churches or jurisdictions were "without grace."⁹ Such assertions were psychologically necessary for these priests who had left

⁸ Letter of Father Seraphim Rose to Alexey Young, dated November 6, 1973, cited in Damascene [Christensen], Hieromonk (2010), 527.

⁹ Damascene [Christensen], Hieromonk (2010), 531.

behind their Greek Orthodox ecclesial bodies. Their gradual and almost militant insistence on the “Reception of Converts” from other Christian confessions by baptism rather than through Chrismation, as was the standard practice of the Russian Orthodox Church, escalated during the period of Archimandrite Panteleimon’s influence. Then a novel practice of insisting on baptizing Orthodox Christians that had already been received into the Orthodox Church through Chrismation or through the exercise of some form of “*economia*,” also gained force at this time.

Fr Seraphim writes:

Some wished to see such a ‘rebaptism’ performed in our Western American Diocese, but our Archbishop Anthony wisely refused to allow it, in which we gave him our full support—for indeed, it would have been tantamount to an open declaration of the absence of grace in the Greek Archdiocese.¹⁰

Under the guise of “traditionalism,” these events signaled a new radicalization within ROCOR. Such outwardly strict measures began to serve as “identity markers,” for zealous converts. But in terms of ecclesiology, they also marked a crossing of the Rubicon. In a letter of 1981, Fr

Seraphim writes:

How tragic that some are now leading their flocks (albeit still very small flocks) out of communion with the only people who can still teach them what Orthodoxy is and help them to wake up from their fantasies of a “super-correct” Orthodoxy that exists nowhere in the world.¹¹

3). **Ecumenism**

Along with a strong reactionary position in relation to Roman Catholicism, a backlash arose against the new spirit of ecumenism that swept across Catholic and Protestant churches. Ecumenism, in its twentieth-century form, became a despicable word among many Orthodox

¹⁰ Letter of Father Seraphim Rose to Andrew Bond, written on April 18/May 1, 1976, in Damascene [Christensen], Hieromonk (2010), 532.

¹¹ Letter of Father Seraphim Rose to Father Demetrios, written on December 8, 1981, in Damascene [Christensen], Hieromonk (2010), 534.

converts. Anything that came to be associated with Ecumenism, including the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches, along with any talk of Orthodox participation in these movements, necessitated harsh words and reproach. In the first issue of *The Orthodox Word*, Fr Seraphim already had written against ecumenical overtures:

The Orthodox Church is not merely one Church among many, not merely a “fourth major faith,” but the one true Church of our Lord Jesus Christ to which all men are called and against which the “gates of hell shall not prevail” (Mt 16.18). She is not merely one of many “newsworthy items, but the sole container of the whole mystery of God’s creation and His plan for mankind.”¹²

Phrases such as “The Pan-heresy of Ecumenism” or the “Heresy of Heresies,” were hurled as some sort of all-embracing accusation at one’s adversaries. Despite the participation of some eminent figures in the Faith and Order Commissions and the WCC, such as Archbishop Anastasios of Albania, Archpriest Georges Florovsky, and Archimandrite Grigol Peradze, calls were issued to cease and condemn participation. A strong bias arose against any involvement in anything labelled as “ecumenical” or ecumenist, even, at times, touching the very title of the Patriarch of Constantinople as “Ecumenical Patriarch.”¹³

Fr Seraphim followed the development of similar trends during the late 1960’s and wrote a series of articles that were later compiled as *Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future*.¹⁴ In his introduction he writes:

The very nature of the Ecumenist heresy—the belief that there is no one visible Church of Christ, that it is only now being formed—is such that it disposes the soul under its influence to certain spiritual attitudes which, in time, should produce a typical Ecumenist ‘piety’ and ‘spirituality.’¹⁵

¹² *The Orthodox Word* Vol I, No. I 1965.

¹³ To decry the state of “World Orthodoxy” in the 1980’s became another identity marker of “true” Orthodoxy.

¹⁴ Seraphim Rose, Hieromonk, *Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future* (Platina, CA: St Herman of Alaska Press, 1979).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

Fr Seraphim did not hesitate to voice his objection to irresponsible representation of the Orthodox faith by Orthodox spokesmen:

On the most sophisticated level, Orthodox theologians representing the American Standing Conference of Orthodox bishops and other official Orthodox bodies conduct learned “dialogues” with Roman Catholics and Protestants and issue “joint statements” on such subjects as the Eucharist, spirituality, and the like—without even informing the heterodox that the Orthodox Church is the Church of Christ to which all are called, that only her Mysteries are grace-giving, that Orthodox spirituality n be understood only by those who know it in experience within the Orthodox Church....¹⁶

Fr Seraphim described ecumenism in these words:

The ideology behind ecumenism, which has inspired such ecumenistic acts and pronouncements as the above, is an already well-defined heresy: the Church of Christ does not exist, no one has the Truth, the Church is only now being built.¹⁷

He argued that the Ecumenical Movement among Christians had given birth to a “dialogue with non-Christian religions,” “that represents a conscious departure from even that part of Christian belief and awareness that some Protestants and Catholics retain.”¹⁸ Unfortunately, I believe that the strength of his words had the negative consequence of fueling the phenomenon in the 1970’–80’s of breaking communion with one’s bishop.

4). **The Orthodox Church under Communism**

Eugene Rose first encountered the Orthodox faith among Russian refugees who initially had fled Russia and later from China. His conversion to the Orthodox faith took place in San Francisco. He was strongly influenced by people that had been fled communism. He saw the Russian Orthodox Church in two distinct historical periods: in Holy Russia and under the Communist Yoke. Hieromonk Seraphim easily accepted the framework of an organized and, therefore, legitimate Catacomb Church. He found Holy Russia in the Catacomb Church. The

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

fathers at the St Herman of Alaska Monastery later collected, translated, and authored all sorts of material setting forth the position of ROCOR as the proper response to the Patriarchate of Moscow and, therefore, the legitimate heir of the Catacomb Church.

5). **Russia's Catacomb Saints**

These writings were later lumped together under the title of *Russia's Catacomb Saints*, a fantastic read held whose theme centered around the response directed at a decree of Metropolitan Sergius [Staragorodsky] in 1927, in which he identified the joys and sorrows of the Soviet State to be those of the Russian Orthodox Church. His opponents reckoned these words to constitute a betrayal of the Church. Prominent bishops, formally and informally, refused to recognize Metropolitan Sergius as Metropolitan of Moscow and some ceased to commemorate him as the head of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The testimony from within the Soviet Union helped to keep ROCOR separate from other Orthodox Churches in Western Europe and the United States, specifically those in English-speaking lands. This ideology and subsequent isolation hindered not only talk of Orthodox unity, but also of gathering in council, and even of inter-communion among Orthodox. Indirectly, this ideology helped to fuel the ongoing response in the 1970's and 1980's of some Orthodox to speak of "walling oneself off" from one's ruling bishop.

It is common for people to attribute the conclusions in *Russia's Catacomb Saints* to the thought and ecclesiology of Hieromonk Seraphim. One of the less admirable aspects of his ecclesiology, is that he permits himself to use the phrase "Soviet Church" in a deliberate, pejorative manner. Due to the circumstances of the times, one can excuse this expression, but it

weakens the legacy of his writings, especially as we find young converts, who know little of the plight of the Church in those years, parroting him by use of the same expression.

Even though these tragic circumstances took place nearly 100 years ago, people in entirely different circumstances in the 21st century, still cite words from Fr Seraphim to justify breaking communion with their ruling bishop. Indeed, the reality on the ground is always more nuanced than it appears. In the late 1970's, Hieromonk Seraphim analyzed the work of Priest Dimitry Dudko and other men of conscience who, while being priests and laymen in the Moscow Patriarchate, continued to sympathize with the efforts of all struggling not to remain silent about the persecution of the Christian faith in the Soviet Union.¹⁹ The experience of the Church during the Soviet period left a pronounced impact on the ecclesiology of Fr Seraphim.

Prophecies about the cessation of the Communist persecution uttered prior to and during the Russian Revolution influenced how Father Seraphim understood the life of the Church in the later part of the twentieth century. "The Future of Russian and the End of the World,"²⁰ offered in 1981, shows the importance he placed on the revival of the Orthodox faith in his day in the former Soviet Union. It left him very hopeful toward the re-blossoming of the Orthodox faith even amidst the dark backdrop of an official atheist state during the years shortly before his repose. He longed for, but was never to see, the reopening of churches and the blossoming of the Orthodox faith with the collapse of the Soviet Union. His books enjoyed great popularity and were very influential with those that found their Orthodox faith during the critical years of *Glasnost*, *Perestroika*, and the Millennium of the Baptism of Rus.

¹⁹ Andreyev, Ivan M., *Russia's Catacomb Saints: Lives of the New Martyrs* (Platina, CA: St Herman of Alaska Press, 1982), 449-562.

²⁰ "The Future of Russia and the End of the World," in *The Orthodox Word*, Nos. 100-101 (1981): 205-217.

Along with events that seemed to foreshadow the resurgence of faith in Russia, Fr Seraphim saw the witness of the Romanian priest, Fr George Calciu, to support everything that he knew and cherished about the battle for the Orthodox faith in the Soviet Union. He was delighted to include *The Seven Homilies to the Youth*²¹ in *The Orthodox Word* as a confirmation of the rebirth of faith that he longed to see occur in Russia.

From Teacher to Pastor

All these currents influenced the way that Hieromonk Seraphim wrote about the Church. His strong statements have led some people to question aspects of his ecclesiology. As an example, in one introduction he writes, “The movement of true Orthodoxy in our times has seen with increasing clarity the need to separate itself from this pseudo- or semi-Orthodoxy and refind its roots in the true and unadulterated sources of Orthodoxy, the Holy Fathers.”²² In no way does Father Seraphim aim to set forth an ecclesiology of separation, as became so widely promoted and practiced in the last half of twentieth century. But he was ready to identify and question apparent departures from the tradition of the Church. In a letter to Fr. Alexey Young from 1976, Fr Seraphim writes: “We see the necessity for the formulation of a sound ‘moderate’ stand that will emphasize true Orthodoxy, firmly oppose ecumenism and modernism, but not go overboard in ‘defining’ such things as the presence or absence of grace, or rebaptism of those already

²¹ Calciu, Fr George, *Christ is Calling You: A Course in Catacomb Pastorship* (Platina, CA: St Herman of Alaska Press, 1997), 21-22.

²² Metrophanes, *Schema-monk, Blessed Paisius Velichkovsky: The Life and Ascetic Labors of Our Father, Elder Paisius, Archimandrite of the Holy Moldavian Monasteries of Niamets and Sekoul* (Platina, CA: St Herman of Alaska Press, 1976), 14.

Orthodox.”²³ Fr Alexey had written earlier: “You should know that they (many people in our Church in England) really are waiting on you to ‘show the way’ in these difficult matters, and so any advice, encouragement, and direction you might send would be most gratefully received. They really do all feel most terribly alone here, and fear for the future.”²⁴

What does the more mature ecclesiology of Father Seraphim Rose in the early 1980’s look like? His ordination to the holy priesthood and subsequent pastoral burden of the faithful helped him to gauge the way in which his words and writings touched the lives of his spiritual children. While earlier he offered most of his pastoral guidance through his extensive correspondence, after his ordination to the priesthood, he addressed with more immediacy the dangers facing English-speaking Orthodox missions and those individuals striving to live the spiritual life with their head rather than their heart. He was very cautious in relation to the well-being of those taking on themselves endeavors far beyond their level. Some of the literature on the spiritual life, which he helped to offer to the English-speaking world, was very easy for young neophytes to mis-apply. For example, in the introduction to the life of Elder Zosima, he writes:

In a sense, this offering is premature: English-speaking Orthodoxy has no desert dwellers, and in its present state of immaturity it is probably incapable of producing any; this is a kind of life above our measure. In this sense the present book is too “advanced,” and might even serve to increase the self-esteem and pride that are sadly fostered by premature thoughts of “hesychasm” and the highest kind of angelic life.²⁵

²³ Letter to Father Alexey Young of July 27, 1976, cited in Damascene [Christensen], Hieromonk (2010), 750-751.

²⁴ Letter of Father Alexey Young of June 27, 1976, cited in Damascene [Christensen], Hieromonk (2010), 752.

²⁵ Verkhovsky, Abbess Vera, *Elder Zosima: Hesychast of Siberia* (Platina, CA: St Herman of Alaska Press, 1990), 13.

His counsel becomes less focused on identifying those trends that compromise the teaching of the Church, and more focused on the life of those longing to nourish themselves with the Divine Services. Attending the Divine Liturgy at Archbishop John’s sepulchre, Fr. Seraphim records:

This Liturgy is splendid as usual, with both bishops, three priests, and a deacon. Earnest prayer is offered at Vladika’s tomb, and long talks are had with both bishops afterward. Archbishop Anthony was very well disposed, giving for our church the material from the old iconostasis in the Cathedral and being encouraged to see that we are against ‘zeal not according to knowledge’ which seems to be troubling him also.... Vladika Nektary, after telling us that we are alone doing anything at all in today’s stifling church atmosphere and alone are really free, counseled us only to place the spiritual side of things always first. “The devil has attacked strongly in these days after the Divine liturgy was celebrated, and once more the thought occurs to the fathers: of what use are these labors in the wilderness?”²⁶

Fr Seraphim did not approach ordination to the holy priesthood lightly. In his early years in the hermitage, before he was ordained a priest, he was able to abide quietly in the wilderness in Platina. However, the growing number of Orthodox people living outside of the metropolitan area created a need for Orthodox clergy to pastor the flock. “In his heart Fr. Seraphim felt that it would be the consummation of his life to be an actual minister of the Lord’s sacraments. At the same time, he had a deep-seated sense of being unworthy of the exalted calling of the priesthood—a genuine fear of God.”²⁷ He knew that embracing the priesthood would entail the sacrifice of his silence and seclusion. Bishop Nektary persuaded him: “You already function as a community of monks, and many people look to you with hope. Why not serve Liturgy by yourselves here in your monastery?”²⁸ He reminded them that:

The Optina fathers also accepted priestly rank, even in the Optina Skete. If you become priests, you can effectively bring people the real tradition, the tradition of Optina. ... As for how often to liturgize, you’re not compelled to do it daily. You can serve Liturgy when needed, and still perform the daily cycle of services, to which you’re already accustomed.²⁹

²⁶ Hieromonk Damascene [Christensen], *Hieromonk*, 747, 749.

²⁷ Hieromonk Damascene [Christensen], *Hieromonk*, 754.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 755.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 756.

Following his ordination to the priesthood, his monastic chronicle becomes brief,³⁰ for the needs of the flock summoned him. Pilgrims expected more from the monastery now that there were priests able to serve the Divine Liturgy and to hear confessions. Increasing numbers of people came whose needs gradually became Fr Seraphim's concern. His pastoral work began to extend itself beyond the monastery to mission parishes, too. Fr Herman observed that: "Father Seraphim *forced* himself to give to others."³¹ Hieromonk Seraphim is best remembered by many of his spiritual children for fostering missions and providing balanced spiritual guidance to those in fledgling parishes in the Pacific Northwest. He later helped to organize the summer lectures and courses arranged around the annual St Herman Pilgrimage³² to provide support for those isolated in the mission field.

Conclusion

Father Seraphim's life revolved around the Church. Having come to the wilderness in Platina, the cycle of Divine Services fed his life. He passed his Orthodox life attending the same parishes and then living in one monastery. Father Seraphim did not float from place to place. He counseled his spiritual children not to become "floaters." He was loyal to his ruling bishop and

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 778.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 782.

³² "The aim of the pilgrimage was to provide an opportunity for basic Orthodox education and inspiration in the context of a pilgrimage to an Orthodox monastery. Away from the distracting and worldly influences of modern city life, the pilgrims were able to go deeper into their own Orthodox faith and became more aware of the riches it contains for their own and other's salvation.... The aim was not a conference of academic lectures ... but a learning experience on a simpler level, stemming not only from the formal talks, but also from the daily cycle of Church services and the labors in which many pilgrims shared." Seraphim Rose, Hieromonk, "The St Herman Pilgrimages," in *The Orthodox Word*, nos. 100-101 (1981), pp. 199-200.

experienced great support from Bishop Nektary, the auxiliary bishop of the Western America Diocese. He defended the teaching of the Church at every opportunity as best he could.

During a very tumultuous time in Church History, he remained steadfast, never ready to give in to “the spirit of the times.” With the rise of Ecumenism, the persecution of the faithful in the former Soviet Union, the various divisive Orthodox groups vying for legitimacy, the re-baptism controversies, and the attacks by self-appointed authorities against veteran pastors of the Church, Father Seraphim sought to maintain a middle path, being drawn neither to the right nor to the left, following the counsel of the wisest teachers whom he knew.

His life, shortened by his unexpected death, was crowned by the priesthood and the opportunity to foster missions under the tutelage of the monastery. In this way he was able to share what he had been given and what he greatly treasured: “the faith delivered once for all to the saints” (Jud 1.3). Fr Seraphim did not regret offering himself with all his strength in service to our Lord who is wondrous in His Saints.