

**On certain conclusions and generalisations concerning the global spiritual,  
moral, and church-historical significance of the personality of Hieromonk  
Seraphim (Rose)**

Priest Alexander Trushin

On global veneration

The acts of spiritual life and enlightening activities of Hieromonk Seraphim (Rose), who initially gained recognition during his earthly journey and later became increasingly well-known and deeply understood following his passing, have found expression in the acknowledgment and growing global reverence of him as a righteous individual from the latter half of the 20th century to the present day. This prompts reflection on his unique presence in the world and his emergence as a new phenomenon.

The extensive efforts of various individuals over the past four decades in different countries to study the written legacy of Fr. Seraphim, his thought patterns, and the dissemination of information about those who personally knew him, along with the search for new testimonies of his feats and sanctity, have culminated in his recent local canonization within the Akhalkalaki Diocese of the Georgian Orthodox Church. These efforts highlight the extraordinary role and worldwide significance of this Orthodox ascetic.

Hence, taking advantage of the opportunity presented by this conference, allow me to offer some reflections, summaries, and conclusions regarding the spiritual and historical importance of Fr. Seraphim's personality. This is based on our involvement, by God's grace, in the investigation and development of church-scientific materials, which, we believe, alongside many others, should ultimately lead to the definitive and global glorification of Hieromonk Seraphim of Platina, just as he is already revered on this earth.

## About Holiness

According to the teachings and practices of the Eastern Orthodox Church, the holiness of an individual constitutes a novel divine-human reality of their existence, emerging (and attainable) within the ecclesiastical context through the restoration of divine communion (previously lost) based on personal Christian life and participation in the sacraments of the Church.

Holiness, as understood in this context, is primarily established from the human perspective through one's love ("attachment" (1 Corinthians 6:17)) for God. On the divine side, it is endowed through the gift of divine grace present in human life.

Initially conferred through the sacraments of Baptism and Chrismation, divine grace, when nurtured through the struggle of Christian life, transforms into a "secondary" active force within the Christian, often referred to as a "second nature." It begins to manifest itself, firstly, through distinct new characteristics of the individual—Christian virtues. Secondly, it synergistically accompanies human natural faculties, reinforcing, sanctifying, elevating, and, when necessary, surpassing their capacity for miraculous acts.

In the teachings of the Church, a holy person becomes, in a sense, a dual-natured being by assimilating divine grace as a second energy of manifestation within their created hypostasis, in the image of God. However, it is essential to understand that this is not a transformation of their essence but rather an energetic interaction, following the law of mutual interpenetration (communication between natures), of properties. This interaction is not illusory but actively real because energies inherently possess the capacity for action. The properties of the divine nature are then expressed through the human nature in the lives of the saints.

As divine grace contains the entirety of divine natural properties, being the perfect energy of the divine essence, it offers its participants the potential to experience the fullness of theosis, provided that they can receive it according to their capacity, as illustrated in the words "as far as the disciples could bear" (Kontakion of the Transfiguration).

Such is the nature of a holy person.

## About the Saints

The holiness of the saints, with all its beauty and significance for them personally, is also necessary for those of us who are still here in the earthly arena amidst life's tumultuous sea.

Firstly, the manifestation of a saint is a new and resounding testimony to the ongoing true existence of Christ's Church in our time—the vitality and fruitfulness it continues to exhibit. The Church is a fertile Garden, and it is inherent in her nature to give birth to saints. When we witness this fruit, it signifies that the Church today, as in the past, remains the same. This means that it continues to exist in God, who is the same "yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:7-8).

Secondly, the emergence of a new saint is important for us not only from a purely intellectual perspective or as evidence of something, but also from a spiritual and practical standpoint. It signifies the appearance of a new intercessor and advocate before God on our behalf, granting us a new opportunity to approach God's Mercy through their intercession in our prayers. It is another "door" that has opened for us in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Additionally, it is a "new grace" of divine Love reaching us through His saving Providence. Grace, of course, is one with God, belonging to the Persons of the Holy Trinity, but it manifests itself to us in a "new way," if you will, through the lives of His new saints in their character and strength. Thus, through Father Seraphim and others, this grace now shines forth in the world and blends with the grace and mercy of all the saints who have gone before us in their intercession for us before God.

For these reasons, the manifestation of a saint is of utmost importance to us.

## About Testimonies

Based on numerous testimonies and research (including our investigation into the life and deeds of Hieromonk Seraphim (Rose) on-site in 2018-2019), as part of the efforts to gather materials for canonization, we can confirm the existence of a multitude of instances of divine grace manifesting through the prayers of Hieromonk Seraphim, both posthumously and during his lifetime.

Descriptions of selected instances, as chosen by us, are provided in the appendix to the materials of this conference in two languages under the title: 'Posthumous Manifestations of Divine Grace through the Prayers of Hieromonk Seraphim of Platina (facts and descriptions),' and will be available in the conference materials.

These testimonies are also accessible on a dedicated website that we have organized in honor of Father Seraphim. The website is currently under development and content enrichment, but I will provide the address at the conclusion of this presentation today.

## About Canonization

In accordance with the practice of the Ecumenical Orthodox Church and local ecclesiastical traditions, the canonization of a devout and virtuous ascetic into the ranks of the saints is accomplished through the examination of specific facts from their life, both during their lifetime and posthumously. These facts are identified as special criteria for canonization<sup>1</sup>.

In the realm of canonization, the following criteria are considered:

- 1) Testimonies of a devout life<sup>2</sup>
- 2) Testimonies of popular veneration.
- 3) Testimonies of posthumous miracles.

To these criteria for the canonization of a righteous ascetic, one should also include any written works attributed to them, if such writings exist, along with their ecclesiastical evaluation<sup>3</sup>.

The first two of the mentioned criteria are necessary but insufficient. Among these three criteria, the presence of posthumous manifestations of divine grace in the name of the considered ascetic of piety, or also known as miracles performed by the saint (through the saint's intercessions), is regarded as the most important for canonization. According to the teachings of the Church, as mentioned earlier, divine grace, in the case of a holy ascetic, remains inseparable from the person of the saint and continues to act even after their death, serving as their active force. Thus, our saints are said to "lie in their graves and drive away spirits" (Stichera at Vespers, Chapter 3, Martyrs).

If all the criteria determined by these testimonies are present, then the process of canonization can be initiated, and a decision can be made regarding the composition of services and the acquisition of the saint's relics, if necessary.

---

<sup>1</sup> As a theoretical justification for this position, one should refer to the work of the leading hagiographer of the Russian Orthodox Church, Archimandrite Damaskin Orlovsky. His fundamental monograph, "Glory and Tragedy of Russian Hagiography: Inclusion in the Ranks of Saints in the Russian Orthodox Church: History and Contemporary Perspectives," Moscow: 2018, is recommended for reading as a contemporary source of traditional Church thought and practice in this field.

<sup>2</sup> For martyrs, the crucial criterion is the fact of a martyr's death for Christ's sake.

<sup>3</sup> This applies to Father Seraphim (Rose) as well

## About the canonization in Akhalkalaki

Regarding the canonization process in Akhalkalaki, it appears that there was no formal church-administrative process in place. There were no special commissions, documents, or statistics associated with it. However, when considering the local veneration of this universally recognized righteous figure, it is worth reflecting on the perspective of St. Athanasius of Paros, a Greek ascetic and teacher from the late 18th to early 19th century who was an initiator of the veneration of Greek new martyrs. He addressed a similar question:

"You wrote to me that recently, on the day of the commemoration of St. John the Theologian, you and your friends had a conversation about the new martyrs. Some of them, not only those who were less knowledgeable but also scholars, asserted that saints and martyrs cannot be venerated without the permission of the Great Church. You seemed to want to object, but you hesitated, fearing that their words might be justified. Where did these 'scholars' read this, and where in the Church of God is it heard that holy martyrs await earthly judgment of their martyrdom, so that this earthly judgment would testify to those who sealed their end with the confession of the holy faith and whom Christ the Founder of the faith immediately and without delay deemed worthy of heavenly crowns?"

St. Athanasius of Paros' perspective suggests that the veneration of saints and martyrs does not necessarily require formal canonization procedures by the Great Church but can arise from the recognition of their sanctity and martyrdom by the local faithful.

On the other hand, indeed, the entire process of external verification and approvals is important and necessary for the correct church-practical handling of the matter concerning universal veneration. All testimonies are valuable and needed, but they serve as evidence for people—some people for others, and even as evidence for God, but still, ultimately, for people. No one denies this, and it is not overlooked because these testimonies are inherent in the very

nature of things for us, who live in time and possess free will, to establish the acts of personal veneration of a righteous figure by many individuals.

However, in the local character of veneration, as it is now established in the Akhalkalaki Diocese, there is a deliberate limitation—it is not universal. This limitation is based on the personal knowledge of the sanctity of the venerated person by one or a group of like-minded individuals, rather than on the universally recognized sanctity of the ascetic by the entire Church. Therefore, it is not extended to everyone as a matter of course. It is referred to as local veneration! In other words, it is veneration not by everyone but only by some, and unquestionably those who have knowledge of it! Hence, it is not imaginary veneration, but simply not yet universal.

Such knowledge and veneration of Father Seraphim existed immediately and still exist among his immediate spiritual children and those who knew him closely in America, starting from the moment of his repose. It is worth noting that Bishop Nektary Kontsevich, who comforted a nun closely acquainted with Father Seraphim at the time of his passing, mentioned that he was now praying not for Father Seraphim but to him.

For the majority of the church community, knowledge of a person's sanctity arises and spreads naturally, not immediately, but over time. However, when such knowledge of sanctity exists, even if it is known only to some individuals, if it is true and unbiased, then the failure to venerate the saint can be seen as a form of untruth and impiety.

To illustrate this point, we can recall the case of Saint Simeon the New Theologian, a great pillar of the Church in the 11th century, whose millennial commemoration was celebrated in the recent past.

He was a disciple and obedient to Saint Simeon the Pious, and immediately after his repose, he venerated him as a saint, along with his entire monastery. This included the creation of icons and festive meals similar to those held for martyrs. This veneration was based on personal and unquestionable knowledge of the gracefulness of his mentor, Saint Simeon the Pious. As it is known, Saint

Simeon the New Theologian himself was an extraordinary and open expression of the experience of life in divine grace, and he was a disciple of his elder, from whom he inherited and later multiplied these great gifts. Therefore, for Saint Simeon, the knowledge of the sanctity of his mentor and all that corresponded to it was true.

However, for such a quite evident and "noisy" veneration of his spiritual father, he was criticized multiple times, including by the highest church authorities. Now both the first and the second (Saint Simeon the Pious and Saint Simeon the New Theologian) are included among the ranks of extraordinary saints of the Universal Church.

In the case of Father Seraphim, Bishop Nicholas knows! The one speaking before you also knows and even possesses a notebook containing testimonies of people who have personally witnessed this sanctity in the places where it manifested. We are aware of many individuals who unquestionably know and bear witness to this as well. Furthermore, miracles testify to this, and witnesses are called upon for this purpose. The most recent of these is the fact of the new myrrh-streaming icon of Father Seraphim. Here is the description of this icon!

Therefore, based solely on the available facts, we are in full agreement with the actions of His Eminence Nicholas regarding the glorification of Hieromonk Seraphim of Platina.

However, if we acknowledge this action as true, then it becomes the first testimony of the radiance of a new grace, a new saint on Earth, and our intercessor before the throne of God. Furthermore, it is the first initiative and a loud call for the universal recognition of sanctity at the local level. Therefore, this event is significant and joyous.



## Image 1

### Summary and Conclusions

It is not unknown that last year, in September, marked the 40th anniversary of the repose of Hieromonk Seraphim. Your Eminence, Bishop Nicholas (Pachuashvili), who resided at the place of his life, asceticism, and repose in the Monastery of St. Herman of Alaska in California, initiated the process of glorifying this ascetic.

As soon as this sacred anniversary had passed, processes began that ultimately led to the first local canonization of Father Seraphim in Georgia. Additionally, these events resonated significantly within the Orthodox world, including in Russia and America, to the extent that I myself was interviewed four to five times by our Orthodox mass media.

All of this compelled us to reconsider the unfolding events and draw some conclusions, especially when speaking joyfully here and now, where we can now pray to Father Seraphim as a saint and discuss him as such without reservations.

Therefore, in concluding my report, I will attempt to present to you a somewhat final picture of the complex spiritual journey toward recognizing the sanctity of Hieromonk Seraphim, taking into account the recent events of 2022 and 2023, which have resolved nearly all remaining uncertainties. In other words, this path has been largely traversed.

It is important to emphasize that to truly understand this picture, one must focus not solely on the numerous earthly events or individuals associated with the life and memory of Father Seraphim. Instead, the attention should be directed specifically toward the movement of divine grace, both during his lifetime and after his repose, within Father Seraphim himself.

The Church, according to ancient teaching on this matter, is "the unity of divine grace that resides in the multitude of individuals who submit themselves to this grace." Therefore, in order to clearly distinguish the sanctity of a person

entering the ranks of the Triumphant Church, our attention should be focused on the extent to which this person has submitted to the grace of Christ, obeying His commandments and following the path laid out by the Savior, which is Truth and Life.

Father Seraphim, who had attained the grace of sanctity, the manifestations of which became increasingly apparent in the final years of his earthly life, concealed it at the moment of his repose, taking it with him "hidden under his cloak," while leaving a clear reflection of it on his incorruptible visage.

However, he did not hide it from everyone, but only from many. Those people who were close to him and loved him were not deprived of his presence, and he immediately helped many of them after his death: healing in sickness, comforting in sorrow, guiding in truth, and responding to their requests and prayers.

But time passed, and the works and teachings of Hieromonk Seraphim became globally known, along with Father Seraphim himself. Many of the difficulties and contradictions that accompanied the righteous one in the circumstances of his final years and posthumous life were resolved and calmed, and the appropriate moment arrived.

The divine grace residing in Father Seraphim desired to manifest itself anew to the world. To put it figuratively, it sought an outlet to the surface of the earth, like a tender shoot trying to break through granite, like an underground spring searching for a new source. Initially, it encountered only the hard rock on its path. This rock, to be completely honest, represents the hardness of human hearts, calloused by prejudice and spiritual insensitivity. It also symbolizes the seemingly insurmountable human contradictions with which the enemy once sealed the tomb of Christ, hoping to keep the Resurrected One trapped inside.

Therefore, the divine grace dwelling in Father Seraphim began to call those capable of hearing it. People started talking about it, contributing what

they could to his glorification, and placing their hope in it. It so happened that one heart, particularly softened by love for Father Seraphim and his yet unrevealed sanctity, responded to this call with action.

This heart belonged to His Eminence Nikoloz, Metropolitan of Akhalkalaki and Kumurdo, and Kari, the spiritual shepherd of the southern lands of Georgia, parts of Armenia, and Turkey. His heart was not of stone but, according to Ezekiel, a heart of flesh – alive and capable of sensing the spring of grace. Thus, his heart was a mere veil, like a delicate membrane or biblical "firmament," separating the true spiritual reality of Father Seraphim's higher existence from our visible world. Yet, it was also the link between them. At the right moment, when everything was ready for the divine grace to act, this veil opened, the spiritual membrane burst, releasing a new stream of grace and love from Father Seraphim into the human world. Thus, His Eminence Nikoloz carried out the deed and act of this new canonization of the 21st century with all his heart.

This is why this place, which might seem quite remote to some, became the source of the spiritual fountain that was immediately noticed worldwide. This is why the veneration of a new righteous person on earth first shone forth in this place. This is why Bishop Nikoloz said, "It starts here, and from here, it will spread (throughout the world)."

This is the first spiritual sketch concerning the life, death, and manifestation of the sanctity of St. Seraphim of Platina, which I wanted to present to you here, at the place of his initial glorification. However, there is a second, larger picture that is now clearly visible based on this first one.

## Image 2

### On the Worldwide Historical Significance

However, if we shift our spiritual gaze even further and attempt to view the phenomenon of sanctity and the path of glorification of Father Seraphim as a whole, the worldwide church-historical significance of the person of St. Seraphim of Platina becomes noticeable. Here is an approximate depiction of this significance:

The American Church – revealed the treasure of Father Seraphim.

The Serbian Church – preserved the place of his life, struggles, and repose (for a time).

The Russian Church – hearing the heartbeat of grace from beneath the covering, proclaimed it.

The Georgian Church – welcomed this new grace into the world and revealed it to all.

Therefore, in addition to the well-known fact of the worldwide spiritual and moral significance of Father Seraphim of Platina through his apostolic work and the dissemination of his teachings in many languages worldwide, we now also see his global church-historical significance through the participation of numerous local Churches and their representatives in the manifestation of this new sanctity, akin to a new miracle. This applies to the environment in which Father Seraphim emerged, his increasing posthumous renown, and his glorification. It's all a miracle!

Indeed, it is now impossible to imagine the church-historical and spiritual-intellectual landscape of the modern world over the past decades without the shining image of Father Seraphim of Platina. Therefore, we can only echo the words proclaimed on the 40th day after Father Seraphim's repose by the blessed memory Archbishop Nektary (Kontsevich): "We glorify you, venerable Father Seraphim, our great teacher and interlocutor of angels.