



Holy Martyr Joseph Muñoz

Life & Akathist

Protection of the Mother of God
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Life of Holy Martyr Joseph Muñoz

Wonderous is God in His saints. He often leads His chosen servants in unusual ways that are beyond the understanding of the majority. One example of such an unusual path is the life of the Holy Martyr Brother Joseph Muñoz. In many ways, both the life and spiritual path of this chosen one of God was hidden from prying eyes. Although his circle of contacts was very large, only a few had a complete picture of his life, because Brother Joseph did not reveal himself fully, speaking to each in his own language, revealing himself to each in a different way.

José (Joseph) Muñoz-Cortés was born on May 13, 1948, into a Spanish Catholic family in Valparaíso, Chile. From an early age, the boy was brought up in the spirit of piety and special reverence for the Queen of Heaven. Having a merciful heart, he distributed the pocket money he received from his mother to the poor.

In 1960, Joseph's family moved from their hometown of Valparaíso to the Chilean capital, Santiago. On the day of their move, twelve-year-old José, on his way to the Catholic Church, mistakenly entered the Orthodox church of the Holy Trinity and received a blessing from Archbishop Leonty of Chile, a remarkable ascetic and great friend of St. John of Shanghai. Joseph himself later recounted this meeting:



Old church of the Holy Trinity, Santiago

"On the day of our move, my mother told me: 'Go to church yourself, I'm very busy because of the move, I'll come later. The church is at the end of the street.' I went. In the middle of the street, I stopped when I heard singing. I saw a small church and went

into it. There were many icons: Christ, the Mother of God and various saints. When I saw the icons, I thought that this was not a Protestant church, but also not a Catholic one. Soon Vladyka appeared with a mitre on his head. I had a feeling that it was a dream. I stayed until the end of the liturgy, however, even if I wanted to leave, I couldn't, there were so many people in the church.

At the end of the Liturgy, everyone went to venerate the cross and receive a blessing. The bishop (it was Vladyka Leonty of Chile) noticed me. At first, he addressed me in Russian, which I didn't understand. Finally, he spoke to me in Spanish: "Come and kiss the cross." I said, "Sorry, I made a mistake, I came here by accident." Then he said to me tenderly: "No, my boy, it was not a mistake. God brought you here." I approached, he gave me the cross to kiss and said, "Come again." What particularly touched me were the poor surroundings and his love. I thought, "If the bishop is so poor and has so much love, then this is the true Church." And I started going there".



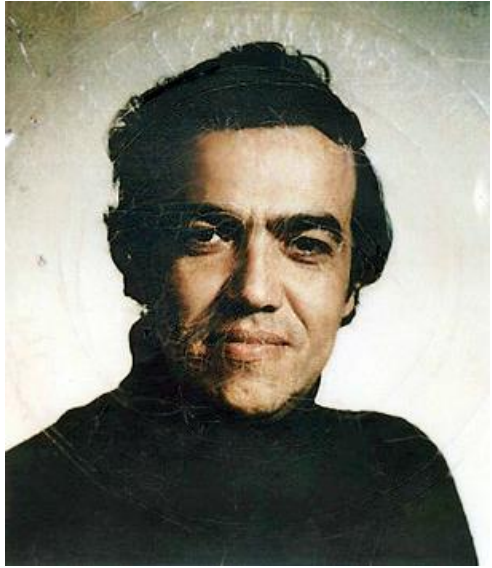
Archbishop Leonty of Chile

When Joseph turned 14 years old, he asked Vladyka's blessing to become Orthodox, and Vladyka Leonty secretly baptized him. Vladyka Leonty continued his spiritual care for the young man and nurtured in him monastic aspirations. From childhood, Joseph had a talent for drawing. After graduating from the School of Fine Arts in Santiago, he obtained a diploma in art history and then was engaged in teaching. Joseph was fascinated not only by the beauty of the Orthodox worship, but also by the spirituality of the Russian iconography. After studying for three years at an Orthodox college, Joseph began to

study icon painting, but there were not many people in Chile who could teach anything in this area.

In 1971, Vladyka Leonty reposed in the Lord, and Joseph, who had decided to devote his life to monasticism, turned to Archbishop Vitaly of Montreal and Canada, responding to his appeal, which was sent to all the parishes of the Russian Church Abroad, calling on young people to join the ranks of monastics. Archbishop Vitaly was in charge of the Transfiguration Skete in Mansonville and the monastic brotherhood of St. Job of Pochaev at the Archbishop's Podvorie in Montreal. Joseph's desire was to enter the monastic brotherhood and study icon painting.

Having received Vl. Vitaly's blessing, in 1974 Joseph moved to Montreal to the Podvorie. However, life at the Podvorie was difficult for the young Spaniard. His lack of knowledge of Russian, as well as insufficient knowledge of French, and his employment in other obediences prevented him from mastering the art of icon painting. There was no monastery at the Podvorie, the doors were open, and everyone could enter and leave freely. Unfortunately,



Joseph Muñoz 1970s

nothing also came out of Vladyka Vitaly's idea to send Brother Joseph to study with the iconographer N. Shelekhov, who, due to being busy with his work and poor health, gave Brother Joseph only a few lessons and stopped teaching him.

On the advice of his friends, Joseph enrolled in a one-year language course, where he studied both French and English, moving out of the Podvorie into a more than modest rented apartment.

However, he did not sever ties with the Podvorie, remaining in obedience to Vladyka Vitaly.

In one of his interviews, Br. Joseph recalls this period of his life: "I had a burning desire to become a monk, and this led me to Vladyka Vitaly. But it was difficult for me to live at the Podvorie because there was no monastery there. I began to pray fervently to Mother of God and felt that I had to live in another place. I lived very modestly in Montreal; I didn't even have money for a subway fare. One day, I finally got on the subway and rode at random. I got off at some station and found myself in front of an old church dedicated to the Mother of God. I entered and saw the beautiful icon of the Mother of God "Of the Passion". I began to pray fervently to her: "Most Holy Theotokos, I am before You. You brought me here. You know I want to become a monk, but there's no monastery where I can go. I promise you to live in poverty, chastity, and obedience to the Church." I made this vow on my knees. When I got up, I felt an extraordinary joy and seemed to hear in my heart the answer of the Mother of God: "Be ready to serve me." Serve, but how? I didn't know that at all yet."

Soon after, in 1979, Joseph entered the University of Montreal, to study theology, where he graduated with a thesis on the Apostle Paul. He then had to work hard to provide for his life. At the same time, Joseph did not give up his desire to study icon painting. He read a lot and experimented on his own. His earlier art education helped him to achieve good results quite quickly. Over time, Joseph began to receive orders and was able to live modestly in a small apartment in Montreal.

In the autumn of 1982, Joseph and his friends went on a pilgrimage to Mount Athos. He really wanted to visit Danilei Skete, famous for its icon-painting workshop, where icons are painted, according to an ancient tradition. But on the way to it, the pilgrims got lost. And then an amazing event took place, about which Br. Joseph later told many times in these words:

"For eight hours, we walked up and down the mountains, and still the Skete was not in sight. We had already lost track of time, but nonetheless continued along our way. Finally, I could go no further;

my legs hurt very much, and I said to my companion, "I cannot go on, let's stop here." We were at the top of a hill. Looking down, we could see a little skete below us. We descended. It turned out to be the Skete of the Nativity of Christ. The abbot of the skete (his name was Clement) received us joyously, and on the terrace offered us some tea and rakhat-loukoum (Turkish Delight), as we entered the house, I saw in their iconographic studio this Icon of the Most-holy Virgin. I can never explain what I felt upon seeing this icon. I think that my heart turned over in my chest. I became very strongly attached to this image. I couldn't take my eyes off the icon, I came to look at it closer, then again and again. I've come back to it many times. In as much as they wrote icons here, I asked the monks to sell this icon to me. However, they told me that they could not sell this icon, for it was one of the first written in their skete in the Byzantine style. For a long time I persisted in asking them to sell the icon to me, but the monks politely gave me to understand that they could not sell it. They could write me a copy of the icon and send it to me. But I felt some kind of special, deep, attachment to that specific icon.

That night, as I was going to the Liturgy, during the singing of "It is truly Meet," I fell to the ground and fervently prayed to the Most-holy Virgin, "I have already done everything humanly possible; I offered them money and pestered the abbot. Nonetheless, O Mother of God, come with us to America, for we are in need of You." After saying that prayer, I felt a spiritual calm, like a feeling of confidence that the Most-holy Virgin would come with us. The Liturgy ended, and we went to breakfast. After breakfast, we began to prepare for our departure from the skete. We were unable to say goodbye to the abbot upon our departure, because we could not find him anywhere. But as I was already leaving the skete, and about to descend to the shore (for the skete was on a hill) in order to get into the boat, the abbot of the skete appeared, carrying a package in his hands. It was an icon wrapped in paper. "Joseph," he said, "the Mother of God wants to go with you to America." I couldn't believe my ears. I trembled with the feeling that something extraordinary had happened. When the abbot gave me the icon, I wanted to pay him for it, but he told me that money cannot be accepted for a holy thing.

I was insistent, and wanted to somehow show my thanks, wanted to contribute money toward the poor skete, but the abbot would take absolutely nothing."

"We got into the boat. When we were already underway and as we were moving in the direction of Daphne, a powerful voice within



Br Joseph with the Myrrh-Streaming Icon

me was insistently saying to me, "Go to the Iveron Monastery, and touch your image of the Iveron Theotokos to the renowned Miraculous Icon of the Iveron Mother of God which is in that monastery." Heeding that voice, we made our way to the Iveron Monastery. When we asked a monk to permit us to touch our icon to the image of

the Iveron Mother of God, he asked in amazement, why we wanted to do that. I explained to him that we wanted to bless the icon, for we were taking it to America, where Satan had taken everything into his hands. The monk agreed, and we touched our icon to the Iveron Icon".

Returning to Montreal, Joseph placed the icon in his room and read an akathist in front of it every night. On November 24, 1982, he woke up around 3 a.m. and smelled a strong fragrance. Looking at the image of the Mother of God, he noticed drops of liquid on it and thought that it was oil dripping from the lamp. But as he wiped them, he was astonished to discover that the fragrance came precisely from them. Here is Joseph's account about the beginning of the myrrh-streaming:

"I bought a lampada for the icon, and placed the holy Icon between the holy relics of several saints of the Kiev-Caves Lavra which

Vladyka Leonty of Chile had given me while I was in Chile, and an icon-photograph of the Holy Venerable New-martyr Grand-duchess Elizabeth. Three weeks passed, during which I read an Akathist to the Most-holy Virgin every night. Suddenly, one night around 4:00 a.m. I awoke and smelled some kind of sweet aroma which filled the entire house – not only my room, but the entire house... I looked at the icon and saw that from the hands of the Most-holy Virgin, there were little streams pouring down to the base of the icon. I wiped



Vladyka Vitaly (Ustinov)

down the icon and sensed that the sweet aroma was emanating from it. But it was so unusual that I kept examining and examining it and could not comprehend that something marvellous was taking place. But inside of me, I felt that something great was happening, and although I can't understand it now, something wondrous was happening. I was so amazed by what was happening, so surprised by this miraculous phenomenon, that I could not come to my senses. And the icon continued to exude myrrh.

Ultimately, we decided to tell Vladyka Vitaly about everything. When we arrived at the monastery, with the Icon wrapped in a piece of cloth which was entirely steeped in myrrh, the first thing that Vladyka did was to take a piece of cotton and wipe the entire Icon dry, removing all of the myrrh on the surface of the Icon. Then he took the Icon and went throughout all of the rooms of the three-story building. When he returned to the church, the Icon was again covered with myrrh, and myrrh flowed

over Vladyka's hands. He venerated the Icon and said that a great miracle was transpiring."

The miracle of the myrrh-streaming of the Icon soon became known throughout the Orthodox world. From that moment on, Brother Joseph's life changed dramatically. Joseph began to take the miraculous icon to Orthodox parishes in various countries – America, Western Europe, Australia and New Zealand. This is when the real feat of Brother Joseph begins, which he clearly and consciously accepted, to dedicate his entire life through the Icon of the Mother of God to the suffering people of God. He immediately asked the Mother of God for love for all and humility for this ministry, and never deviated from the path assigned to him.

Everywhere the Icon was greeted with great joy. Molebens and akathists were served in beautiful churches, hospitals, nursing homes, as well as for the sick, the suffering, and those in need of consolation. Wherever the icon appeared, numerous healings of spiritual and bodily ailments took place. The grace-filled influence of the Most pure Theotokos awakened and transformed the faithful, who were often hardened in insensibility. Thus, one poor woman, having learned about the death of her son, was preparing to take her own life, but touched to the depths of her soul by the sight of the miraculous icon, she repented of her terrible intention and immediately confessed it.

Brother Joseph lived in complete obedience to the Most holy Mother of God, like a son to his mother. Before doing anything, he asked for a blessing in front of Her icon. Constantly living in the presence of the miraculous icon, Joseph preserved the deepest reverence for it, he did not even dare to examine the icon out of curiosity. He said: "Where the icon is, a special grace is felt. God has entrusted me with a great responsibility, so now I cannot allow any bad thoughts in my mind before the icon. Before Her, I must exercise self-control in all things. Even in cooking, I don't allow myself to do what I used to do. For example, now I don't even fry onions in the house, so as not to mix their smell with the incense emanating from the icon. Therefore, my food is very simple now."

Brother Joseph maintained contact with Abbot Clement until the blessed repose of the Elder, which followed in 1997 on the day

of the Triumph of Orthodoxy. Arriving at the monastery, he received instructions from his spiritual teacher. Elder Clement blessed Joseph to fulfill the monastic prayer rule. With the blessing of the elder, while on the road, he replaced his daily prayer rule with the Jesus Prayer. Often his companions saw him praying with a prayer rope. He sat down and bowed his head to his knees, according to the tradition of the Byzantine hesychasts. When he stayed at his home in Montreal, he tried to read the entire liturgical cycle every day. He usually prayed while standing up, although in his poor health it was often painful (Joseph suffered from diabetes and other ailments). He said that in prayer it is very important to be constant and not to deviate from the rule once taken upon yourself.

According to the testimony of his close friends, in the early 1990s, Elder Clement tonsured Brother Joseph a monk with the name Ambrose in honour of the great Elder Ambrose of Optina. It was a secret tonsure that only a few people knew about.

Brother Joseph kept many relics of saints, which he sometimes received in a mysterious way. When asked why there were so many relics

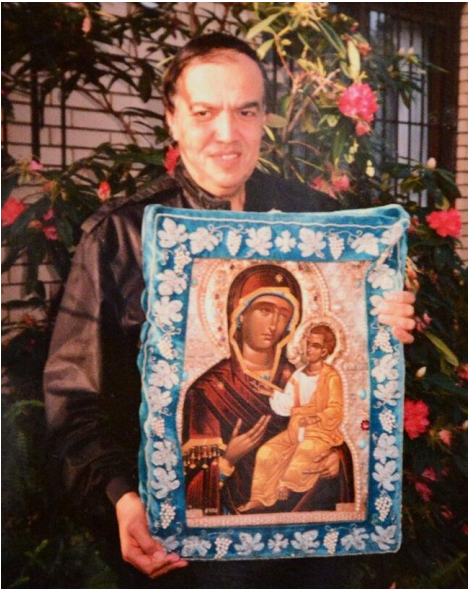


Abbot Clement and hieromonk Chrysostom

in his apartment, Joseph replied that they were a great spiritual support for him. He said, "The Saints were people just like us. There were mistakes and failures in their lives, but they have struggled for Christ and are now shining in heaven. If we make every effort of our soul, we can also attain holiness with the prayerful support of the saints."

Spiritual gifts can lead a person to pride and perdition, which is why God does not give His grace to those who are prone to self-conceit. Brother Joseph, because of his deep humility, was able to carry out this great ministry. To the question: Why was he chosen by

God? Brother Joseph answered: "I recognize my shortcomings and confess my insignificance, but I think that God nonetheless is using me for His purposes. God often makes Himself known through the least of men. I am one of the least in the Orthodox Church: I am not Russian, but a convert whom God once called to the True Faith. And according to His mercy, He has now chosen me a second time. But the Lord makes me feel that I am nothing. Every day I feel more and more this insignificance of mine; I am only an instrument, albeit unclean and sinful, in the hands of God. I believe in the Mother of God, just as I believe in God. I greatly revere the Mother of God, because



Br Joseph with the Myrrh-Streaming Icon

this is what I was taught as a child by my mother. I believe that the Blessed Virgin manifests Herself wherever She wants."

Brother Joseph willingly took upon himself the cross of the guardian of the Icon. Denying himself everything, he humbly submitted to God's will. Especially at the beginning of his ministry, Joseph suffered from slander and various temptations. Various ridiculous rumours were spread that he was engaged in magic, that there was a mech-

anism in the Icon...

Many reproached Brother Joseph for keeping the Icon in his possession, believing that the holy Icon should be transferred to the Montreal Cathedral for safekeeping. Joseph decided to ask for advice from the abbot Clement, who gave him the Icon. He went to Mount Athos and told him everything, to which he replied: "The Mother of God has chosen you to serve Her. If you get rid of the icon, you will never have peace. You can give the Icon away if you want, but then you will suffer for the rest of your life." Then I understood, says Br.

Joseph, that I had to dedicate my whole life to this Icon of the Mother of God.

Brother Joseph believed that it was no coincidence that the Icon was revealed in the bosom of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. According to him, the Mother of God revealed Her myrrh-streaming icon in the Church Abroad in 1982 for the sake of the glorification of the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia, together with the Royal Family, performed by the Church Abroad in 1981. Brother Joseph was used to saying that the Icon showed us a miracle not because we deserved it, but for the sake of the prayers of thousands of Russian New Martyrs, known and unknown.

Brother Joseph cared with all his heart for the future of the Church Abroad, and it was he, the Mother of God's chosen one, who was given a prophetic vision on the night of November 20-21, 1985, a few hours before the death of the holy Metropolitan Philaret. In this vision the fate of the last two Metropolitans of ROCA – the holy Metropolitan Philaret and Archbishop Vitaly, the future Metropolitan, was prefigured, as well as the fate of the Church itself.

According to Joseph, on the evening of November 20, he felt very tired and went to bed. The holy Icon was hanging on the wall opposite his bed, so that he could see it while lying down. Soon after he lay down, the lamp hanging in front of the Icon went out. He lit it up again, but it went out a second time. Then Joseph changed the oil and the wick, washed the lamp glass, and refilled it. But soon the lamp went out for the third time... This made him anxious, for he felt that the Mother of God was secretly indicating to him that something significant was about to happen. Joseph stood up to pray. While he was praying, he fell asleep. In a subtle dream, a panoramic picture opened up to him, like a huge wide screen, and he saw the following vision.

The soil was rocky covered with forest. On the trail he saw Metropolitan Philaret kneeling with an exhausted face. On Vladyka's back and on his right shoulder lay a large, heavy cross. The appearance of the cross was dreadful – a cold iron cross. Metropolitan Philaret fell under the weight of this cross and could not move. But

suddenly, unexpectedly, Metropolitan Philaret bent forward and with a decisive movement threw the cross to the ground.



Metropolitan Philaret of New York

Joseph was seized with fear at what he saw and covered his face with his hands in horror. When he finally dropped his hands, a different picture appeared before him. He saw the land turned into a desert due to a terrible disaster. Instead of Metropolitan Philaret, Vladyka Vitaly was kneeling with the same cross on his back, but the cross was more horrible, darker and heavier. Although with great difficulty, Vladyka somehow moved little by little. In the last, third part of the vision, Joseph saw a cross of a purely black colour in the same desert,

and Vladika Vitaly crucified on it, in full vestments, with a mitre. A few hours after this vision, the world learned of the death of Metropolitan Philaret.

Brother Joseph strictly adhered to his affiliation with the Church Abroad and did nothing without the blessing of the hierarchy. The Icon visited all the dioceses of the Russian Church Abroad. Brother Joseph loved to come to the Lesna Monastery in France, where the Icon usually streamed myrrh especially abundantly. Every year he tried to celebrate Pascha in Lesna monastery, as well as the feast of the miraculous Lesna Icon, celebrated in early October. In the monastery, Brother Joseph had his own cell, where he could do his favourite thing – icon painting. In the Lesna monastery, Brother Joseph painted icons for the iconostasis with the Royal Doors in the winter church. He treated the sisters with great warmth: he encouraged the young novices, shared his experience, trying to console them in temptations. He loved to talk with the nuns on spiritual

topics and listened with interest to their stories about the past of the monastery.

In October 1995, Brother Joseph visited Bulgaria at the invitation of Mother Seraphima, the Abbess of the Pokrov Convent in Knyazhevo. This visit was tremendously fruitful for the spiritual revival and enlightenment of the whole of Bulgaria and the surrounding Orthodox countries. People stood in prayerful silence in queue for five or six hours before reaching the Icon. From October 10 to 17, about sixty thousand Bulgarians venerated the miraculous Icon and were anointed with fragrant myrrh, which flowed abundantly from it all this time.

For fifteen years the Icon travelled around the world. During this time, many people were healed of their ailments, many received the miraculous grace-filled help from the icon. Help was received not only by the Orthodox, but also by people of other confessions, many sceptics of little faith and non-believers came to faith. There were also many cases when photographs of the icon began to stream myrrh in the homes of lay people.

Brother Joseph was a man of deep inner life. Many of those who interacted with him felt his amazing kindness, self-sacrifice and nobleness. He kept silent about his infirmities, fatigue, and illnesses. He saw Christ in every person, trying to come to the aid of others, even to outcasts, which sometimes embarrassed many. People turned to Brother Joseph for help, as someone they trusted, sharing with him their sorrows and worries. He listened to everyone with love and patience. Amazingly, Brother Joseph remembered the names of all the people he met. He did not refuse prayerful help to anyone, regardless of the religion of the person who asked. There were hundreds of names in his commemoration book. He had 58 godchildren, and he prayed for each of them daily, and not just for them. He couldn't have any personal life. People came, called, wrote, asked for help, intercession, prayers. And he prayed for everyone.

Joseph's character combined openness in his dealings with others with a firm stand in the faith. He abhorred manipulative, faith-indifferent and self-serving people. Joseph suffered greatly because of the lack of love among believers, envy, and slander. "Lord, how

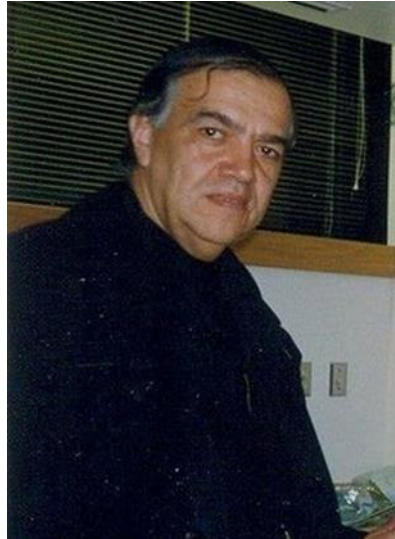
sad I am because of all this," he once wrote in his diary. Frequent travel and constant meetings with people undermined his health: he developed diabetes.

The presence in the world of the grace-filled Myrrh-streaming Icon, healing people physically and spiritually, enraged the enemy of the human race and he took up arms with all his might against the faithful guardian of the Myrrh-streaming Icon.

In the summer of 1996, Joseph visited Mount Athos to bid farewell to the dying Abbot Clement. Then Fr. Clement predicted to him that the next year, 1997, would be fateful for the guardian of the Icon, that the evil one, powerless against the Mother of God, would furiously fall upon Her humble servant. The elder prophesied to Joseph that terrible events would take place and that he would be subjected to terrible slander.

A year before his death, Joseph had a terrible vision, as he said, "it was not a dream, but completely awake." He woke up in the night and felt that he was bound hand and foot. His mouth was also gagged, and he could neither speak nor scream. He tried to free himself, but to no avail, and only prayed within himself.

In the last years Br. Joseph has been terrorised with death threats, both by phone and in person. He even had to buy a special device to record these threats. One day in Paris, someone who showed him a KGB ID card said to Brother Joseph: "You are interfering with us. Do you know that? You're getting in our way." There is another occasion when a car was driving behind him, and when he, losing patience, approached it, the people sitting in the car said that if he did not stop his activities, he would be liquidated.



Brother Joseph 1990s

In his last interview (1997) to the magazine “Russian Pastor”, published in San Francisco, Joseph suddenly began to speak about martyrdom, as if anticipating his death: "...believers ought to be ready to die for the truth, and not to forget that in acquiring enemies here, we acquire the Heavenly Kingdom... He who is faithful in little things will be faithful in great things, when it is required. Given an opportunity to become confessors, we ought not to lose it. Having lost the earthly life, we find the heavenly. We ought not to fear death for Christ."



Weeping fresco of the Theotokos, Andros

In July 1997, when Brother Joseph visited Argentina for the last time, he invited Fr. Alexander Iwaszewicz to go with him to Greece and, God willing, to visit the Holy Mountain and pray at the grave of the deceased Elder Clement, as well as to buy fabrics for the upcoming 100th anniversary of the magnificent Trinity Cathedral in Buenos Aires. On October 13, Brother Joseph arrived in Greece, and three days later he met Fr. Alexander at the Athens airport. They spent the next two weeks visiting holy places and praying constantly. On October 29, the friends went to the island of Andros, where in the monastery of St. Nicholas there was an ancient icon that had been streaming myrrh for the last seventeen years. When they safely reached the monastery, the monk who accompanied them opened the church and immediately exclaimed: "The Mother of God began to weep!" It turned out that at that moment the ancient large wall icon of the Mother of God (fresco of the 15th century), located in the narthex, began to weep. The monk said that the icon weeps when some terrible event is about to

happen. Joseph was so deeply impressed by this sign of the Mother of God that he repeated it to Fr. Alexander several times: "Father, I feel that very soon something terrible will happen. I don't know what it is, but I feel something." He repeated the same words to the priest on the morning before his death.

On that day, having said goodbye to Brother Joseph, Fr. Alexander Iwaszewicz flew to Argentina. Here is Fr. Alexander's account of their last farewell: "On the last night we could not sleep, a long conversation turned into a mutual confession... in an instant, Brother Joseph went through his whole life..." At the airport, we parted: "That's it – it's time to say goodbye. When we reached the entrance to the private hall, Brother Joseph said to me, "Father, forgive me for all that I have done wrong, and if I have offended you, I beg your pardon from the bottom of my heart." I said, "Rather, you forgive me, José." "God forgive! – he answered, – Thank you for everything, thank you so much." Right there, at the airport, Brother Joseph bowed to me to the ground, and I bowed to him... We hugged for a long time and tightly. I had to go on, and Brother Joseph exclaimed, "Bless me, Father!" – "God bless you, José!" He said to me: "With God!" and I said to him: "With God!" – for the last time... This is how I said goodbye to Brother Joseph just a couple of hours before his death..."

He was found in a room at the Grand Hotel in Athens. The door was locked from the inside, and in the morning the maid was unable to get inside. The hotel room, where Joseph was martyred is a corner room with a balcony – the only one in the entire hotel with access to the roof of the neighbouring building. This explains why the door of the apartment where Joseph was killed was locked from the inside. The killers got into the room with ease and just as easily left without anyone noticing. According to the doctor who examined the body, the murder was committed by two or three people: one held him, another tied his hands and feet, and a third struck him. The terrible torture lasted for about half an hour, after which Joseph was dying alone for a long time. At the trial, the doctor testified that it was evident that Joseph did not resist. He was lying tied across the bed. Traces of torture are visible on the face, legs, arms, and chest.

How Joseph was lured to the hotel room where this horrific murder was committed remains unknown.

A man who during his lifetime didn't give a single reason to doubt his moral purity, after his horrific death, was subjected to many reproaches; speculations and gossip appeared in the press, and only after some time a reassessment of what had happened began. It is unknown where the miraculous Montreal Icon of the Mother of God is located now.

The terrible news instantly spread around and astonished everyone who knew him. Ten days later, the body of the martyr returned from Athens to Montreal. In the Cathedral of St. Nicholas a pannichida was served with the coffin closed. It was decided to bury Brother Joseph at Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville, NY. On November 11, the coffin with Joseph's body was brought to Holy Trinity church and placed in the middle of the church, pannichidas were served, and the Psalter was read all night. That night, the plastic bag in which Brother Joseph had been brought was opened. Traces of suffering and torture were clearly visible: crimson scars from the rope on the face, neck, in the places where the hands were tied. But everyone was struck by the absence of any signs of decay on the 13th day after death.

On November 12, a touching, solemn, and grace-filled funeral and burial of Brother Joseph took place, headed by the abbot of the monastery, Archbishop Laurus. Twenty-two priests and many deacons concelebrated with him. Hundreds of people from America, Canada, Europe, and all over the world came to bid farewell to the martyr and see him off on his last journey. A startling sermon was delivered by Protopresbyter Valery Lukianov. The last kiss was



Martyr Joseph at his funeral

very long. People didn't want to leave the church. The spiritual uplift was reminiscent of the Easter service. Then, a solemn procession to the cemetery followed.

On the fortieth day after the death of Brother Joseph, many of his admirers and friends gathered again. A general pannichida was served at the cemetery, at which a sign appeared: candles, which initially could not be lit because of the strong wind, ignited and burned for several hours in the snow on his grave, in the monastery cemetery, blown by the winds from all sides, until they burned to the end.

Just as in ancient times Joseph the Betrothed was the guardian of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, so Brother Joseph Muñoz was chosen by the Mother of God to guard Her wondrous myrrh-streaming icon. His entire life, crowned with martyrdom, is proof of his purity and chastity, of his chosenness, of his deep humility, of his holiness, although hidden from prying eyes.

Holy New-martyr Joseph, pray to God for us! Amen.

**Akathist to the Holy New-Martyr Joseph,
Ambrose in Monastic Tonsure,
Keeper of the Iveron Portaitissa (Gatekeeper) Icon of
the Theotokos**

Kontakion 1

O Joseph, guardian of the All-Pure One, thou didst finish thy course as an athlete of Christ, as a new martyr in the Greek land, like a silent lamb led to the slaughter, and the assembly of the elect in Heaven exclaimeth: Rejoice, O New-martyr Joseph, the guardian of the Gatekeeper.

Ikos 1

From thy childhood thou didst live as a pilgrim, leaving Chile thou didst go to Canada, thou didst meet Orthodoxy on thy way, for the exaltation of the life-giving Cross, thou didst take it on thy shoulders, wherefore we say to thee:

Rejoice, thou who through the Cross didst come to know the Church,

Rejoice, thou whose Tabor was Athos,

Rejoice, thou who didst ascend to Golgotha,

Rejoice, thou who madest the world thy monastery,

Rejoice, thou who didst fight the good fight,

Rejoice, thou who didst take refuge in the Church,

Rejoice, thou whose life was but prayer,

Rejoice, thou who didst reach the holy haven,

Rejoice, thou who didst crucify thy free will,

Rejoice, thou who didst abolish thine own reasoning,

Rejoice, thou who didst obtain the One Who is,

Rejoice, thou who didst follow Christ throughout thine entire life,

Rejoice, O New-martyr Joseph, the guardian of the Gate-keeper.

Kontakion 2

On thy journey in the Holy Mountain of Athos thou didst meet the Icon of the Heavenly Gatekeeper, Who was watching thee from the gates of heaven, thou didst want to take Her Icon with thee, but the monks refused to give it to thee, and thou didst pray all night: Alleluia!

Ikos 2

In the morning, when thou wast leaving the monastery with sadness, not hoping thy prayer to be answered, the abbot came to give thee the holy Icon. And thou didst receive it with fear and trembling, as one who receiveth a sacrament, wherefore we say to thee:

Rejoice, pure prayer in the night,
 Rejoice, intercession before the Throne,
 Rejoice, pure genuflection,
 Rejoice, prayer that openeth Heaven,
 Rejoice, devotion of a pure soul,
 Rejoice, blessing of the Unseen,
 Rejoice, receptacle of the Ineffable,
 Rejoice, worship in Truth,
 Rejoice, ardent prayer of the heart,
 Rejoice, precious jewel of Grace,
 Rejoice, reverence that leadeth to God,

Rejoice, thou who hast been chosen by the Abbess of Athos,

Rejoice, O New-martyr Joseph, the guardian of the Gate-keeper.

Kontakion 3

When thou didst go to the Iveron monastery and wast able to obtain an immense grace, that the Icon be placed on the original, thou didst leave the Garden of the Mother of God singing in the depths of thy soul: Alleluia!

Ikos 3

From then on, constantly holding on to the Mother of God, thou becamest the guardian of the Heavenly Gatekeeper who hath chosen thee above all others to carry as a sweet treasure the Icon of Her who visited us singing to thee:

Rejoice, loving son of the Holy Mother,

Rejoice, child of the Orthodox Church,

Rejoice, brother of the Monks of Athos,

Rejoice, shepherd of the Most Pure Ewe-Lamb,

Rejoice, traveller of Pure Grace,

Rejoice, pilgrim of the Image,

Rejoice, jubilation of the Assembly of Saints,

Rejoice, fragrant incense of Sacrifice,

Rejoice, sign of God's mercy,

Rejoice, vessel of all Grace,

Rejoice, thou whose body resteth in the monastery of the Holy Trinity,

Rejoice, thou whose spirit is rejoicing in the heavenly abodes,

Rejoice, O New-martyr Joseph, the guardian of the Gate-keeper.

Kontakion 4

Having reached Montreal thou didst put thine icon in the revered corner with the relics of the holy monks of the Kiev Lavra and the image of the holy Martyr Elizabeth, and thou didst recite every day an akathist, singing to eternal God: Alleluia!

Ikos 4

When the Most Pure Lady wished to make Her icon a source of grace, thou didst perceive one night fragrant oil flowing from it. And since then, the myrrh-streaming Icon appeared a consolation to the world, but thou becamest its keeper, and we cry out to thee:

Rejoice, thou who wast worthy of this miracle,
 Rejoice, thou who wast aware of this grace,
 Rejoice, thou who didst accept it as a child,
 Rejoice, thou who wast the first to be anointed with it,
 Rejoice, thou who didst distribute this manna,
 Rejoice, diligent caretaker of pilgrims,
 Rejoice, distributor of the Divine Presence,
 Rejoice, humble bearer of the Great Mystery,
 Rejoice, beacon of humility,
 Rejoice, sacred temple of piety,
 Rejoice, thou who wast filled with the fear of God,
 Rejoice, myrrh that anointeth the Church,
 Rejoice, O New-martyr Joseph, the guardian of the Gate-keeper.

Kontakion 5

From that time on, thy life became a long pilgrimage, thou wast on the roads of the world with the icon, as a pilgrim of the Most Holy Theotokos, thou hast filled the world with fragrance; as a living tabernacle thou wast entering the temples, where we sing: Alleluia!

Ikos 5

Only a few appreciated thee because thou wast so discreet, so modest and so aware of the great Grace. Thou didst accompany the icon and didst leave again, but on thy way prayer was born. And we who have received the miracle sing to thee:

Rejoice, thou who wast comforting the afflicted,
 Rejoice, thou who wast encouraging repentance,
 Rejoice, light of the darkened,
 Rejoice, haven of the lost,
 Rejoice, comfort of the sorrowful,
 Rejoice, for thou wast raising from despair,
 Rejoice, compassion of the elect,
 Rejoice, assistance to the needy,
 Rejoice, radiant abode of Divine Love,
 Rejoice, relief to distressed souls,
 Rejoice, charity from the Most High,
 Rejoice, glory of all the righteous,
 Rejoice, O New-martyr Joseph, the guardian of the Gate-keeper.

Kontakion 6

Where sadness reigned, joy came, those who had quarrelled were suddenly reconciled, the hard-hearted returned to the

path of salvation, and the faithful, gathered around the Icon, sang to God with a loud voice: Alleluia!

Ikos 6

Near the Heavenly Mother all the faithful again became children of the Holy Church, the ailing were healed, the sorrowful were consoled and sang with one voice the akathist hymn, while in heaven the angels exclaimed:

Rejoice, revealer of True Life,
 Rejoice, initiator of Prayer,
 Rejoice, wise guide to Christ,
 Rejoice, assurance of the Hereafter,
 Rejoice, gathering of the scattered,
 Rejoice, conversion of the doubting,
 Rejoice, thou who didst bring hope to pure souls,
 Rejoice, anointing balm for the sick,
 Rejoice, perfect abode of the Holy Spirit,
 Rejoice, key of holy penance,
 Rejoice, fertile soil of grace,
 Rejoice, chosen son of the Most Pure Mother,
 Rejoice, O New-martyr Joseph, the guardian of the Gate-keeper.

Kontakion 7

At times thou didst stay in the Convent of Lesna, which was on thy way a peaceful haven, where in a solitude of silence and prayer with thy pure and holy hands thou didst write for the monastery iconostasis icons of the saints of the Lord, who sing: Alleluia!

Ikos 7

It was there that Heaven sometimes visited thee; St. Elizabeth of Russia came to see thee, and when a visitor came, she departed, leaving this meeting place fragrant with holiness; wherefore we cry out to thee thus:

Rejoice, friend of Holy Russia,
 Rejoice, beloved of the Russian Saints,
 Rejoice, thou who didst converse with Heaven,
 Rejoice, companion of the ancient ascetics,
 Rejoice, brother of the Greek New-martyrs,
 Rejoice, emulator of the desert dwellers,
 Rejoice, hesychast who didst die for the Name of Christ,
 Rejoice, cohabitant of theologians,
 Rejoice, imitator of the pious athletes,
 Rejoice, equal of the martyrs of old,
 Rejoice, brother of the saints of all times,
 Rejoice, living decoration of the Icon,
 Rejoice, O New-martyr Joseph, the guardian of the Gate-keeper.

Kontakion 8

Living unceasingly for God, thou didst wish to dedicate thyself to Him even more, thou becamest a monk, having been tonsured by the holy Elder Clement, nevertheless even as a monastic thou didst keep on the Royal Way in the world, where Christ's servants say: Alleluia!

Ikos 8

Always clothing thy soul with prayer, in the secret chamber of the heart, where the Father seeth us, thou didst send sighs

of prayer to God, interceding unceasingly for the world, wherefore we raise to thee these praises:

Rejoice, offering on the Altar of Heaven,
 Rejoice, tabernacle of prayer,
 Rejoice, icon of the Charity,
 Rejoice, incarnation of Hesychia,
 Rejoice, burning candle of the Light,
 Rejoice, true temple of devotion,
 Rejoice, prayer before the Divine Presence,
 Rejoice, lamp full of the Holy Oil,
 Rejoice, shrine of contemplation,
 Rejoice, prayer of intercession,
 Rejoice, participant in the choir of Saints,
 Rejoice, praise everlasting to the Lord,
 Rejoice, O New-martyr Joseph, the guardian of the Gate-keeper.

Kontakion 9

Thou wast an apostle of mercy, sacrificing thy life and health for the Church, having joined thyself only to the Mother of God, thou didst bring her Icon to Her children in the world, so that they might sing to God: Alleluia!

Ikos 9

Interceding for many every day, imploring the Lord and His Mother for those whom thou didst meet on thy way, thou wast an intercessor for thy brethren, so with all the saints we cry out to thee:

Rejoice, man of propitiation,
 Rejoice, hymn of the Unfathomable Mystery,

Rejoice, ship that saileth to Heaven,
 Rejoice, assurance before Christ,
 Rejoice, thou who with thy prayers sustainest the dome of
 the Church,
 Rejoice, thou who like a wall protectest the faithful,
 Rejoice, narthex where the faithful have refuge,
 Rejoice, voice of the Apostles in the world,
 Rejoice, pillar of purity,
 Rejoice, font of tears of joy,
 Rejoice, dwelling place of pure prayer,
 Rejoice, rampart of the Church,
 Rejoice, O New-martyr Joseph, the guardian of the Gate-
 keeper.

Kontakion 10

Thou didst love the martyrs, thou who didst die as a martyr,
 thou didst treasure their relics, carrying them with thee as a
 precious token, living at home in their holy presences and
 singing with them to Christ: Alleluia!

Ikos 10

We have never been worthy of thy presence, O Guardian of
 the Holy Icon of our Mother, thou didst open for us the win-
 dow of Heaven, from where all the graces poured out abun-
 dantly upon us, who now proclaim to thee with amazement:

Rejoice, summit of human goodness,
 Rejoice, image of blessing,
 Rejoice, mirror of the Heavenly Salvation,
 Rejoice, pure symbol of Sacrifice,
 Rejoice, self-effacement before the Spirit,

Rejoice, abyss of compassion,
 Rejoice, icon of compunction,
 Rejoice, crown of chastity,
 Rejoice, example of virtue,
 Rejoice, divine sign of election,
 Rejoice, inspiration of the pious clergy,
 Rejoice, enlightener of the laity,
 Rejoice, O New-martyr Joseph, the guardian of the Gate-keeper.

Kontakion 11

Leaving the Lesna Convent, saying goodbye for the last time, thou didst ask for forgiveness from thy loved ones, as if going to meet Christ in Communion, but it was to the heavenly altar that thou didst ascend, singing in thy pure soul: Alleluia!

Ikos 11

As if preparing for this difficult journey, thou didst confess to a priest, thy friend, and with a purified soul and heart thou wast suddenly sacrificed on the altar of this world, wherefore in admiration of thy great faith, we sing to thee such things as these:

Rejoice, rule of life in Christ,
 Rejoice, example of piety,
 Rejoice, journey of faith that leadeth to the Lord,
 Rejoice, for the Gates of Paradise have opened for thee,
 Rejoice, thou who leadest to the Kingdom to Come,
 Rejoice, star pointing to salvation,
 Rejoice, for thou wast filled with the teaching of the Fathers,

Rejoice, herald of the Good News,
 Rejoice, bookmark of the Holy Book of Life,
 Rejoice, holocaust pleasing to God,
 Rejoice, perfect propitiation,
 Rejoice, model of Divine Love,
 Rejoice, O New-martyr Joseph, the guardian of the Gate-keeper.

Kontakion 12

The icon of the Mother of God in Andros mourned thy death, with Her tears implying thy last days. Yet having received an indication to thy martyrdom, thou didst accept God's will, so that ascending into Heaven, thou mayest sing: Alleluia!

Ikos 12

Before his end, holy Elder Clement foretold thee a great sorrow, and that thy name would be reviled. Blessed art thou, for thou hast represented in thy death a beatitude of Christ, wherefore we chant to thee:

Rejoice, thou who hast been twice chosen by the Mother of God,
 Rejoice, star on Her garment,
 Rejoice, flower blooming in the Kingdom,
 Rejoice, path to the Light,
 Rejoice, pearl on the King's Sceptre,
 Rejoice, beacon shining in our darkness,
 Rejoice, lily in the Garden of the Most Pure Lady,
 Rejoice, blossoming branch of the brotherhood,
 Rejoice, for in turbulence thou hast attained wisdom,

Rejoice, for thou hast accepted martyrdom,
 Rejoice, lamb who wast laid on the altar,
 Rejoice, shrine full of Christian virtues,
 Rejoice, O New-martyr Joseph, the guardian of the Gate-keeper.

Kontakion 13

Thou hast departed to join the cohorts of saints; we know well that the Most Pure Mother of God, Who once called thee, hath again called thee to Herself to be among the elect of Her Son, to Whom we sing together with thee: Alleluia!
(This Kontakion is said three times)

Ikos 1

From thy childhood thou didst live as a pilgrim, leaving Chile thou didst go to Canada, thou didst meet Orthodoxy on thy way, for the exaltation of the life-giving Cross, thou didst take it on thy shoulders, wherefore we say to thee:

Rejoice, thou who through the Cross didst come to know the Church,
 Rejoice, thou whose Tabor was Athos,
 Rejoice, thou who didst ascend to Golgotha,
 Rejoice, thou who madest the world thy monastery,
 Rejoice, thou who didst fight the good fight,
 Rejoice, thou who didst take refuge in the Church,
 Rejoice, thou whose life was but prayer,
 Rejoice, thou who didst reach the holy haven,
 Rejoice, thou who didst crucify thy free will,
 Rejoice, thou who didst abolish thine own reasoning,
 Rejoice, thou who didst obtain the One Who is,

Rejoice, thou who didst follow Christ throughout thine entire life,

Rejoice, O New-martyr Joseph, the guardian of the Gatekeeper.

Kontakion 1

O Joseph, guardian of the All-Pure One, thou didst finish thy course as an athlete of Christ, as a new martyr in the Greek land, like a silent lamb led to the slaughter, and the assembly of the elect in Heaven exclaimeth: Rejoice, O New-martyr Joseph, the guardian of the Gatekeeper.

PRAYER TO HOLY MARTYR JOSEPH

O holy New-Martyr Joseph, humble guardian of the miraculous icon of the Most Pure Virgin, to Whom thou hast committed thyself from thy youth, thou didst appear as a faithful servant of the Mother of God, traveling with Her to the faithful children of the Church, assisting Her to enrich the world with the treasures of Her grace and fragrant myrrh, from Her thou wast filled thyself with the aromas of meekness and humility. Thou wast tonsured a monk in the 'Theotokos' domain, on the Holy Mountain of Athos, and in all the world, which is the domain of the evil one, thou didst shine forth as an image of prayer and virtue. Now resting in body in the monastery of the Holy Trinity, and with thy soul boldly standing before the throne of God, look thou mercifully upon us, unworthy, who pray with compunction before thine icon, repenting of our sins and asking for thy help and intercession. Turn not away us who are in distress and in need of thy help, and through thine intercession give us what is useful for salvation. Above all, pray to Christ and His Most Pure Mother,

that our Church may be preserved from worldly temptations, that we may escape the snares of the evil one in this life, and be worthy to enter the Kingdom of God. Amen!

Troparion of the martyr, Tone 2

O wondrous martyr Joseph, servant of the Mother of God, imitator of Christ's love for people, image of meekness, rule of humility, mirror of prayer, confirmation of faith: for those who faithfully honour thy memory, do thou supplicate Christ, Whom thou didst love and to Whom thou didst joyfully sacrifice thyself.

Kontakion of the martyr, Tone 2

Let us praise the wondrous Joseph, the true servant of Christ and the zealous imitator of the saints, the bright lamp of love and humility: for the Mother of God chose him to be the guardian of Her miracle-streaming Icon, and the Lord, Who alone knoweth what is in the heart, crowned him with a crown of martyrdom.

Megalynarion

We magnify thee, O holy Martyr Joseph, and honour thy precious sufferings which thou didst endure for the sake of Christ.

This akathist to holy Martyr Joseph is a free translation from French into English. The original was written by a friend of the Martyr Joseph, Claude Lopez-Ginisty. Translated by Bishop Andrei (Erastov) and edited by Daniel Olson.

<https://acathistes-et-offices-orthodoxes.blogspot.com/2009/02/acathiste-au-saint-neomartyr.html>