

Date: December 2, 2024

Subject: BURL-Choir Hieromartyr Clement, Pope of Rome Weekend NOTICE

Dorogiye!

This Saturday/Sunday, the Church commemorates the Hieromartyr Clement, Pope of Rome.

The attached Tropar / Kondak text sheet contains the special prayers that will be sung.

This week on Tuesday / Wednesday, the Church celebrates the Entry of the Most Holy Mother of God into the Temple.

Later this week, on Thursday / Friday, the Church commemorates the repose of Saint Alexander Nevsky.

Early next week, on Monday / Tuesday, the Church will commemorate the Wonderworking Kursk Root Icon of The Mother of God.

Brief summaries about Hieromartyr Clement, the Entry of the Mother of God into the Temple, Saint Alexander Nevsky, the Kursk Root Icon of The Mother of God are provided below.

(Note: unless otherwise indicated, all dates are “old style”.)

\*\*\*\* Hieromartyr Clement, Pope of Rome

The Hieromartyr Clement, Pope of Rome, was born at Rome into a rich and illustrious family. Separated from his parents from childhood by force of circumstances, Clement was raised by strangers. Living in Rome, the youth received a fine education, he was surrounded by luxury, and had access to the imperial court. But these comforts brought him no joy, and pagan wisdom failed to attract him. He began to ponder the meaning of life.

When the news of Christ and His teaching began to reach the capital, Saint Clement left his home and estate and went to the lands where the Apostles were preaching. At Alexandria Saint Clement met the holy Apostle Barnabas, listening to his words with deep attention, and perceiving the power and truth of the Word of God. Arriving in Palestine, Saint Clement was baptized by the holy Apostle Peter and became his zealous disciple and constant companion, sharing his toil and sufferings with him. Shortly before his own sufferings and death, Saint Peter consecrated Saint Clement as Bishop of Rome. After the death of the Apostle Peter, Saint Linus (67-79) was the next Bishop of Rome, succeeded by Saint Anacletus (79-91), and then Saint Clement (92-101).

The virtuous life, charitable works and prayerful activity of Saint Clement converted many to Christ. He once baptized 424 people on the day of Pascha. Among the baptized were people of all social classes: slaves, officials, and even members of the imperial family.

The pagans, seeing the success of his apostolic preaching, denounced Saint Clement to the emperor Trajan (98-117), accusing the saint of insulting the pagan gods. The emperor banished Saint Clement from the capital, sending him to the Crimea, to work at a stone quarry near the city of Cherson. Many of the saint's disciples followed after him voluntarily, preferring to go into exile rather than live without their spiritual Father.

When he arrived at the place of exile, Saint Clement found many Christian believers there, sentenced to labor under harsh conditions amidst a scarcity of water. He prayed together with the condemned, and the Lord appeared to him in the form of a lamb and revealed the location of a spring, from which gushed forth a veritable river of water. This miracle attracted a multitude of people to Saint Clement. Hearing the zealous preacher, hundreds of pagans were converted to Christ. Each day 500 or more men were baptized. And there in the stone quarry, a church was built, in which he served as priest.

The apostolic activity of the saint aroused the wrath of the emperor Trajan, and he ordered that Saint Clement be drowned. They threw the martyr into the sea with an anchor tied to his neck. This occurred in the year 101.

The saint's faithful disciples Cornelius and Fibus asked the people to pray that the Lord would permit them to see the martyr's body. The sea drew back a distance of three miles from the shore and the people walked out on the seabed until they found a marble cave shaped like a church. There they found the incorrupt body of their archpastor in this "Angelic Church" formed by God. After this, each year on the anniversary of Saint Clement's martyric death the sea receded, and for seven days Christians were able to venerate his holy relics.

During the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Nikēphoros (802-811), by divine providence, the sea failed to withdraw, and the relics of Saint Clement became inaccessible for fifty years. In the time of the emperor Michael and his mother Theodora (855-867), Saints Cyril and Methodius visited Cherson. When they learned of the concealed relics of Saint Clement, they asked Bishop George of Cherson to pray that the Lord would show them the relics of the hieromartyr.

Saints Cyril and Methodius walked along the shore in procession with the clergy who came with them from Constantinople. Through the fervent prayers of everyone gathered there, the holy relics of Saint Clement miraculously appeared on the surface of the sea at midnight. They solemnly took them to the Church of the Holy Apostles at Constantinople. A portion of the relics were then brought to Rome by Saints Cyril and Methodius, but a large portion of the relics was later brought to Kiev by the holy Prince Vladimir (July 15) and placed in the Desyatin-Tithe church, together with the relics of Saint Fibus, where a chapel dedicated to Saint Clement had been built. The hieromartyr Clement is widely venerated in Russia. From ancient times, many churches have been dedicated to him.

Saint Clement, who belongs to the Apostolic Fathers, has left to us a spiritual legacy (two Epistles to the Corinthians) the first written examples of Christian teaching after the writings of the holy Apostles.

#### \*\*\*\* THE ENTRY OF THE MOST HOLY MOTHER OF GOD INTO THE TEMPLE

According to Holy Tradition, the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple took place in the following manner. The parents of the Virgin Mary, Saints Joachim and Anna, praying for an end to their childlessness, vowed that if a child were born to them, they would dedicate it to the service of God.

When the Most Holy Virgin reached the age of three, the holy parents decided to fulfill their vow. They gathered together their relatives and acquaintances, and dressed the All-Pure Virgin in Her finest clothes. Singing sacred songs and with lighted candles in their hands, virgins escorted Her to the Temple (Ps. 44/45:14-15). There the High Priest and several priests met the handmaiden of God. In the Temple, fifteen high steps led to the sanctuary, which only the priests and High Priest could enter. (Because they recited a Psalm on each step, Psalms 119/120-133/134 are called "Psalms of Ascent.") The child Mary, so it seemed, could not make it up this stairway. But just as they placed Her on the first step, strengthened by the power of God, She quickly went up the remaining steps and ascended to the highest one. Then the High Priest, through inspiration from above, led the Most Holy Virgin into the Holy of Holies, where only the High Priest entered once a year to offer a purifying sacrifice of blood. Therefore, all those present in the Temple were astonished at this most unusual occurrence.

After entrusting their child to the Heavenly Father, Joachim and Anna returned home. The All-Holy Virgin remained in the quarters for virgins near the Temple. According to the testimony of Holy Scripture (Exodus 38; 1 Kings 1: 28; Luke 2: 37), and also the historian Josephus Flavius, there were many living quarters around the Temple, in which those who were dedicated to the service of God dwelt.

The earthly life of the Most Holy Theotokos from Her infancy until She was taken up to Heaven is shrouded in deep mystery. Her life at the Jerusalem Temple was also a secret. "If anyone were to ask me," said Saint Jerome, "how the Most Holy Virgin spent the time of Her youth, I would answer that that is known to God Himself and the Archangel Gabriel, Her constant guardian."

But there are accounts in Church Tradition, that during the All-Pure Virgin's stay at the Temple, She grew up in a community of pious virgins, diligently read the Holy Scripture, occupied Herself with handicrafts, prayed constantly, and grew in love for God. From ancient times, the Church has celebrated the Feast of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple. Indications that the Feast was observed in the first centuries of Christianity are found in the traditions of Palestinian Christians, which say that the holy Empress Helen (May 21) built a church in honor of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple.

Saint Gregory of Nyssa, in the fourth century, also mentions this Feast. In the eighth century Saints Germanus and Tarasius, Patriarchs of Constantinople, delivered sermons on the Feast of the Entry.

The Feast of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple foretells God's blessing for the human race, the preaching of salvation, the promise of the coming of Christ.

#### \*\*\*\* REPOSE OF SAINT ALEXANDER NEVSKY

The Holy Prince Alexander Nevsky was born on May 30, 1220 in the city of Pereslavl-Zalessk. His father Yaroslav II, Theodore in Baptism (+1246), "a gentle, kindly and genial prince", was the younger son of Vsevolod III Large Nest (+ 1212), brother of the Holy Prince Yuri Vsevolodovich (February 4). Saint Alexander's mother, Theodosia Igorevna, a Ryazan princess, was Yaroslav's third wife. Their older son was the Holy Prince Theodore (June 5), who departed to the Lord at age fifteen. Saint Alexander was their second son.

His childhood was spent at Pereslavl-Zalessk, where his father was prince. The princely tonsure of the lad Alexander (a ceremony of initiation to be soldier) was done in the Savior Transfiguration Cathedral of Pereslavl by Saint Simon, Bishop of Suzdal (May 10), one of the compilers of the Kiev Caves Paterikon (Lives of the Fathers). From this Elder-hierarch, Saint Alexander received his first blessing for military service in the name of God, to defend the Russian Church and the Russian Land.

In 1227 Prince Yaroslav, at the request of the people of Novgorod, was sent by his brother Yuri, the Great Prince of Vladimir, to rule as prince in Novgorod the Great. He took with him his sons, Saints Theodore and Alexander. Dissatisfied with the Vladimir princes, the people of Novgorod soon invited Saint Michael of Chernigov (September 20), and in February 1229 Yaroslav with his sons departed to Pereslavl. The matter ended peacefully: in 1230 Yaroslav with his sons returned to Novgorod, and Saint Michael's daughter Theodosia was betrothed to Saint Theodore, the elder brother of Saint Alexander. After the death of the bridegroom in 1233 the young princess went to a monastery and became famous in monastic exploits as the nun Saint Euphrosynē of Suzdal (September 25).

From his early years Saint Alexander went along on his father's campaigns. In 1235 he participated in a battle at the River Emajogi (in present-day Estonia), where the forces of Yaroslav totally routed the Germans. In the following year Yaroslav went to Kiev, "settling" his son, Saint Alexander, to rule independently as prince at Novgorod. In 1239 Saint Alexander entered into marriage, taking as wife the daughter of the Polotsian prince Briacheslav. Some histories relate that the day the princess was baptized was the Name Day of her saintly spouse, and she was named Alexandra. His father, Yaroslav, blessed them at betrothal with the holy wonderworking icon of the Theodore Mother of God (the father was named Theodore in Baptism). Afterwards, Saint Alexander constantly prayed before this icon. Later, it was taken from the Gorodetsk Monastery, where he died, by his brother Basil of Kostroma (+1276), and transferred to Kostroma.

A very troublesome time had begun in Russian history: from the East came the Mongol Horde destroying everything in their path; from the West came the forces of the Teutonic Knights, which blasphemously and with the blessing of the Roman Pope, called itself "Cross-bearers" by wearing the Cross of the Lord. In this terrible hour the Providence of God raised up for the salvation of Russia holy Prince Alexander, a great warrior, man of prayer, ascetic and upholder of the Land of Russia. "Without the command of God there would not have been his prince."

Abetted by the invasion of Batu, by the ruin of Russian cities, by the dismay and grief of the nation, by the destruction of its finest sons and leaders, a horde of crusaders made incursions into the borders of Russia. First were

the Swedes. "A king of Roman faith from the midnight land," Sweden, in 1240 gathered a great armed force and sent them to the Neva on many ships under the command of his son-in-law, YarI (Prince) Birger. The haughty Swede sent his messengers to Novgorod to say to Saint Alexander: "Fight me if you have the courage, for I am already here and I am taking your land captive."

Saint Alexander, then not yet twenty years old, prayed a long time in the church of Saint Sophia, the Wisdom of God. He recited the Psalm of David, saying: "Judge, O Lord, those who injure me, fight against those who fight against me. Take hold of shield and buckler, and rise up to help me" (Ps. 34/35). Archbishop Spyridon blessed the holy prince and his army for the battle. Leaving the church, Saint Alexander exhorted his troops with words of faith: "The power of God is not in numbers, but in truth." With a smaller force, trusting in the Holy Trinity, the prince hastened towards the enemy to await help from his father, not knowing whether the enemy would attack, nor when.

But there was a miraculous omen: at dawn on July 15 the warrior Pelgui, in Baptism Philip, saw a boat, and on it were the Holy Martyrs Boris and Gleb, in royal purple attire. Boris said: "Brother Gleb, let us help our kinsman Alexander." When Pelgui reported the vision to the prince, Saint Alexander commanded that no one should speak about the miracle. Emboldened by this, he urged the army to fight valiantly against the Swedes.

"There was a great slaughter of the Latins, and a countless multitude was killed, and their leader was left with a mark upon his face from a sharp spear." An angel of God invisibly helped the Orthodox army: when morning came, on the opposite bank of the River Izhora, where the army of Saint Alexander was unable to proceed, was a multitude of the slain enemy. Because of this victory at the River Neva on July 15, 1240, the nation called the saint Alexander Nevsky.

The Teutonic Knights remained a dangerous enemy. In a lightning-quick campaign in 1241 Saint Alexander recaptured the ancient Russian fortress of Kopore, expelling the knights. But in 1242, the Germans succeeded capturing Pskov. The enemy boasted of "subjecting all the Slavic nation." Saint Alexander, setting forth in a winter campaign, liberated Pskov, that ancient home of the Holy Trinity, and in spring of the year 1242 fought a decisive battle against the Teutonic Order. On the ice of Lake Chud both armies clashed on April 5, 1242. Raising his hands towards the heavens, Saint Alexander prayed: "Judge me, O God, and judge my strife with a boastful nation and grant help to me, O God, as to Moses of old against Amalek, and to my great-grandfather Yaroslav the Wise against accursed Svyatopolk."

By his prayer, by the help of God, and by military might the Crusaders were completely destroyed. There was a terrible slaughter, and there was such a crashing of striking spears and swords that it seemed as though the frozen lake were in motion and not solid ice, since it was covered with blood. When they turned to flee, the enemy was pursued and slashed by Alexander's army "as if they sped through the air, and there was nowhere for the enemy to flee." Later, they led a multitude of captives behind the holy prince, marching in disgrace.

Contemporaries clearly understood the universal historical significance of the Great Battle of the Ice, and the name of Saint Alexander was celebrated throughout Holy Russia, "through all the lands, from the Egyptian Sea to Mount Ararat, from both sides of the Varangian Sea to Great Rome."

The western boundaries of the Russian land were safely secured, and it was time to guard Russia from the East. In 1242 Saint Alexander Nevsky and his father Yaroslav journeyed to the Horde. Metropolitan Cyril blessed them for this new service of many hardships: it was necessary to turn the Tatars from enemies and plunderers into honorable allies, and this required "the meekness of an angel and the wisdom of a snake."

The Lord crowned the holy mission of the defenders of the Russian land with success, but this required years of hardship and sacrifice. Having made an alliance with Khan Batu, Prince Yaroslav was required to travel to faraway Mongolia, to the capital of all the nomadic empire. The situation of Batu himself being precarious, he sought the support of the Russian princes, wishing to break with his own Golden Horde from faraway Mongolia. And there in turn, they trusted neither Batu nor the Russians.

Prince Yaroslav was poisoned. He died in agony, surviving the Holy Martyr Michael of Chernigov, whose relative he nearly became, by only ten days. Since his father bequeathed him an alliance with the Golden Horde, it was necessary for Saint Alexander Nevsky to hold fast to it in order to avert a new devastation of Russia. Sartak, the son of Batu, had accepted Christianity, and was in charge of Russian affairs with the Horde. He became his friend, and like a brother to him. Vowing his support, Saint Alexander allowed Batu to launch a campaign against Mongolia, to become the chief power in all the Great Steppes, and to raise up the Tatar Christian leader, Khan Munke (most of his Tatar Christians were Nestorians) on the throne in Mongolia.

Not all the Russian princes possessed the wisdom of Saint Alexander Nevsky. Many hoped for European help in the struggle against the Mongol Yoke. Saint Michael of Chernigov, Prince Daniel of Galich, and Andrew, Saint Alexander's brother, conducted negotiations with the Roman Pope. But Saint Alexander well knew the fate of Constantinople, seized and devastated by Crusaders in the year 1204. His own personal experience taught him not to trust the West. The alliance of Daniel of Galich with the Pope, giving him nothing in return, was a betrayal of Orthodoxy, a unia with Rome. Saint Alexander did not want this to happen to his Church.

When ambassadors of the Roman Pope appeared in 1248 to seduce him also, he wrote in answer that the Russians were faithful to the Church of Christ and to the belief of the Seven Ecumenical Councils: "These we know very well, but we do not accept your teaching." Catholicism was unsuitable for the Russian Church, and a unia signified a rejection of Orthodoxy, a rejection of the source of spiritual life, a rejection of the historical future foreordained by God, and the dooming of itself to spiritual death.

In the year 1252 many Russian cities rose up against the Tatar Yoke, supporting Andrew Yaroslavich. The situation was very risky. Again there arose a threat to the very existence of Russia. Saint Alexander had to journey to the Horde once more, in order to prevent a punitive Tatar incursion on the Russian lands. Defeated, Andrew fled to the Swedes seeking the help of those very robbers whom his great brother had crushed with the help of God at the Neva.

Saint Alexander became the ruling Great Prince of All Rus: Vladimir, Kiev and Novgorod. A great responsibility before God and history lay upon his shoulders. In 1253, he repelled a new German incursion against Pskov; in 1254 he made a treaty with Norway concerning peacetime borders; in 1256 he went on a campaign to the Finnish land. The chronicler called it "the dark campaign," because the Russian army went along through the polar night, "going to impassable places, unable to see either day or night". Into the darkness of paganism Saint Alexander brought the light of Gospel preaching and Orthodox culture. All the coastal region was enlightened and opened up by the Russians.

In 1256 Khan Batu died, and soon his son Sartak was poisoned, the one who was like a brother to Alexander Nevsky. The holy prince journeyed a third time to Sarai in order to confirm peaceful relations of Rus and the Horde with the new Khan, Berke. Although the successor to Batu had accepted Islam, he needed the alliance with Orthodox Rus. In 1261, by the diligent efforts of Saint Alexander and Metropolitan Cyril, a diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church was established at Sarai, the capital of the Golden Horde.

There followed an epoch of great Christianization of the pagan East, and Saint Alexander Nevsky prophetically speculated about the historical vocation of Rus. The holy prince used every possibility to uplift his native land and the ease its allotted cross. In 1262 by his decree in many of the cities the Tatar collectors of tribute and the conscription of soldiers were stopped. They waited for a Tatar reprisal. But the great intercessor of the nation again journeyed to the Horde and he wisely directed the event into quite another channel. Having been dismissed for the uprising of the Russians, Khan Berke ceased to send tribute to Mongolia and proclaimed the Golden Horde an independent entity, making it a veritable shield for Russia from the East. In this great uniting of the Russian and Tatar lands and peoples the future multi-national Russian State was matured and strengthened. Later, within the bounds of the Russian Church, was encompassed nearly the entire legacy of Ghenghis Khan to the coasts of the Pacific Ocean.

This diplomatic journey of Saint Alexander Nevsky to Sarai was his fourth and last. The future of Rus was rescued, his duty before God was fulfilled. But his power was wholly devoted, and his life put to the service of the Russian

Church. On the return journey from the Horde Saint Alexander fell deathly ill. Unable to reach Vladimir, in a monastery at Gorodets the prince-ascetic gave up his spirit to the Lord on November 14, 1263, completing his difficult earthly path by receiving the monastic schema with the name of Alexis.

Metropolitans Cyril, the spiritual Father and companion of the holy prince, said in the funeral eulogy: "Know, my child, that already the sun has set for the land of Suzdal. There will be no greater prince in the Russian land." They took his holy body to Vladimir, the journey lasted nine days, and the body remained undecayed.

On November 23, before his burial at the Nativity Monastery in Vladimir, there was manifest by God "a wondrous miracle and worthy of memory." When the body of Saint Alexander was placed in the crypt, the steward Sebastian and Metropolitan Cyril wanted to take his hand, in order to put in it the spiritual gramota (document of absolution). The holy prince, as though alive, reached out his hand and took the document from the hand of the Metropolitan. "Because of their terror, and they were barely able to stumble from his tomb. Who would not be astonished at this, since he was dead and the body was brought from far away in the winter time."

Thus did God glorify the saintly Soldier-Prince Alexander Nevsky. The universal Church glorification of Saint Alexander Nevsky took place under Metropolitan Macarius at the Moscow Cathedral in 1547. The Canon to the saint was compiled at that time by the monk Michael of Vladimir.

#### \*\*\*\* THE WONDERWORKING KURSK ROOT ICON OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

In the 13th century, during the dreadful period of the Tartar invasion of Russia, the devastated province of Kursk was emptied of people and its principal city, Kursk, became a wilderness. Now, the residents of the city of Rylsk, which had been preserved from invasion, often journeyed to the site of Kursk to hunt wild beasts. One of the hunters, going along the bank of the river Skal, which was not very far from ruined Kursk, noticed an icon lying face down on the ground next to the root of a tree. The hunter picked it up and found that it was an icon of the Sign, such as was enshrined and venerated in the city of Novgorod. At this time, the icon's first miracle was worked, for no sooner had the hunter picked up the sacred image than there immediately gushed forth with great force an abundant spring of pure water. This took place on September 8th in the year 1295.

The hunter constructed a small wooden chapel and placed the newly manifested image of the Mother of God therein. The residents of Rylsk began to visit the place of the manifestation of this holy object and the icon was glorified by miracles all the more. Prince Vasily Shemyaka of Rylsk ordered that the icon be brought to the city of Rylsk itself and this was done in a solemn manner, for the people of the city went forth to meet the icon of the Mother of God; but Shemyaka himself declined to attend the festivities and for this reason was punished with blindness. The prince, however, repented and straightway received healing. Moved by this miracle, Shemyaka constructed a church in the city of Rylsk in honor of the Nativity of the All-Holy Theotokos, and there the miraculous icon was enshrined on September 8th, the day of its manifestation, appointed as the annual feast date.

But the icon vanished in a miraculous manner and returned to the place of its original appearance. The residents of Rylsk continually brought it back, but each time it returned to its former place. Then, understanding that the Mother of God was well pleased to dwell in the place of the manifestation of her image, they eventually left it there in peace. Innumerable pilgrimages streamed to the site and services of supplication were celebrated there by a certain priest whose name was Bogoliub and who dwelt at the site of the wooden chapel and struggled there in asceticism.

In the year 1383, the province of Kursk was subjected to a new invasion of Tartars. They decided to set fire to the chapel, but it refused to burn, even though they piled up fuel all around it, and so the superstitious barbarians fell upon the priest Bogoliub, accusing him of sorcery. The pious priest denounced their foolishness and pointed out the icon of the Mother of God to them. The malicious Tartars laid hold of the holy icon and cut it in two, casting the pieces to either side. The chapel then caught fire and the priest Bogoliub was carried off a prisoner.

In his captivity, the God-loving elder kept the Faith, placing his hope on the all-holy Mother of God, and his hope did not fail him. Now, one day as he was guarding flocks and passing the time by singing prayers and doxologies in honor of the Mother of God, there passed by some emissaries of the Tsar of Moscow.

They heard this chanting, arranged to ransom the priest from captivity, and Bogoliub returned to the former site of the chapel. There he found the pieces of the miraculous icon which the Tartars had cast away. He picked them up and straightway they grew together, although the signs of the split remained. Learning of this miracle, the residents of Rylsk gave glory to God and to His all-pure Mother. Again they attempted to transfer the holy icon to their city, but once more the miraculous image returned to its former place. A new chapel was then built on the original site of the icon's appearance and here it remained for about 200 years.

The city of Kursk was revived in the year 1597 at the command of Theodore Ivanovich of Moscow. This pious Tsar, who had heard of the miracles of the icon, expressed his desire to behold it, and in Moscow, the icon was greeted with great solemnity. The Tsaritsa, Irene Theodorovna, adorned the holy icon with a precious riza. At the command of the Tsar, the icon was set in a silver-gilt frame upon which were depicted the Lord of Hosts and prophets holding scrolls in their hands. The icon was subsequently returned and, with the close cooperation of the Tsar, a monastery was founded on the site of the chapel. A church, dedicated to the Life-bearing Spring, was built above the same spring that had appeared when the icon was first revealed and the monastery attached to it was called the Kursk Root Hermitage in honor of the manifestation of the icon at the root of the tree.

During an invasion of Crimean Tartars, the icon was transferred to the cathedral church of Kursk, and an exact copy was left at the Hermitage. Tsar Boris Godunov bestowed many precious gifts for the adornment of the icon and even the pretender, the false Dimitry, who desired to call attention to himself and to win the support of those who lived in the vicinity of Kursk, venerated this icon and placed it in the royal mansions where it remained until the year 1615.

While the icon was absent from the city of Kursk, the grace-bearing aid of the Mother of God did not forsake that city, for when in the year 1612 the Poles laid siege to Kursk, certain of the citizens beheld the Mother of God and two radiant monks above the city. Captured Poles related that they, too, had beheld a woman and two radiant men on the city walls, and that this woman made threatening gestures at those who were conducting the siege. The citizens then made a vow to construct a monastery in honor of the all-holy Theotokos and to place the miraculous icon therein. The besiegers were quickly put to flight and in gratitude to their heavenly helper, the people of Kursk built a monastery in honor of the all-holy Theotokos of the Sign.

In 1676, the icon of the Mother of God of the Sign was borne to the Don River to bless the forces of the Don Cossacks. In 1684, a copy of the miraculous icon of the all-holy Theotokos of the Sign was sent to the Monastery of the Root by the sovereigns and great princes Ivan and Peter Alexievich. This copy was set in a silver-gilt frame and a command was made that this copy be borne wherever Orthodox warriors went into battle.

In the year 1812, the Kursk Civic Society sent to General Kutuzov a copy of the miraculous icon of Kursk, setting it in a silver-gilt frame. The commander expressed his gratitude to the citizens of Kursk and his belief that Kursk would remain free, thanks to the protection of the Queen of Heaven.

In March of 1898 a group of anarchists, desiring to undermine the faith of the people in the wonderworking power of the icon, decided to destroy it. They placed a time bomb in the Cathedral of the Sign, and at two o'clock in the morning a horrendous explosion rent the air and all the walls of the monastery were shaken. The frightened monastic brethren rushed immediately to the cathedral, where they beheld a scene of horrible devastation. The force of the blast had shattered the gilded canopy above the icon. The heavy marble base, constructed of several massive steps, had been jolted out of position and split into several pieces. A huge metal candlestick which stood before the icon and been blown to the opposite side of the cathedral. A door of cast iron located near the icon had been torn from its hinges and cast outside, where it smashed against a wall and caused a deep crack. All the windows in the cathedral and even those in the dome above were shattered. Amid the general devastation, the holy icon remained intact and even the glass within the frame remained whole. Thinking to destroy the icon, the anarchists had, on the contrary, become the cause of its greater glorification.

Every year on Friday of the ninth week after Pascha, the icon of the Sign was solemnly borne in procession from the Kursk Cathedral of the Sign to the place of its original manifestation at the Kursk Hermitage, where it remained

until September 12. On September 13, it was again solemnly returned to the city of Kursk. This procession was instituted in the year 1618 in memory of the transfer of the icon from Moscow to Kursk and to commemorate its original appearance.

During the Bolshevik revolution, the icon was removed from the Cathedral of the Sign on April 12, 1918. Search was made for the icon but without result. The holy object was discovered under the following circumstances: Not far from the monastery there lived a poor girl and her mother who for three days had not had anything to eat. At that time Kursk was controlled by the Bolshevik regime. On May 3, the girl, a seamstress, went off to the marketplace in search of bread. Returning home at about one o'clock in the morning, she passed by a well which, according to tradition, had been dug by St. Theodosius of the Caves. There, on the edge of the well, she beheld a package wrapped in a sack, and when she opened it, in the package she found the sacred icon, which apparently had been left there by those who had stolen it.

At the end of October 1919, when the White Russian Army was evacuating the city of Kursk, twelve monks of the monastery transferred the icon to the city of Belgorod, from which it was again transferred, first to Taganrog and Ekaterinodar, and then to Novorossiisk. During the evacuation, with the permission of Metropolitan Anthony Khrapovitsky who was then President of the Higher Ecclesiastical Administration in Southern Russia, the icon was taken aboard the steamship St. Nicholas by Bishop Theophan of Kursk on March 1, 1920, and was transported to the city of Thessalonica. On April 3, Bishop Theophan took the icon to the city of Pec, the ancient capital of Serbia. For four months the icon remained in Pec, and in September, at the request of Baron Wrangel, it was returned again to the Crimea. A year after departing from the city of Kursk, on October 29, 1920, the holy image again left its native land during the evacuation of the White Army and those Russian people who refused to submit to the Soviet regime. After arriving again in the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, with the blessing of Patriarch Dimitry, the holy icon remained with Bishop Theophan in the Serbian monastery of Yazak on Frushkaya Mountain. From the end of 1927, the icon was to be found in the Russian church of the Holy Trinity in the city of Belgrade.

With the blessing of the Synod of Bishops, Bishop Theophan bore the icon around to various places where Russians of the diaspora dwelt. During World War II, when Belgrade was subjected to bombardment and other tribulations associated with the war, the miraculous icon became a rampart of hope for all that approached it with sincere prayer.

The steadfast companion of those Russian people who did not accept the satanic authority, this great and ancient holy object, which remained in Moscow during the dreadful turmoil of the 17th century, was removed from Yugoslavia in the autumn of 1944 together with those who again fled the godless regime. From ruined Vienna, the icon was borne to the tranquil city of Carlsbad to which the Synod of Bishops had been evacuated. With the approach of the Bolsheviks it was again transferred to Munich in the spring of 1945. The holy icon proved to be an unending consolation to many thousands of people who were experiencing all the trials and tribulations of the latter years of World War II. From Munich the icon was borne to Switzerland, France, Belgium, England, Austria, and many cities and camps in Germany itself. Subsequently, the icon was transferred to the New World where it had its permanent residence first in the New Kursk Hermitage in Mahopac, N.Y., and then in the Synod's Cathedral Church of the Mother of God of the Sign in New York City, the residence of the First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. At present, by decree of the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, a festival is held in honor of the icon at the New Kursk Hermitage in Mahopac, N.Y., on the Sunday nearest the feast of the Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos, and in the Synod's Cathedral of the Mother of God of the Sign in New York City on November 27/ December 10.