

Uncovering of the relics of St Joasaph the Bishop of Belgorod

Commemorated on [September 4](#)

Saint Joasaph was born at Proluka, in the former Poltava governance, on September 8, 1705, the Feast of the Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos. He was descended from the old and venerable Little Russian (Ukrainian) lineage of the Gorlenkovi. At Baptism he was named Joachim.



In 1712, his father enrolled the seven-year-old Joachim in the Kiev Spiritual Academy. Within the walls of the academy he felt attracted to monastic life. For seven years he studied it further, and finally revealed his intention to his parents.

For a long time his mother and father pleaded with their first-born son not to accept monastic tonsure. But in 1725, unknown to them, he became a “rasophore” (“robe-wearing novice”) with the name Hilarion at the Kiev Mezhygorsk monastery, and on 21 November 1727 he was tonsured in the mantya with the name Joasaph at the Kievo-Bratsk monastery. This event coincided with the completion of his studies at the spiritual academy.

After the death of His Grace Barlaam, the See of Kiev was governed by Archbishop Raphael Zaborovsky. Archbishop Raphael noticed the abilities of the young ascetic and assigned him to greater service to the Church. He was entrusted with the responsibility of the office of examiner of the Kiev archbishopric.

In November 1734, Archbishop Raphael ordained the hierodeacon Joasaph as hieromonk, and he was transferred from the Bratsk monastery school to the Kiev-Sophia archbishop’s house. At the same time, he was appointed a member of the Kiev religious consistory.

In fulfilling the office of examiner, he exerted much effort towards the correction of moral deficiencies among the parish clergy. The saint’s service in the consistory office enabled him to develop his administrative abilities. During this time, he made a good study of the needs of clergy-servers, noting both the good points and the failings of the diocese. His talent for administration was combined with his great spiritual effort.

He quickly ascended the ladder of spiritual perfection, which can be seen in his work, “The Conflict of the Seven Venerable Virtues with the Seven Deadly Sins.”

On June 24, 1737 Hieromonk Joasaph was appointed head of the Holy Transfiguration Mgarsk monastery, and elevated to the rank of igumen. Here he worked with all his strength to put the monastery in good order, for it was an old bastion of Orthodoxy in the struggle with the Unia. In this monastery were relics of St Athanasius, Patriarch of Constantinople and Wonderworker of Lubny (May 2). Several times St Athanasius appeared to Igumen Joasaph, as a sign of his patronal protection.

In 1744 Metropolitan Raphael elevated Igumen Joasaph to the dignity of archimandrite. Towards the end of that same year he was called to Moscow and soon, at the direction of the Most Holy Synod, he was appointed vicar of the Holy Trinity Sergiev Lavra monastery. At this monastery of St Sergius he also unstintingly fulfilled obedience to the Church (this year required much exertion for the rebuilding of the monastery after a fire).

On June 2, 1748 at the Peter and Paul cathedral in Peterburg, Archimandrite Joasaph was ordained Bishop of Belgorod. Ascending the archbishop’s throne, St Joasaph strictly concerned himself with piety and the condition of the churches, with the proper celebration of divine services, and especially with the moral condition of his flock.

The saint devoted great attention to the education of the clergy, and the correct observance of churchly norms and traditions. Just as before, the saint worked with all his strength in his archpastoral service, without regard for his health.

On the eve of his repose, the saint forbade his cell attendant Stephen to aspire to the priesthood, and he predicted that if he did not obey him, he would meet with an untimely end. To another cell attendant Basil, the saint indicated that he would be a deacon, but would never become a priest. Later, this prediction was fulfilled. St Joasaph died on December 10, 1754, and was glorified on September 4, 1911.

Church New Year
Commemorated on [September 1](#)

The first day of the Church New Year is also called the beginning of the Indiction. The term Indiction comes from a Latin word meaning, “to impose.” It was originally applied to the imposition of taxes in Egypt. The first worldwide Indiction was in 312 when the Emperor Constantine (May 21) saw a miraculous vision of the Cross in the sky. Before the introduction of the Julian calendar, Rome began the New Year on September 1.

According to Holy Tradition, Christ entered the synagogue on September 1 to announce His mission to mankind (Luke 4:16-22). Quoting Isaiah 61:1-2), the Savior proclaimed, “The spirit of the Lord is upon me; because He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent me to proclaim release to captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord...” This scene is depicted in a Vatican manuscript (Vatican, Biblioteca. Cod. Gr. 1613, p.1).

Tradition says that the Hebrews entered the Promised Land in September.

**WHAT THE ORTHODOX CHURCH
TEACHING ON: SUICIDE**

Question

I was searching through your website for Q&A based upon our church and its beliefs and I was wondering if you can send me any information on suicidal situations and what the Bible has to say about it. Please email me back as soon as possible.

Answer

Our faith teaches us that, no matter how hopeless our plight in life may seem, with God there is always cause to have hope. Our Lord continually emphasizes this, not only by His words, but likewise by His deeds, and most specifically by the miracles that He performed which transformed what often seemed to be hopeless situations into occasions of joy.

As seen in the image of Judas, who sunk into despair and hopelessness and hung himself—he, like the Wise Thief, could have repented and sought and received forgiveness—when one forgets that “with God, all things are possible,” one can indeed sink to such a state of despair that suicide might appear to be a solution. However, as we know, suicide is never a valid solution to life’s trials and difficulties and, as such, it might be termed the ultimate form of despair, the ultimate admission that even with God, there is no hope for one’s life and crises.

God is the Source and Giver of life—life which is sustained by the Holy Spirit, Who dwells within each of us. To willfully take one’s life, then, is to willfully cut oneself off from the Source of one’s life, to project a sense of hopelessness that cannot be reversed, even by the God Who sent His Son into this world precisely to give us the faith and hope to see, to accept, and to share His divine love. There is no problem, no crisis, no sin that is too great to overcome, if only we hold fast to that hope which is, as Scripture teaches, in us by virtue of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, Who abides in us and claims us as God’s own.

Of course, there are many factors to consider in cases of suicide, just as there can be many factors which would lead someone to despair and hopelessness. There are those who would, on the one hand, see suicide as an unpardonable sin, one which precludes one’s salvation. On the other hand, there are those who would acknowledge that one who takes his or her own life cannot possibly be acting in a clear and conscious manner, being overcome by darkness or intense mental or emotional illness. In the case of any given suicide, of course, it is difficult to discern the multitude of factors that can lead to such personal destruction, leading many to reserve personal judgment against a victim of suicide. Complex as the issue can be, one thing, however, is certain: Our lives are not our own but, rather, a gift from God—a sacred gift entrusted to us which must be used wisely, nurtured lovingly, and accepted thankfully, regardless of the difficulties one may encounter. As such, our life is not ours to take, any more than taking the life of another is ours to take.

There are those who would categorically claim that those who commit suicide are victims—victims of overwhelming odds, victims of a bad upbringing, victims of abusive situations or addictions or any number of unfortunate circumstances. Indeed, such can be the case; regardless, it is precisely to lighten such burdens that Our Lord came into the world, proclaiming new life for all who would opt to change their hearts and minds and vision and direction and accept the hope that He freely offers to everyone who desires it, regardless of their sins or odds or upbringing or addictions. In Him, there is no situation, no problem that is too great to overcome; in Him, we are reminded that what overwhelms us today is often forgotten tomorrow, if only we focus on Him in faith, cling to Him in hope, and become one with Him in love.

In short, suicide never solves the problem; rather, it prevents us from putting the problem behind us, with God’s help, while delighting in the new life that He, and He alone, promises to all who place their burdens on Him.