

## **St Tikhon the Patriarch of Moscow, and Enlightener of North America**

Commemorated on April 7

St Tikhon was born in 1865 into a priest's family in rural Russia. His childhood was spent in direct contact with peasants and their labor. From his early years he displayed a particular religious disposition, love for the Church as well as rare meekness and humility.

During his studies at the Pskov Theological Seminary, the the modest seminarian was liked and respected by his fellow seminarians, for his piety, brilliant progress in studies, and constant readiness to help comrades, who often turned to him for explanations of lessons and help in reviewing numerous compositions. Vasily was called “bishop” and “patriarch” by his classmates.

In 1888, at the age of 23, Vasily Belavin graduated from the St Petersburg Theological Academy. He led an austere and chaste life, and in 1891, when he turned 26, he took monastic vows. He embarked on this new way of life consciously and deliberately, desiring to dedicate himself entirely to the service of the Church. The meek and humble young man was given the name Tikhon in honor of St Tikhon of Zadonsk. In 1897, archimandrite Tikhon was consecrated Bishop of Lublin.

Bishop Tikhon devoted his energy to the work of the Church. His attractive moral make-up won the general affection, of not only the Russian population, but also of the Lithuanians and Poles. In 1898, Bishop Tikhon was made Bishop of the Aleutians and Alaska. As head of the Orthodox Church in America, Bishop Tikhon was a zealous laborer in the Lord's vineyard. He did much to promote the spread of Orthodoxy, and to improve his vast diocese. Both clergy and laity loved their archpastor, and held him in such esteem that the Americans made Archbishop Tikhon an

honorary citizen of the United States. In 1901, he blessed the cornerstone for St Nicholas Cathedral in New York, and was also involved in establishing other churches.

In 1905, the American Mission was made an Archdiocese, and St Tikhon was elevated to the rank of Archbishop. He had two vicar bishops whom today we know as St Innocent of Alaska, and St Raphael of Brooklyn. They assisted him in administering his large, ethnically diverse diocese. In 1905, St Tikhon gave his blessing for the establishment of St Tikhon's Monastery.

People everywhere loved him as a friendly, communicative, and wise archpastor. He spoke simply to his subordinates, never resorting to a peremptory or overbearing tone. When he had to reprimand someone, he did so in a good-natured, sometimes joking manner, which encouraged the person to correct his mistakes. He did much in terms of material support for various charitable institutions. His generous soul and love of people clearly manifested themselves everywhere he went. World War I broke out when His Eminence was in Vilna. He spared no effort to help the poor residents of the region who were left poor and homeless as a result of the war with the Germans.

Metropolitan Tikhon was elected as the Patriarch of the Orthodox Church of Russia. He foresaw that his ministry would be filled with affliction and tears, but through all his suffering, he remained the same accessible, unassuming, and kindly person. All who met St Tikhon were surprised by his accessibility, simplicity and modesty. His gentle disposition did not prevent him from showing firmness in Church matters, particularly when he had to defend the Church from her enemies.

The situation was complicated by external circumstances: the change of the political system, by the accession to power of the godless communist regime, by hunger, and civil war. This was a time when Church property was being confiscated, when clergy were subjected to court trials and persecutions, and Christ's Church endured repression.

The summer of 1921 brought a severe famine to the Volga region. Patriarch Tikhon issued a message to the Russian people and to the people of the world, calling them to help famine victims. He gave his blessing for voluntary donations of church valuables, which were not directly used in liturgical services. However, on February 23, 1922, the All-Russian Central Executive Committee published a decree making all valuables subject to confiscation. According to the 73rd Apostolic Canon, such actions were regarded as sacrilege, and the Patriarch could not approve such total confiscation, especially since many doubted that the valuables would be used to combat famine. This forcible confiscation aroused popular indignation everywhere. Nearly two thousand trials were staged all over Russia, and more than ten thousand believers were shot. The Patriarch's message was viewed as sabotage, for which he was imprisoned from April 1922 until June 1923.

He passed away in 1925 and was canonized in 1989.

Patriarch Tikhon did much for the Church and for the strengthening of the Faith itself during difficult years of trial. Perhaps his own words can best sum up his life: "May God teach every one of us to strive for His truth, and for the good of the Holy Church, rather than something for our own sake."

(Adapted from <http://oca.org/saints/lives/2015/04/07/101016-st-tikhon-the-patriarch-of-moscow-and-enlightener-of-north-ameri>)

1. **St Tikhon's personality.** Use at least five adjectives to describe St Tikhon's personality, according to the text:

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2. **St. Tikhon's work for the Church.** Write three sentences about St. Tikhon's contribution to the life of the Church.

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3. **Troparion of St. Tikhon.** Fill in the blanks of the Troparion with the words from the list below:  
people sheep pastor apostolic peace intercessions enlightener providence hope faith

Let us praise Tikhon, the patriarch of all Russia, and \_\_\_\_\_ of North America, an ardent follower of the \_\_\_\_\_ traditions, and good \_\_\_\_\_ of the Church of Christ who was elected by divine \_\_\_\_\_, and laid down his life for his \_\_\_\_\_. Let us sing to him with faith and \_\_\_\_\_, and ask for his hierarchical intercessions: keep the church in Russia in tranquility, and the church in North America in \_\_\_\_\_. Gather her scattered children into one flock, bring to repentance those who have renounced the true \_\_\_\_\_, preserve our lands from civil strife, and entreat God's peace for all \_\_\_\_\_!