

Memory Eternal to Igumen John (Scratch)

The Igumen John (Scratch) 64, a Member of the Monastic Community of St. Silouan, former Dean of the Cathedral of the Annunciation in Ottawa, Ontario, and in retirement Attached to the Bishop's Chapel of St Silouan, fell asleep in the Lord, in his home in the early morning of Jan. 15 2006.

Born in Lethbridge Alberta Canada on Aug. 2nd 1941, to Lydia and Clare Scratch, a Pentecostal Minister, he spent his early life joining his parents and sister Lorraine on missions to the third world and the Orient. It was during one of these trips that he first encountered Orthodoxy as young boy, in the streets of Shanghai China, namely in the presence of St. John Maximovitch. Fr. John would often say that his time in China was a definitive factor and blessing in his journey to and in Orthodoxy.

In 1967 he married Suzanne Park, and continued his studies at Bishops University near Sherbrooke, Quebec. He was ordained a priest in the Anglican Church in early 1969 becoming the sixth generation of Scratches to serve the Lord in this way. By the late 1970s, Fr. John, Matushka Suzanne, and their family, were living in Ottawa. It was during this time, of turmoil and secularization in the Anglican Communion, that he and his family found refuge in the Orthodox Church. In the spring of 1979, Fr. John, Matushka Suzanne, and their six young children, left the financial security of the Anglican Church and were received into the parish of St. Nicholas in Ottawa under the omphor of Archbishop Sylvester of Montreal. He was soon ordained to the diaconate, and then to the priesthood shortly thereafter, and he worked as a security guard to support the family. Later, his wife also found work.

In the winter of 1980, Fr. John, Matushka Suzanne, and a small handful of people, founded the first English Orthodox mission in Ottawa, Holy Transfiguration, in the living room of a house. In March of 1987, Matushka Suzanne suffered a major stroke, forcing Fr. John into semi-retirement, to care for her, and his children. With all of this, Fr. John was still able to shepherd his flock into amalgamation with its mother parish, reuniting the two under the protection of the Mother of God, the Annunciation to the Theotokos-St Nicholas Cathedral.

For the next few years, Fr. John became more involved with the 24-hour care of Matushka Suzanne. After a serious heart attack, he retired fully, but always he was devoting himself to the care and well being of his flock, even if he was often not physically available or accessible. On Jan 10, 1998, Matushka Suzanne fell asleep in the Lord; and after a time of refection, Fr. John came out of retirement, to serve together with the Archpriest Dennis Pihach at St. Herman's Sobor, in Edmonton Alberta.

For a time, Fr. John ministered to the flock in Edmonton, but after a second more serious heart attack, he retired fully again. He moved back to Ottawa, to be with his family, and his ever increasing number of grand children, and later to witness the ordination of his eldest son, Gregory, to the Diaconate in 2003. In August of 2004, Fr. John became as

Bishop Seraphim described, "what he was", in being tonsured a monk, and named John (after the Baptist).

It was in these last few years as a monastic, that Fr. John's witness of faith, perseverance, and suffering for the love of the Lord, was truly blessed, and revealed to others. For him, and those around him, the assurances of the Lord's abundant mercy always brought consolation and peace. It was in this context that he always cared for, and in a fatherly way nurtured those who turned to him. It was in this context that he was a Christ-like pastor, to the very end. In the days just before his death, he was diagnosed with a large tumor in his colon. Immediately, he blessed, and thanked God for all that was given him in his life. He accepted the situation with great peace, and open confidence in His love. He lived in the Scriptures. In one of his last quotations of Scripture, he cited Is. 26:3 "Thou dost keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusts in Thee".

Glory be to God for all things!

Fr. John is survived by his sister Lorraine and her husband Roy, his nephew Gregory, and by his six children: the Rev. Deacon Gregory and Taesia (and the child to be born of her) Scratch, Jeremy and Helen Scratch, the Subdeacon Sebastian and Helen Scratch, Lydia and Michael Holden, the Subdeacon John and Michelle Scratch, Mary-Teresa and Karl Nye; and by his grand children Juliana, Gabriel, Alexandra, Sevastjan, Maria-Suzanne, Taiece, Seraphim, Benjamin, Elizabeth, and Parryn.

Services for the Igumen John are at Annunciation Cathedral in Ottawa (corner of Lebreton N., and Eccles Streets)

Sunday Jan. 15, 7 PM Memorial Service

Monday Jan. 16, 7 PM Memorial Service

Tuesday Jan. 17, 7 PM Monastic Rite of Burial Service

Wednesday Jan. 18, 10 AM Divine Liturgy

Burial at Pinecrest Cemetery, in Ottawa