

PRAYER TO SAINT HERMAN OF ALASKA

O Blessed Hermit of Spruce Island,
good teacher of the faith in the Holy Trinity,
and our Spiritual Father,
intercede before the throne of the Almighty God,
for peace within the Church,
the dispelling of all disunity, faithlessness and discord.

O Holy Father and Patron of the Church in America:
Be a physician to the weak in faith;
be a support to the fallen;
be a defender to the defenceless;
be a bulwark of strength to the weary in spirit;
be a guide to the travelers by sea, by land and by air;
be our heavenly intercessor.

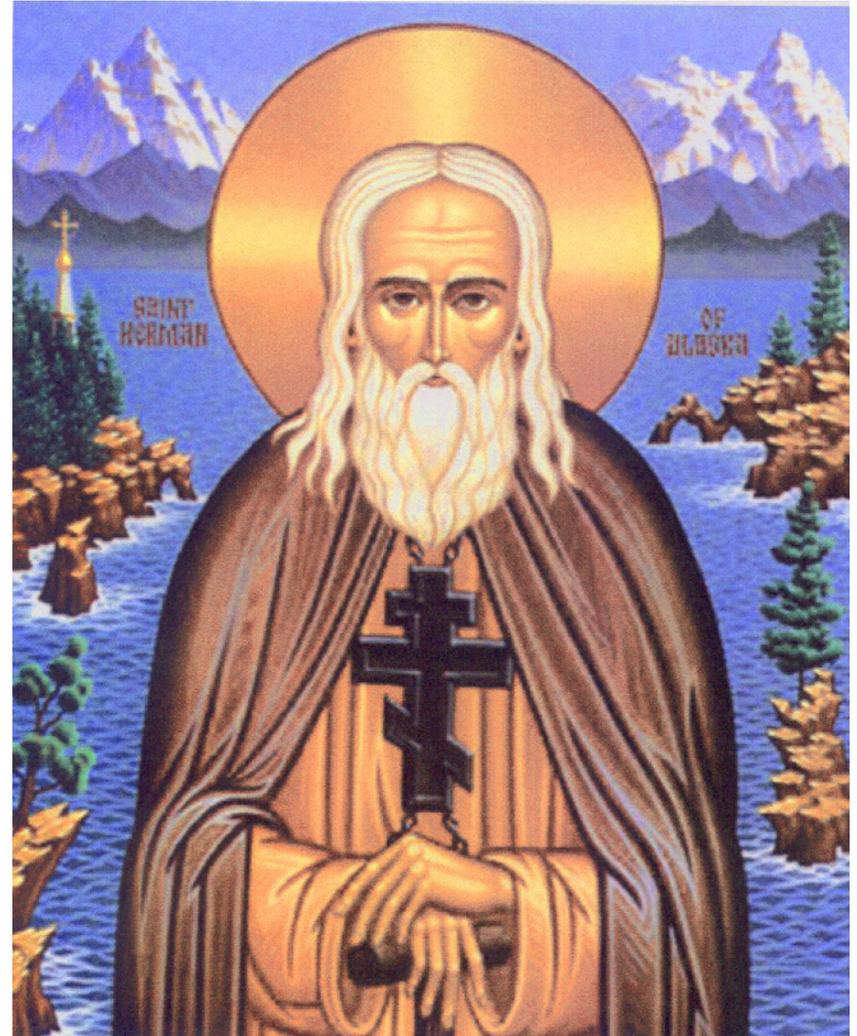
O Blessed Father Herman of Alaska,
together with all the Saints and the Heavenly Hosts,
pray to God that on each of us He will bestow
wisdom for our mind,
strength for our will,
light for our spirit,
enabling us to attain to the true peace of life
which is from God alone.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Troparion to Saint Herman of Alaska (Tone 4)

O blessed Father Herman of Alaska,
North star of Christ's holy Church,
The light of your holy life and great deeds
Guides those who follow the Orthodox way.
Together we lift high the Holy Cross
You planted firmly in America.
Let all behold and glorify Jesus Christ,
Singing his holy Resurrection.

Saint Herman of Alaska **“Wonderworker of All America”**



**O, Blessed Father Herman,
pray unto God for us!**

The Amazing Life and Work of Saint Herman of Alaska

Valaam is a famous monastery in northern Russia. It is a very spiritual place. Many monks from Valaam became saints. St. Herman became a monk at the Trinity-Sergius Hermitage (near St. Petersburg) when he was sixteen years old. Then he moved to Valaam Monastery to live the life of a hermit monk in the forest.

In 1793, a group of ten men from Valaam were sent on a **spiritual mission to North America** to preach the Gospel to the native peoples. The members of this historical mission were Archimandrite Joseph Bolotoff, the Hieromonks Juvenal, Macarius, Athanasius, Stephan and Nectarius, Hierodeacons Nectarius and Stephen, and the monks Joasaph, and Herman.

In **Alaska**, they baptized thousands of native persons who became Orthodox believers, and a school and a church were built where the missionaries lived. But there were many hardships and tragedies. Hieromonk Juvenal was killed, becoming a martyr. Archimandrite Joasaph, who had just been elevated to the rank of Bishop, drowned in a shipwreck during a severe storm. The others died one after another until in the end only St. Herman remained.

He then moved to **Spruce Island**, a small tree-covered island with a small stream in its middle. St. Herman was spiritually close to the holy elders at Valaam, so after he came to Spruce Island he called the place **“New Valaam.”** There he dug a cave out of the ground with his own hands, and he lived in it his first summer. For winter a tiny cabin was built for him. This was his **“cell” (monk’s dwelling place)**, and he lived there for 40 years until his death. A wooden chapel and a wooden building used as a school and guest house were built nearby. He converted the cave into a place for his burial.

St. Herman grew vegetables in a large garden near his cell. He used seaweed to fertilize the soil. The basket that he used to carry the seaweed from the shore was large and heavy, but he was seen carrying it for a long distance without any help at all. St. Herman gave away or traded most of what he grew in his garden. He worked hard, and everything that he acquired as a result of his work he used for feeding and clothing orphans and for books for his students.

Someone once asked, “How do you manage to live alone in the forest, Father Herman? Don’t you ever become lonesome?” He answered, “No I am not there alone! God is here, as **God is everywhere.**”

St. Herman’s mission was to the **Aleut people**. Some asked for spiritual advice. Some sought help when there was oppression against the native peoples. Some asked him to intercede to settle arguments in their communities and families. And some asked for help in providing for the needs of their children. He **helped everyone** who asked.

St. Herman especially **loved children**. He made large quantities of biscuits and treats for them. And the children loved him and called him **“Apa,”** an Aleutian word that means **Elder** or **Grandfather**.

St. Herman’s **love for others** was so great that he denied himself even food so that others would have enough. When he was a guest somewhere, he took tiny portions or went without dinner because he did not want to eat food that others might need. In his cell his meal was a small fish or some vegetables. His body became very thin as a result of his work and fasting. He prayed to God to give him **spiritual and physical strength**, and God granted his prayer. His disciple, whose name was Gerasim, saw him one winter night carrying a large log which normally would be carried by four men; and he was bare footed.

In the tradition of hermit monks who care for the needs of others, St. Herman wore the oldest possible clothes to show his **humility** before God. His cassock was an old faded **riasa (monk’s robe)** that was full of patched holes. He did not wear a shirt; instead he wore a deer skin smock. His **klobuk (monastic head covering)** was made by himself. He also wore a cross fastened across his body by heavy chains. He went everywhere and in all seasons in these clothes: in rain, snowstorms, and below-freezing weather.

A small bench covered with a deerskin was St. Herman’s bed, and he used two bricks for a pillow. Instead of a blanket, he covered himself with a wooden board that he warmed on the stove.

St. Herman lived to the age of 81. When he knew that his time had come to die, he quietly bowed his head on his disciple Gerasim’s chest. Then the cell was filled with a sweet-smelling scent, and his face glowed. It was the 25th day of December, 1837 (**December 13** according to the Julian Calendar.) A government official forbade a burial until he could be there, but it was the time of winter storms and no ship could sail to Spruce Island. Although St. Herman’s body lay in state for a full month in the warm house of his students, his face did not undergo any change at all, and not the slightest odor emanated from his body. The people who witnessed this knew that this was a sign that he was a saint.