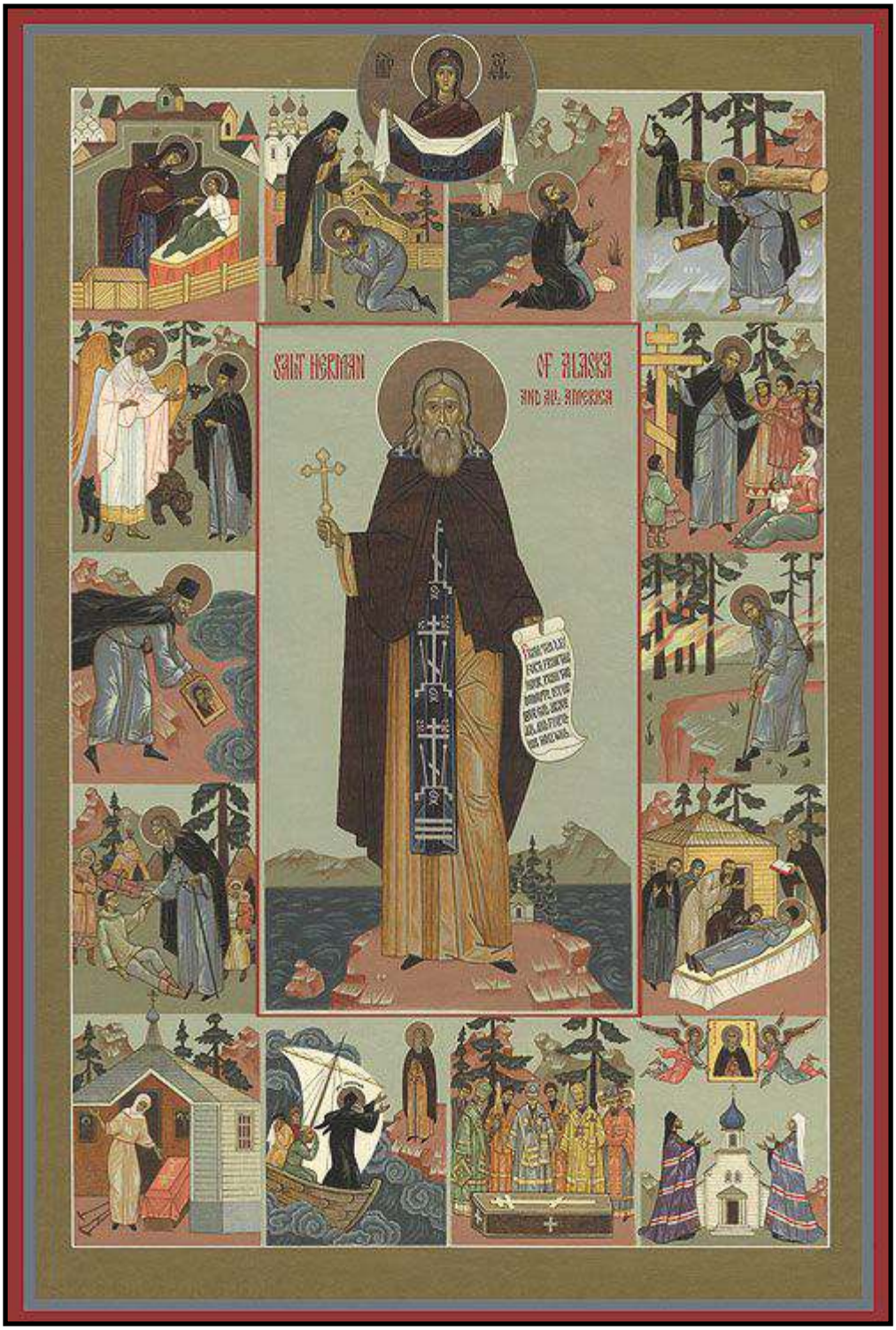
Saint Herman of Alaska

Wonderworker of All America

1 As a teenager, the Mother of God healed Saint Herman from a disfiguring abscess.

2 Abbot Nazarius blessed Saint Herman and companions before they left for Alaska.

3 Saint Herman and his companions arrive in Kodiak, Alaska in 1794.



4 Saint Herman chose Spruce Island for his hermitage, which he called "New Valaam."

5 Saint Herman was never alone on Spruce Island. He befriended the animals and conversed with the angels.

6 Everyone – especially the children – loved listening to Saint Herman as he shared the Gospel.

7 Fearing a tidal wave, Saint Herman placed an icon of the Mother of God on the shore, preventing a flood.

8 Saint Herman prayed and dug a ditch around his hermitage, which was saved from a raging fire.

9 Saint Herman ministered to many who had been afflicted by a smallpox epidemic.

10 After his death on December 13, 1837, Saint Herman was buried in his beloved "New Valaam."

11 In 1907, a woman with a serious leg ailment prayed at Saint Herman's grave. Miraculously, she was cured of her ailment through his intercession.

12 In 1842, the newly consecrated Bishop Innocent prayed to Saint Herman when his ship – en route from Russia to Alaska – encountered a terrible storm. Immediately, the storm subsided.

13 In August 1970, Father Herman was glorified as North America's first saint in special services celebrated in Kodiak, Alaska, and his relics were enshrined in Holy Resurrection Cathedral.

14 After Saint Herman's glorification in 1970, his veneration spread across Alaska and all North America.

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Saint Herman was born between 1756 and 1760 to a merchant family in Serpukhov, Russia. His birth name is not known.

As a teenager, and already a monk at the Trinity-Saint Sergius Monastery, he had extraordinary spiritual experiences. When a large, disfiguring abscess appeared on his neck, making it almost impossible for him to swallow, he thought death was near. He prayed through the night before the icon of the Mother of God, finally falling exhausted into sleep. He dreamed that the Mother of God healed him, and awaking in the morning he found that the abscess was completely healed **[1]**.

After five or six years, Saint Herman moved to Valaam Monastery on Lake Ladoga. He loved the place and his brother monks. About the Abbot he later wrote, "Your fatherly goodness, humble one, will be erased from my heart neither by the terrible, impassable Siberian lands, nor by the dark forests." In 1794, the abbot chose him as one of the monks who would go to America as missionaries. Abbot Nazarius is shown **[2]** blessing them for their voyage.

The 7300-mile, 293-day journey was the longest in Orthodox missionary history. On September 24, 1794, the group – Archimandrite Joasaph, Hieromonks Juvenal and Athanasius, Hierodeacons Nectarius and Stephen, and Monks Joasaph and Herman – arrived in Kodiak, Alaska. They thanked God for their safe arrival **[3]**.

These zealous men baptized thousands of natives, built schools and constructed a church. But over the years, the lives of the others were lost in various ways, until only Saint Herman was left.

Choosing Spruce Island for his hermitage, and calling it "New Valaam," Saint Herman carried on his missionary work as humbly as ever, but some knew he was a wonderworker. One winter night, a disciple was astounded to see him barefoot, carrying a log so heavy that it was normally borne by four men **[4]**.

Saint Herman's holiness enabled him to live in harmony with wild animals and to converse with angels. When asked how he could live alone in the forest, he replied, "God is there, as everywhere. The angels are there as well. With whom is it more pleasant to converse, angels or men? Angels, of course" **[5]**. His gentleness won Saint Herman the love of children, for whom he baked cookies and biscuits. Everyone responded to his thoughtful preaching and his care for their needs **[6]**.

Saint Herman protected his beloved native people, whether from severe governors or natural disasters. When a tidal wave threatened to flood the land, he placed an icon of the Mother of God on the shore and assured the people that the wave would not go past it. His prayers kept the wave safely in check **[7]**. On another occasion, he dug a ditch around his hermitage to protect it from a forest fire. Just as he predicted, the fire was immediately extinguished **[8]**. And during a terrible month-long smallpox epidemic, he visited and prayed with the victims and their families, urging them to repentance and preparing the dying for the end **[9]**.

Saint Herman died on December 13, 1837. That night, a vision of a man rising from Spruce Island into the clouds was seen in various places. Though his body stayed in the warm home of his disciples for one month, there was no sign of decomposition. They buried him on his beloved Spruce Island, his "New Valaam" **[10]**.

Even after Saint Herman's death, miracles continued. A woman who prayed at his grave in 1907, on crutches and suffering with terrible leg pain, found that she could walk unaided and free of pain **[11]**. In 1842, another saint, Bishop Innocent Veniaminov, prayed to Saint Herman when his ship was in danger on the sea as he was returning to Alaska. Soon, the waters calmed and the winds became favorable **[12]**.

In August 1970, Father Herman was glorified as the first North American saint. Metropolitan Ireney, Archbishop Paul of Finland and Bishop Theodosius of Alaska presided at the glorification services **[13]**. Saint Herman is venerated by the Diocese of Alaska and the entire Orthodox Church in America **[14]**.

Holy Father Herman, pray to God for us! ■

TROPARION
TO ST. HERMAN OF ALASKA

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
AND ALL AMERICA
FROM THIS DAY FORTH, FROM THIS HOUR, FROM THIS MINUTE, LET US LOVE GOD ABOVE ALL AND FULFILL HIS HOLY WILL.