

St. Luke the Surgeon

June 11th



St. Luke was born Valentine of Felix Voynoyassenetsky in Kertz on April 27th 1877. His mother was Orthodox, but later did not attend church, while his father, a Roman Catholic, was deeply pious and influenced Valentine very much. His faith was much influenced by both his proximity to the Holy Lavra of the Kiev Caves (which his family lived near) and a copy of the Holy Bible he received upon graduating High School. He had a great talent for and desire to pursue art, however, his desire to do something to help the poor peasants around him was overriding, and he attended medical school in Kiev, and graduated in 1903.

In 1904, the Russo-Japanese War brought Valentine to the Far East as a surgeon, where he met his future wife Anna Vasilievna Lanskaya. They married and had four children. During this time, as a surgeon, Valentine became specially trained in ophthalmological operations, along with regional anesthesia and the surgery of pyogenic infections (which later became areas of research for him). He also displayed immense faith in those difficult times. The family would entertain a nun from the Fiodorovski monastery once a month, and they would attend church regularly. Valentine would also refuse to perform an operation without first praying before an icon of the Theotokos in the operating room, and then signing the patient with iodine in the sign of the Cross. In fact, one time the Communist Party officials removed the icon, at which point Valentine refused to return to surgery until it would be returned. Soon, the wife of one of the party officials needed an operation, and specifically requested Valentine. He, however, refused to perform the surgery until the icon of the Panagia was returned. They complied with his request, and he returned to surgery.

Valentine's wife, who came down with tuberculosis, died prematurely. Though Valentine grieved deeply for his wife, he was able to see the hand of the Lord guiding him even through this difficult time, both by Him choosing one of the nurses to help raise his children, and by calling him to the priesthood. In obedience to Archbishop Innocent, Valentine hastily followed Christ's divine call, and was ordained a deacon on January 26th, and a priest on February 2nd, 1921. In fact, because of the need for a bishop, Fr. Valentine also obeyed the call of the people and underwent the monastic tonsure (being given the name "Luke", after the Evangelist whom he resembled) and was consecrated a bishop.

This period of time was extremely difficult for the Russian Orthodox Church, as they were constantly being assaulted from the right (zealots and schismatics) and from the left (the atheist government and their heretical "Living Church"). Because of St. Luke's confessions of faith (and despite his immense medical and scientific achievements), he was imprisoned, tortured, and exiled for 11 years in total to Siberia, and other treacherous locales. Besides persecution from the government, he had to deal with heretics from the "Living Church" who masqueraded as Orthodoxy and drew people away from the Church, and schismatic individuals who also caused unneeded harm in those turbulent years.

St. Luke's virtues, struggles and achievements are staggering. As a Grace-filled hierarch of the Church, he re-opening many churches that had been closed by the Communists, produced deep theologic works, and supported the faithful while drawing many to Orthodoxy. In addition, his love, skill and devotion to his patients saved thousands, (especially injured soldiers in war), and his research techniques were award-winning, and were claimed to be important to his fellow surgeons fifty years later. After a lifetime of such medical accomplishments and spiritual struggles in his confession for the Faith, St. Luke reposed in the Lord as the Archbishop of Simferopol (Crimea) on June 11th (New Calendar) 1961.