

When the other monks began to gather around him, wishing to follow his example, all he wanted to do was to serve them in everything. He built cells (monks' small houses) for them, cooked for them, and considered himself their servant. When rich men came to ask for his blessing, they were confused by his appearance — he was the worst dressed among them, always chopping wood or sawing logs. He would take the clothing that no one else wanted and wear it until it became rags.

St. Sergius's disciples increased in number, and they begged him to become their abbot (the leader of their monastery) but he continually refused, preferring the life of a simple monk. After much pleading he submitted to their request as to God's will, and became a priest. St. Sergius once has a vision of many birds, which was a symbol of the saint's disciples who spread the monastic life all over northern Russia, often in remote places. The number of monasteries founded by these disciples was almost 400.

Near the monastery where St. Sergius lived, there were many poor people. St. Sergius shared food with them and even found work that they could do. He would give help to all who sought his help with loving attention. He was a true leader who led his monks in work and service by setting an example. He established a number of monastery schools and taught farmers better methods of farming.

Sergius died on September 25, 1392. He was glorified as a saint in 1452. After his glorification the monastery he founded became known as the Holy Trinity-St. Sergius Lavra.

By the prayers of St. Sergius, and by his example, may we too show our love for others and help others.

St. Sergius of Radonezh



The boy Bartholomew who became St. Sergius of Radonezh

ST. SERGIUS OF RADONEZH

St. Sergius' father Kyril and his mother Maria were very devout Orthodox Christians.

When he was a boy his name was Bartholomew. As a child, he had trouble learning to read and write. After praying hard about this, he was met by a mysterious elder (holy old man) who gave him a piece of prosphora (communion bread), saying, "Take and eat it, this is given to you as a sign of God's grace and for understanding of the Scriptures" and blessed him to learn. Bartholomew turned from a poor student to an excellent student overnight. And, the mysterious elder told his parents that the boy would become a servant of the Holy Trinity and save many souls. Then the elder disappeared, leaving them to wonder—had they been visited by an angel?

Bartholomew loved prayer, and doing deeds for everyone. He wanted to live the life of a monk. But he waited until both of his parents had died, so that he could help them in their old age. Then immediately he gave his inheritance to his younger brother, and he and his older brother became monks.

He began his life of devotion to God with the name Sergius. Most monks and nuns change their names as they change their lives from a life in the world (which we call "secular") to a life totally devoted to God (life in a monastery.)

His brother left and St. Sergius lived alone for a number of years. The wild animals seemed to recognize him, and wolves and bears would come to his hut but would not harm him. One bear came to his hut to share St. Sergius' last piece of bread with him. Gradually people learned about St. Sergius and they would come to him for spiritual guidance.



St, Sergius and the Vision of Birds