

Finnish Church celebrates canonization of St. John of Sonkajanranta (+ VIDEO)



On [November 29](#), the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate of Constantinople announced its decision to glorify among the saints the holy Martyr and Confessor John of Sonkajanranta (1884-1918) at the proposal of the Finnish Orthodox Church, an autonomous body within the Patriarchate.

Johannes Vasilinpoika Karhapää was an Orthodox missionary who was killed by the White Guards during the Finnish civil war. Schema-Abbot John of Valaam was canonized on the same day, which was liturgically celebrated on June 1.

The liturgical proclamation of this glorification was celebrated on Saturday at the Church of the Holy Prophetess of God Anna in Sonkajanranta in southeastern Finland by His Eminence Archbishop Leo of Helsinki and All Finland, with the concelebration of several other hierarchs from the Finnish Church, reports the [Finnish Church](#).

A large number of clergy and faithful from throughout Finland, including relatives of

the newly-canonized saint, were present for the festal Divine Liturgy. The small church was filled to overflowing, with many faithful watching a broadcast of the service in the courtyard.

Abp. Leo addressed the gathered faithful with a sermon about the labors of the holy Martyr John and Protodeacon Juha Pessie read out the life of the new saint. Following the Divine Liturgy, a solemn procession was held with the icon of the saint to a memorial cross erected in his honor in the 1980s, where a moleben was served.

Following the moleben to St. John, all the guests were treated to a festive lunch. The official celebrations then finished with the chanting of an akathist to St. John at the memorial cross. All present were blessed with the gift of a memorial icon of St. John.



St. John was born in 1884 in the Sonkajanranta village in Ilomantsi. He married and had two children, and was married a second time after his wife died in 1910.

He developed a strong and active Orthodox faith in his childhood. In response to fervent Lutheran missionary work, St. John founded an Orthodox school and association as a subdivision of the Sts. Sergius and Herman Brotherhood that actively countered the Protestant propaganda.

St. John also worked as a traveling catechist in Ilomantsi, and in 1914, he was

appointed as a teacher of religion for the entire Kuopio Province. His great activity also earned him a number of enemies who called him a henchman of the tsarist regime and even accused him of being a spy.

In 1915, the Church of St. Anna, where the glorification of St. John was celebrated, was built for the school he had founded. St. John received a number of distinctions for his zealous teaching and missionary work, though he was also hated as a propagator of the "Russian faith." Accusations against him intensified following the Russian revolution in 1917 and he was also accused of being a Bolshevik. St. John never responded to any of the heinous accusations.

Eventually he was slandered among the Orthodox faithful as well, and it was demanded that he be removed from his Church positions. Having lost the support of the local archbishop as well, St. John was seen as a criminal in the turmoil of the Finnish civil war.

St. John and his brother were arrested in March 1918 after a small icon was found in his pocket. They were locked up in the basement of the Joensuu town hall with other prisoners. He was later shot by a group of rowdy White Guards. The exact date of his execution is unclear.

His wife was able to obtain his body only months later, and he was buried in Ilomantsi with a large group of Orthodox and Lutherans attending.

Troparion, Tone 2

Thy martyr John, O Lord / rejoices crowned as a saint in Heaven / as the first-begotten of our people, / for spurred on by Thee, he served for the good of the true faith even unto death. // By his prayers have mercy upon our souls.

Troparion, Tone 5

The faithful bow to thee today, John, / Instructor of the word of God, / for difficult was thy path, of fervent faith and Divine inspiration, / and as an innocent victim brutally murdered / thou dost abide in the joy of the Heavenly Kingdom. // Therefore we honor thee as a martyr.

– Source: [OrthoChristian](http://OrthoChristian.com)