

The life of St Sophrony the Athonite (of Essex) for children



A short film about the life of St Sophrony the Athonite

Made for the Sunday School of the Greek Orthodox Church of Manchester

St Sophrony was born in 1896 in Moscow. He had a big family with many siblings. He loved painting from a very young age. He started painting before he could say mum and dad. As a boy, he was watching his parents praying.

His nanny was taking him to the church. There, she spent hours praying while he sat next to her. This is how he started praying since he was a child. Prayer was a natural part of his life.

As he was growing up, his love for painting was growing too. He studied fine arts and began a career as an artist. During this period, he started having doubts about God and he tried to find the truth in other eastern religions. The warm prayers of

his mother and nanny helped him return to Orthodoxy. He repented deeply for this period of turning away from God in all his life.

When he was 26 years old, he moved to Paris.

He continued his painting with passion and soon he was renowned as an artist in Paris. At the same time, he tried to devote himself to prayer. He loved prayer and painting more than anything. But, he soon realised that it was not possible to dedicate himself to two things. He chose prayer over painting, giving up everything for God. And God blessed him richly.

He departed for Mount Athos when he was 30 years old. He became monk and he was named Sophrony.

At his monastery he met a great elder, Saint Silouan. Saint Silouan guided him through his efforts to come closer to God. Meeting Saint Silouan completely changed his life.

Before falling asleep in the Lord, Saint Silouan gave him all his writings. A few years later, father Sophrony decided to collect all his elders writings in a book. To achieve it he moved back to Paris.

In Paris he fell very ill. Doctors believed that he would die. But, with God's help he recovered.

Some young people found out about him and gathered close to him, asking him to start a monastery.

They found a suitable place in Essex, England.

That's where they founded the monastery of St John the Baptist. He was 63 at the time and he lived the remaining years of his life there. During this period, he ministered all the people that flooded the monastery to seek for a spiritual father. He especially loved children, and they loved him.

He fell asleep in the Lord on 11th July 1993. He was 97 years old.

Father Sophrony pray to God for us!