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ANNUAL ST. HERMAN PILGRIMAGE HELD IN ALASKA (+VIDEOS)



The Orthodox Church in America held its annual pilgrimage in honor of the first American saint, St. Herman of Alaska, this week.

The pilgrimage was led by the local hierarch His Grace Bishop Alexei of Sitka with His Eminence Archbishop Benjamin of San Francisco and His Grace Bishop Daniel of Chicago, who traveled to Alaska specially to honor St. Herman.

The three hierarchs celebrated the Liturgy together on Sunday, August 7, at St. Innocent Cathedral in Anchorage, Alaska, together with local and visiting clergy, reports the OCA Diocese of Chicago and the Midwest.

Following the Liturgy, Bp. Daniel distributed icons of St. Tikhon of Moscow and St. John of Chicago, asking those gathered to remember his diocese in their prayers. A

festive meal was then held before the pilgrims departed for Kodiak.

The hierarchs were greeted at the Kodiak airport by faculty and students of St. Herman Seminary, then taken to Holy Resurrection Cathedral, the home of St. Herman's precious relics.

An akathist was read to St. Herman before his relics, and Bp. Alexei encouraged everyone to reflect upon the text of the akathist, which teaches about the holy life of the great ascetic. Bp. Daniel anointed all present with holy oil from St. Herman's lampada.

The Divine Liturgy was celebrated the next day at the cathedral for the feast of St. Jacob Netsvetov, another Alaskan saint. Bp. Alexei preached on the importance of becoming like children, who are quick to forgive and to turn to their mothers for help, as we should turn to our mother the Church.



Bp. Daniel thanked Bp. Alexei for hosting the pilgrimage, and gifted the cathedral community with chalice covers.

A festive meal was then held, followed later by a presentation from the seminary

archivist on the various historical documents and items housed at St. Herman Seminary, including handwritten documents by St. Innocent of Alaska.

The pilgrimage culminated with the feast of St. Herman. The All-Night Vigil was celebrated at the cathedral in Kodiak. The next morning, the clergy and faithful took boats from Kodiak Bay to Spruce Island, the place of St. Herman's ascetic struggles and blessed repose, for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.



Bp. Alexei presided over the feast of St. Herman for the first time as diocesan hierarch of Alaska, and Abp. Benjamin offered a homily on the life of the ascetic, saying: "We know that he is a saint because he embodies the nine virtues that St. Paul teaches about—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control—and St. Herman showed us that it was possible to achieve such gifts."

Following the Liturgy, a prayer to St. Herman was read, entreating his prayers upon all present and for the continued spiritual strength of the Orthodox faithful in North America.

A festive meal was then offered on the shores of Spruce Island by local parishioners.

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