

REPOSE OF SCHEMAMONK SERGIUS

March 20 (Old Style)/April 2 (New Style), 2015

Feast of the 44 Holy Abbas (Fathers) Martyred at the Monastery of St. Sabbas

Several hours ago, at 2:00 a.m., Schemamonk Father Sergius, the much-revered senior brother (in age) of the St. Gregory Palamas Monastery reposed quietly in the Lord, in his sleep, after a short bout with pneumonia. One the Fathers and his brother in the flesh, Mr. William Kornik, who was visiting, were with him when he reposed. His Grace, Bishop Auxentios and His



Eminence, Metropolitan Chrysostomos and the brotherhood were summoned, and the prayers for the departure of the soul were read, after which the body was prepared and moved to the monastery Chapel (*see photograph below*), where the reading of the Psalter began.

Later this morning, after the daily Presanctified Liturgy, the funeral and burial service will take place at 11:00 a.m., in keeping with the ancient monastic custom of interment, when possible, before sundown on the day of death.

Father Sergius, 74 years of age, was born on July 31, 1940. At eight years of age he contracted polio and lost all use of his arms and hands. He thus lived his later childhood and adult years completely dependent on others to feed him and to care for all of his personal needs. However, despite his illnesses and limitations, he was an indefatigable, uncomplaining, joyful, and dedicated servant of the Church, fluent in English, Russian, and Slavonic, and a gifted expert in the Church's *typon* and Russian choral music. He was a graduate of the University of San Diego, where he also attended the School of Law.

Father Sergius was tonsured a monk, in 1964, by the late Archbishop John (Shahovskoy) of San Francisco, in what was then the Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church of America (now the OCA, or the Orthodox Church in America). He separated from the OCA when, during the Soviet régime, it entered into communion with the Moscow Patriarchate, placing himself under the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (ROCOR), from which he also separated when it later joined with the Moscow Patriarchate. In all of these transitions, Father was sedulous to act in a moderate but resolute spirit, never condemning anyone in following his conscience. It was at the time of the ROCA's reconciliation with Moscow that he asked to become a member of the brotherhood of the St. Gregory Palamas Monastery, where he was tonsured to the Great Schema in 2009. (*See the photograph above; from left to right: Archimandrite Akakios, monastic sponsor at Father's tonsure to the Angelic Schema, His Grace, Bishop Auxentios, who performed the tonsure, and Father Sergius.*)



At the monastery, Schemamonk Sergius was always in attendance at daily Liturgy, communing daily, and the other monastic services, even though for the past year he was constantly on oxygen and had lost the ability to walk more than a few feet. His innocence, purity, humility, famous smile, and example of long-suffering acceptance of his disabilities endeared him to all who knew him, including the four Fathers at the monastery who were assigned to the sometimes demanding task of caring for him day and night. Yet, Father's entire life was, in actuality, one of patiently bearing a heavy Cross. None of us can really understand what a burden he endured, constantly dependent on others for his every need; and, indeed, only with time will we *fully* realize what a great gift he was to us.

To describe Father's inimitable piety and love of the Church, one story is sufficient. When one of the Fathers caring for him asked him what, if he could regain the use of his arms and hands, would be the first thing that he would do, without hesitation he said: "I would cross myself." May his memory be eternal! **Αἰώνια ἡ μνήμη!**

(*At left, in the Nave, looking from the monastery Chapel altar, the wooden bier with Father Sergius' earthly remains lying in state this morning, covered with a funeral shroud.*)

The Saint Gregory Palamas Monastery Brotherhood