

WEEKLY MEDITATION

REPOSE OF ARCHBISHOP ARSENY (October 4)

Today is the 64th anniversary of the repose of Archbishop Arseny (Chagovtsov or Chagovets), an important figure in American Orthodoxy and our Orthodox Church in America. A widowed priest from the Kharkov region (eastern Ukraine), who under the spiritual direction of St. John of Kronstadt was tonsured a monk at the Valaam Monastery, he was the superior of a monastery in Kupiansk (near Kharkov) when in 1902 he was moved to accept the invitation to use his many priestly skills in the North American Mission under the direction of Archbishop Tikhon (who went on to later become the Patriarch of Moscow). He founded St. Tikhon's Monastery and Orphanage in 1905 and in 1937 he founded St. Tikhon's Pastoral School at the Monastery. Although the Monastery was dedicated to the famous St. Tikhon of Zadonsk, the Pastoral School was founded in the name of his friend and mentor who had initially brought him to America and who had died at the cruel hands of the Bolsheviks. Between the founding of these two institutions, Arseny led a varied and sometimes dramatic life of service to the Church. He was involved in both apologetics and colorful confrontations with eastern rite Catholics in Pennsylvania. He used his great linguistic gifts and ear for dialect in administering the Church in Canada for 2 years. He published multi-lingual church papers and traveled extensively. He returned to Russia and trained missionaries for work among former eastern-rite Catholics. He suffered the upheavals and displacements the Russian Revolution and Civil War, almost losing his life, and found himself in a monastery in Serbia. A quiet life was not to follow. In 1926 he was sought out by the Russian church authorities resident in Serbia and consecrated Bishop for Winnipeg at the request of the American Church on behalf of the Orthodox faithful in Canada. In Canada he served under extremely difficult conditions, and sometimes in danger amid the controversies of church life. He traveled from 'sea to shining sea', and was known as the flying bishop because of his constant travel. Everywhere he went he preached, and became known as 'the Canadian Chrysostom'. He established the monastery at Sifton, Manitoba and organized assemblies for the far-flung communities of his diocese. After brief service as Bishop of Detroit and Cleveland, he retired to the monastery he had founded decades earlier and although ill and exhausted, gave himself over to teaching and training students at the new pastoral school. He reposed on October 4, 1945. In 1953, a priest wrote in memory of Archbishop Arseny:

(Continued on page 5)