

Saint Tikhon the Confessor

Patriarch of Moscow, Enlightener of North America

2 After completing his studies, he taught at seminaries in Pskov and Kholm.

3 He was consecrated Bishop of Lublin, Auxiliary of the Kholm Diocese, in 1897.

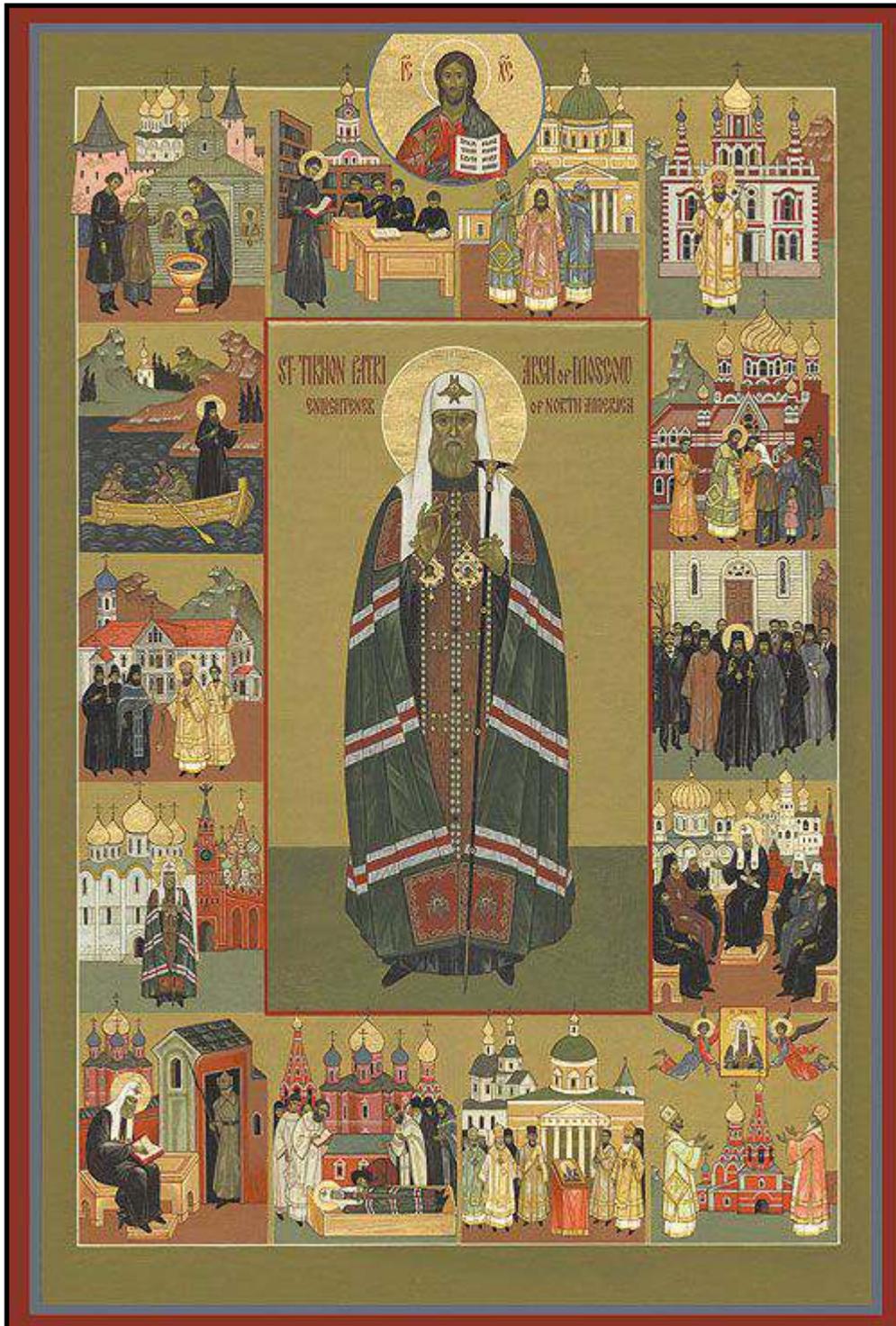
1 The infant Vasily Ivanovich Belavin was born and baptized in Toropetz, Pskov region, Russia in 1865.

5 Bishop Tikhon made a number of pastoral journeys, visiting his flock in the remotest corners of Alaska.

7 In 1905, he established and blessed St. Tikhon's Monastery in South Canaan, PA.

9 In 1917, he was elected Patriarch of Moscow – a position that had been abolished some 200 years earlier.

11 Under communist persecution – and house arrest in Moscow's Donskoy Monastery – Patriarch Tikhon guided the Church through a perilous period.



4 In 1898, Bishop Tikhon was appointed Bishop of the Aleutian Islands and Alaska.

6 In 1905, he moved his See to New York, where he supervised construction of St. Nicholas Cathedral.

8 In 1907, he presided at the First All-American Sobor in Mayfield, PA.

10 As Patriarch of Moscow, he presided at the All-Russian Church Council of 1917-1918.

14 Saint Tikhon is uniquely remembered by Orthodox Christians in North America as well as Russia for his selfless ministry on behalf of the People of God.

12 The difficulties of Church life under communism took a toll on the health of Patriarch Tikhon, who fell asleep in the Lord on April 7, 1925. He was buried in the Donskoy Monastery.

13 In 1989, the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church glorified Patriarch Tikhon as a saint and confessor of the faith. His body, hidden for decades, was discovered and reinterred in 1992.

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Vasily Ivanovich Belavin – the future Saint Tikhon – was born on January 19, 1865 in the Toropetz region of Pskov, Russia. Baptized in the church that his father served as a priest [1], Vasily showed a profound love for the Church and a gentle nature since childhood.

After completing studies at the Pskov Seminary, the tall, fair-haired young man graduated from the Saint Petersburg Theological Academy, where he was affectionately called “bishop” by his classmates, in 1888. He taught at the Pskov Seminary, and then in 1891 took monastic vows with the given name Tikhon, in honor of Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk. Soon after, he was reassigned to teach at the Kholm Seminary and raised to the rank of archimandrite. He later was appointed Rector of the seminary [2]. In 1897 he was consecrated Bishop of Lublin, ministering amongst Lithuanians and Poles as well as Russians and winning everyone’s affection [3].

The following year brought significant changes to Bishop Tikhon’s life. Having been appointed Bishop of the Aleutian Islands and Alaska, he travelled to America and took up residence at Holy Trinity Cathedral in San Francisco [4]. He worked hard to promote Orthodoxy, and made pastoral journeys to the remotest parts of Alaska [5].

Recognizing the need for more effective outreach to immigrants, Bishop Tikhon had the diocesan See moved to New York City. Later he oversaw the construction of Saint Nicholas Cathedral there [6]. In 1905, following his elevation to the rank of Archbishop, he established and blessed Saint Tikhon’s Monastery in Pennsylvania [7]. In 1907, just before he returned to Russia, Archbishop Tikhon presided at the first All-American *Sobor* in Mayfield, Pennsylvania. This gathering set the precedent of conciliar Church government in America [8].

Archbishop Tikhon spent the next ten years in Yaroslavl, Russia and Vilnius, Lithuania, serving with love and offering generous help to those left destitute by World War I. In 1917, having been raised to the rank of Metropolitan, he was elected Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia – the first in 200 years [9]. He knew the position would be filled with suffering, but he accepted it with obedience and out of his desire to serve Our Lord, regardless of the circumstances.

As Patriarch, Saint Tikhon presided at the All-Russian Church Council of 1917-18 [10]. This gathering was unprecedented in its legislation of many needed reforms in Church life. But the Patriarch’s task was exceedingly difficult, dealing with internal schisms, disorganization, and little administrative help. It was during the Council that the Russian Revolution took place.

Saint Tikhon courageously guided the Church through severe persecution by the Communist regime, which was devoted to the eradication of all religious expression and faith, and was placed under house arrest in Moscow’s Donskoy Monastery [11]. Though he was always kind and approachable, he refused, in his own words, to “make concessions which could lead to the loss of the purity and strength of Orthodoxy.”

The daily strain of external and internal problems, threats and persecution undermined Patriarch Tikhon’s health. He died on April 7, 1925, and was buried in the small Cathedral of the Donskoy Monastery [12]. Nearly one million people paid their respects to their beloved shepherd, who had exhorted his clergy to devote all of their energy “to preaching the word of God and the truth of Christ, especially today, when unbelief and atheism are audaciously attacking the Church of Christ. May the God of peace and love be with all of you!”

In 1989, Patriarch Tikhon was glorified by the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church [13]. On April 7, 1990, representatives of the Orthodox Church in America joined Patriarch Pimen and the faithful of the Russian Orthodox Church in celebrating his feastday for the first time in the Donskoy Monastery [14].

Saint Tikhon remains an inspiration to the faithful of North America as well as Russia and a constant reminder that, despite the trials and tribulations the Church faces in the world, “the gates of hell shall not prevail.”

Holy Father Tikhon, pray to God for us! ■

