



Newly Discovered Sermons of St. Augustine

Robert Klein

Two previously unknown sermons of St. Augustine of Hippo have been discovered and authenticated by German and Austrian researchers, according to a recent announcement.

The homilies, which discuss an Old Testament story that has long been the subject of debate by Christian theologians, were found in a 12th century manuscript that had been housed first in a German and then in a Polish monastery, and is now kept in a Polish diocesan library.

After two years of study, the 20-member research team has verified the sermons as most likely having been written by the renowned North African saint, bishop, and Father of the Church, who lived and preached in the 4th and 5th centuries. The identification was based on stylistic phrasing and other linguistic clues, liturgical practices that long predate the

medieval Church of the 12th century, a prayer at the end of the first homily that is North African in origin, and theological nuances – as well as a dry sense of humor – that are Augustinian. In addition, nothing in the sermons is copied from other works of St. Augustine, which would be a sure sign of inauthenticity.

Both sermons examine the Biblical story of King Saul and the Witch of Endor (1st Samuel/1st Kingdom, Chapter 28), an account that troubles Christians because it seems to promote necromancy.



In the narrative, King Saul consults a medium before a battle with the Philistines. The medium, or witch, calls up the spirit of the late Prophet Samuel, who correctly tells Saul that he will die in the upcoming battle. Patristic

writers have offered two explanations for this apparent act of witchcraft that

appears in the Scriptures: Either God permitted Samuel to appear to Saul and prophesy, in spite of and without the aid of the medium, or the medium herself called up a demon disguised as Samuel to demoralize and terrify Saul.

In his two homilies, St. Augustine discusses both explanations, weighing their pros and cons, and apologizing in his first sermon for not having prepared very well for his lecture.

Eventually the bishop comes to no conclusion as to the meaning of the story of Saul and the Witch, but instead leaves it open to his listeners to decide. However, St. Augustine does speculate that the incident may have brought about the fallen Saul's repentance and redemption, proving that God allows evil in order to draw good out of it, which is a very Augustinian view, and another point in favor of the sermons' authenticity. These two newly discovered sermons are not the only recent appearances in the news by St. Augustine.



American Vice President J.D. Vance and American-born Pope Leo XIV have publicly debated and disagreed on St. Augustine's "just war theory" and

how it relates to contemporary American foreign policy, proving that the concepts of a Church Father from 1,600 years ago still relate to the world in which we live.

St. Augustine is perhaps most famous today as the author of the Confessions, one of the most profound spiritual autobiographies of all time. It is perhaps the first autobiography in the modern sense of the world, and has been a "best seller" since the time it was written by the great Father of the Church and Bishop of Hippo in the late 4th century.

Literally hundreds of other works by St. Augustine, including theological treatises, letters, and sermons, are extant and have had a foundational effect on the Western Church.

However, because St. Augustine had minimal connections with the Fathers in the East, did not have his works translated from Latin into Greek for many centuries, and wrote theological speculations that have not been "believed everywhere, always, and by all," his effect on the Eastern Church has not been as essential. Nevertheless, St. Augustine is venerated on his June 15 feast day as "a bright vessel of the divine Spirit and revealer of the city of God."



St. Augustine's Confessions and many of his other works are available to be checked out from the St. James library. However, parishioners may have to wait a few years before the Bishop of Hippo's newest two sermons are translated into English. ♣

The NEW Hagia Sophia

Katie Reif

During a recent religious pilgrimage overseas, we traveled to the city of Belgrade Serbia to visit the Church of Saint Sava recently referred to as “The New Hagia Sophia.”



Belgrade is one of the oldest cities in Europe. The city has survived countless wars and battles starting from the Roman incursion around 35 BC all the way through the break-up of Yugoslavia in March 1991. Christianity in Belgrade has been documented since the occupation of the Roman Empire in the 1st and 2nd centuries but in August 1521, its entire Orthodox Christian population was deported to Istanbul. Later, during an uprising, the relics of Saint Sava were ordered to be publicly torched on the Vračar plateau in Belgrade.

The Church of Saint Sava was built on this site. Saint Sava is the Patron Saint of Serbia. St. Justin Popović noted, ‘Saint Sava’s ideal and plan for the whole nation was: “Give up everything for Christ, but Christ for nothing.”’

Saint Sava was born between 1169–1174 and reposed January 14, 1235. He was a Serbian prince who later became the Archbishop of the Serbian Church. His story is a little amusing as he snuck away from his providential life as a royal to become a pious monk on Mount Athos unbeknownst to his family. Though a wondrous Saint, let me tell you about his church, or as the locals say his “Temple”.

The church has been re-built many times over during wars and bombings. The construction of the first church began May 10, 1935, three centuries after the burning of Saint Sava’s relics. In 1935 a new church began construction to replace the existing smaller church which had been added onto multiple times. In October 1944 during WWII, the church was destroyed in a battle for the liberation of Belgrade. Under Yugoslav communist control, construction on the church was halted. Construction finally continued August 12, 1985. During the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999, construction stopped again. The final construction began in 2001.

In August 2020, Patriarch of Serbia Irinej and Serbia’s president Aleksandar Vučić expressed their wish that the Saint Sava Church would symbolically replace the Hagia Sophia, after which it was modelled, and become a “New Hagia Sophia”

Visiting Saint Sava’s Temple today is more splendid than any other man made structure. The church is 42,840 square feet with a dome 230 feet high and can hold up to 10,000 people on the ground floor and in the galleries of the temple.

The exterior is clad in white Grecian marble with accents of granite from Bosnia and Finland. It towers over all the city in magnificent Byzantine architecture.



Entering the church is like entering Heaven itself, if heaven had two gift shops flanking the front doors. The building consumes you in its massive belly as if you've been transported to another world. There was a line extending out the door just before Liturgy of patrons, tourists, and other Christians waiting to venerate icons and relics of saints.

Every inch of the massive interior walls and ceilings are adorned with precious marbles, mosaic icons, and storytelling frescos. There is nowhere for the eye to rest though it doesn't feel visually busy or ostentatious.

The sun coming through the windows reflecting off the gold mosaics and the incense rising in the air was angelic. Each side of the cross-shaped sanctuary has a small chapel with the most exquisite iconostases and icons.



The central area of the sanctuary is illuminated by an enormous gold chandelier measuring 65.3 feet in diameter and weighing over 7 tons. The swinging motion of these giant fixtures is supposed to represent the presence of angels and the unending mercy of God.

The people in Serbia, particularly at Saint Sava's, were so reverent and sincere in their worship, it was moving to be a part of. There were icons of saints on stands throughout the church where people were constantly venerating, praying, and prostrating. Even after Liturgy lines formed throughout the church for veneration and prostrations. This was common behavior in every Serbian Orthodox Church we visited.

After having visited Hagia Sophia in Turkey in 2025 and seeing Saint Sava's in Serbia a year later, I can see in my mind's eye what a glorious place the Hagia Sophia once was if it was even close to the grandeur of the Church of Saint Sava. Of course, Saint Sava's has central air conditioning which did not go unappreciated.

In the words of Saint Sava's disciple Atanasije, "O divinely-adorned Sava, and we, your beloved children, who have you as our strength and our divinely inspired hope, are rejoicing now." ❀

Note From the Editor: St. James Makes an Appearance

Jessica Green



Did you happen to notice St. James, the brother of our Lord, present in the icon on our newsletter header?

It reads: **С ΙΑΚΟΒЪ**

The C abbreviates "Svyatuiy/Holy" and *IAKOV* is "Jacob" which in English New Testament translations is traditionally given as James. This detail comes from a much larger mural depicting the "Flight from Egypt" when the Theotokos and St. Joseph fled Herod's persecutions.

If you look at Byzantine icons of the Flight into Egypt, you will frequently spot a secondary figure alongside the Holy Family.

This icon is currently on display in the State Museum of Palekh Art.



But, *Palekh* itself is a very interesting place. The village lies deep inside the ancestral heart of the Ivanovo region of Russia, it is an ancient settlement where traditional icon painting has endured through many centuries and persecutions.

In the 17th-18th century the Palekh school of iconography was at its height, drawing in the very best of Russia's artists seeking to be part of the holy painting traditions. These masters forged their own aesthetic, even as they upheld the traditions of ancient Russian iconography.

By the time of the 1917 Bolshevik revolution (due to the suppression of religious art) the artists of Palekh would decide to safeguard their heritage by adapting traditional methods like egg tempera and gilding to a new, secular medium. The Palekh miniatures, which are tiny paintings on lacquer varnished articles made of papier-mâché (such as small boxes, cigarette cases, and powder cases)

Today Palekh boxes are highly prized works of fine art. The earliest Palekh boxes captured scenes from fairytales and folklore, moving away from religious

themes while preserving traditional techniques. This art movement is credited with bringing Russian folklore to a global audience.



A scene from the fairy tale *Tsarevitch Ivan, the Fire Bird and the Gray Wolf*

After the fall of the Soviet Union, policies such as *glasnost* and *perestroika* offered artists new freedom to express themselves without government restrictions, and many artists have returned to painting icons. Today, the legacy of sacred art in Palekh still thrives, with new icon schools studying, reviving, and continuing the traditions of antiquity.

The story of Palekh's artists is one of endurance under incredible trials. The most basic human need, the longing for God, had always found its most poignant voice in our creative and artistic expressions. From our earliest paintings of our own hands on the insides of cave walls to the grandest of cathedrals and most exquisite symphonies, all are ultimately expressing a yearning for connection to the Most High.

Under communism a “brutalist” art and architecture sought to beat down that part of the human spirit, and yet I have noticed throughout the history of the christian people, in any place where the church is persecuted: it thrives.

Indeed, “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.” The many peoples of the soviet controlled countries, including vast populations orthodox christians, were able to preserve their traditions under communist persecution; not unlike story of Roman and other Pagan persecutions in many centuries before when Christians were meeting in catacombs and private homes to hold services, and they were using covert symbolism in art to express their faith, even though it is dangerous to do so.

The story of Christian art is a story of resilience and adaptation, where the enduring human desire to express and connect with the Divine persists even through harsh persecutions; preserving traditions to ensure their survival for future generations.

Find out More!

(PDF Book: [Palekh Icon Painting](#))

(Web Article: [The Palek Icon School](#))

(WikiMedia: [Palekh Miniatures](#))

(Web Article: [The Repression of Icons led to the Emergence of Russian Fairytale](#))

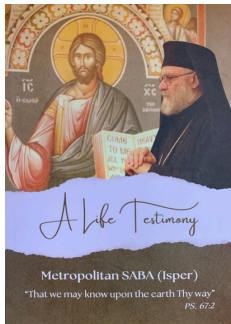
ἄγιος

Many Years to the newly illumined
Michael Matthews, Marshall Spietzack,
and Brianna Ray.

St. James Orthodox Church Lending Library

The St. James Church Library continues to acquire new books for its collection, including those reviewed here. Feel free to browse the shelves and check out what appeals to you.

A Life Testimony, by Metropolitan Saba *Reviewed by Beth Green*



A Life Testimony is a wonderful autobiography from our Metropolitan Saba. I found it fascinating to hear how he grew up and about his journey to the priesthood and eventually to a

metropolitan. He tells about getting a degree in engineering because his father insisted, and later he went back to study theology. It turns out his engineering degree was of great use in designing a new church building that was so badly needed. I was able to see Metropolitan Saba's great humility and love for God and his flock. If you want to know more about the man leading the Antiochian Church in America and be blessed and motivated, read this book! ♣



PLEASE RETURN
ALL LIBRARY
BOOKS TO SH.
SOPHIA.

St. Phocas the Gardener

September 22



The story of St. Phocas the Gardener emphasizes the Christian qualities of simplicity, charity, hospitality, and sacrifice.

St. Phocas lived at the turn of the fourth century in the town of Sinope on the Black Sea, in what is today Turkey. He owned a small garden by which he frugally supported himself, while using most of his earnings as alms for the poor and to buy shelter for the homeless. His deeds of charity impressed his pagan neighbors and won converts to the Faith. However, this was the time of the Emperor Diocletian's great persecution of the Christians, and Phocas's deeds soon called attention to himself. The district governor gave a group of soldiers orders to find Phocas and kill him.

Phocas encountered the soldiers by chance, and without identifying himself, invited them to his home. There he fed the soldiers, gave them a place to sleep, and told them he would help them find who they were seeking. That night, as the soldiers slept, Phocas dug his own grave in his beloved garden. He made arrangements for all his goods to be distributed to the poor.

In the morning, Phocas revealed who he was, and told the soldiers to do their duty.



The soldiers were upset that their kind host was the victim they sought, so they offered to tell their superiors that they failed to find Phocas. Phocas would not hear of it, and bared his neck for the sword. He was decapitated and his body was buried in his garden. The grave became the site of miracles, and eventually a church was built there. It should come as no surprise that St. Phocas is the patron saint of flower and ornamental gardening.

What is a surprise is that he is also the patron saint of seafarers. Travelers by sea would traditionally set aside some of their grain rations as “Phocas’s portion,” which then would be given to the poor when the ship reached its destination, in thanksgiving for a safe voyage. ♣

SUNDAY SCHOOL Classes are currently suspended for the Summer BREAK but will return in September of 2026 Stay Up to Date on the website “St. James Kids” tab.

Big Changes, Little Church

St. James has welcomed so many new families and friends over the last few months that we have the best problem for a church to have. We need to expand our space. So you might notice a few changes and here are a few things to keep in mind:

The Cry Room is not currently available, if little ones need to be changed/settled during services you can take them to the adjacent building: *St. Nektarios Hall* (where we hold coffee hour). There is a LiveStream of the services in that area.

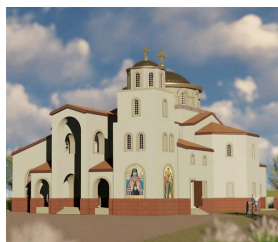
The playground area will be relocated. This area is only available after services conclude. Please do not use the playground while services are in session.

You may notice our “Village” of cabins where the playground used to be. These will become the new classrooms and library!



Additional Parking is Available: at the Oaks Miniature Golf Course (next lot up on Whiting Rd.) or in the FRONT LOT ONLY of RLM Affairs. Please Stay Off

New Church to be Built at Antiochian Village



A new church with a capacity of approximately 400 people is in the planning stages for Antiochian Village in Ligonier, Pennsylvania.

With the blessing of His Eminence Metropolitan Saba, the Archdiocese Board of Trustees was introduced to conceptual renderings of St. Raphael of Brooklyn Church which would be located adjacent to the Camp and overlooking the Conference and Retreat Center.

The building plans include a balcony to increase capacity, along with an underground mausoleum and adjoining cemetery. Additional features may be incorporated as planning continues. The new facility is intended to complement rather than replace the existing chapels and worship spaces that have served campers and conference guests for many years.

The church's namesake, St. Raphael, established the Syro-Arabian Mission in 1895, which became the foundation of the Antiochian Archdiocese. He was originally interred at the Village near St. Ignatius Church at the camp. His relics are now housed in a reliquary at Sts. Peter and Paul Church in the Conference Center. Learn More: antiochianvillage.org

What Is Antiochian Village?

Nestled among the rolling hills of Pennsylvania's Laurel Highlands, Antiochian Village is much more than a conference center or summer camp. Owned and operated by the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, it serves as one of the Archdiocese's most important ministries—a place where Orthodox Christians of all ages gather to worship, learn, and grow in the faith.



Since opening as Antiochian Village in 1978, the property has welcomed thousands of visitors each year. This Orthodox campus features a year-round conferences and retreat center, summer camp, bookstore, museum, theological library, walking trails, chapels, and guest accommodations. Whether attending a parish retreat, a youth camp, a Bible conference, or a family gathering, visitors find an atmosphere centered on Christian hospitality and fellowship.

For many young people in the Archdiocese, Antiochian Village Camp is where lifelong friendships are formed and faith takes deeper root. Campers participate in worship, Bible study, service projects, outdoor activities, and recreation while experiencing the richness of Orthodox Christian life in community.

Thai Peanut Noodle Soup

Fasting-Friendly



Ingredients

- 6 Tbsp. vegetable oil, divided
- 8 oz. cremini mushrooms, stemmed and sliced 1/4" thick
- 2 Tbsp. plus 1/8 tsp. kosher salt, divided
- 6 oz. pad Thai rice noodles
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 Tbsp. minced or grated ginger
- 2 Tbsp. red Thai curry paste
- 1 (14.5-oz) can unsweetened coconut milk
- 1/4 cup low-sodium soy sauce
- 3 Tbsp. creamy natural peanut butter
- 4 cups low-sodium vegetable broth
- 1 small red bell pepper, seeded and sliced
- 2 Tbsp. fresh lime juice
- 8 cilantro sprigs
- 1 cup Thai or regular basil leaves
- 1 cup unsalted roasted peanuts

Directions

1. Begin by washing and peeling the vegetables, then dicing them into small pieces, though the dry beans should remain whole. Pour the water into a substantial soup pot and introduce all the vegetables, including the beans, while reserving the onions. Allow the

mixture to simmer gently over medium heat for one hour.

2. In a large frying pan, sauté the onions in a portion of the olive oil. Once they have reached a lovely golden hue, remove them from the heat.
3. Incorporate the golden onions into the soup along with the wine, the remaining olive oil, macaroni, tarragon, salt, and pepper, continuing the cooking process for another fifteen minutes. Cover the pot and permit the soup to rest for ten minutes.



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*St. James Orthodox Church belongs to the
Antiochian Orthodox Christian
Archdiocese of North America*

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