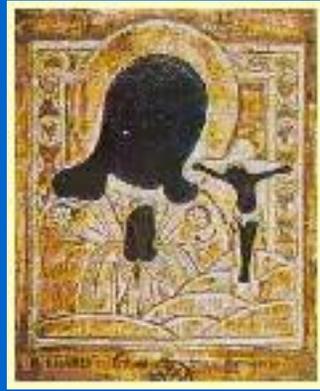


# THE AKHTYRKA ICON OF THE MOTHER OF GOD



"Three years since the day of the transposition of the icon to the house, on the day of the Protection of the Most-Holy Mother of God, a priest entered the room where the icon was and was struck by the unusual light emanating from it; this phenomenon began to occur over and over, but the priest piously prayed and spoke to no one of it. As soon as he fell into a light sleep, the priest saw the Mother of God and heard her instructions, to clear the icon of dust and wash it with clean water.

The priest, waking from his slumber, immediately went to fulfill the will of the Mother of God, cleaning it of dust, washing it with pure water and gathered the water into a basin to pour it into the river the following day.

Afterwards, he fell asleep again, and saw in his dream that he is approaching the river with the basin of water with which he cleaned the icon, but on the way, he heard the voice of the Mother of God: "Return home and keep this water; it will heal all those suffering from fever." The priest had a daughter who had for a long time suffered from fever; awakening, he gave her this water to drink, and the daughter was instantly cured. After that, all who suffered from fever would come to this icon in prayer and would be healed."

The priest put the Icon into Holy Protection Church. As Bishop Philaret writes: "In the church, wondrous healings of various sick people flowed from the holy icon, and its glory spread to faraway places."

As is always the case in such instances, the Church was obligated to conduct an "investigation" of the miracles of the holy icon, since groundless faith or deceit in this matter could bring the truth more damage than even stubborn disbelief. The investigation lasted for eight years, and since the "historical veracity of the miraculous occurrences proved to be indubitable, both by their circumstances and by the variety of miraculous events," the Holy Synod in 1751 recognized the Akhtyrka Icon of the Mother of God as miracle-working. In 1753, on the site of the appearance of the Miracle-working Icon, at the order of Empress Elizabeth, a new Church of the Protection was built of stone.

During the revolution, the icon disappeared, but later turned up mysteriously in Harbin and was acquired by S.A. Stepanov. According to protopriest N. Trufanov of Harbin, who had often venerated the Icon in Akhtyrka, the one acquired by Stepanov was that same Miracle-working Icon of Akhtyrka. In the 1950's, S. Stepanov took the Icon to Brazil, and then to San Francisco, where he handed it over to the Committee of Russian Orthodox Youth as a blessing. At the present time the Icon is under the auspices of Archbishop Hilarion of Sydney and the Australian and New Zealand Diocese.