



▪ Let us imitate the Saints

The Oil From the Vigil Lamp of the Theotokos and of All the Saints*

Saint Niphon, Bishop of Constantiane, had the following admirable habit:

When he was going to take a little sleep, he would first spread stones on the ground and throw a small mattress on top. Then he would chant funeral hymns, as if he were intending to bury himself, and recite by heart four readings from the Epistles and four from the Gospels, as well as a few other prayers. Finally, making the sign of the Cross three times over his bed, he would lie down, using a stone for a pillow.



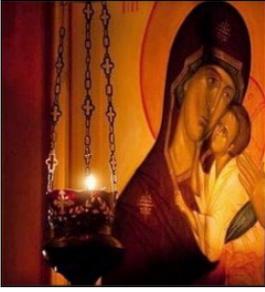
The demons often attacked him in his sleep. They would pester him and not let him rest. He would then take his staff and with spiritual strength hit them fiercely, mocking their weakness — to the point that the demons were completely confounded.

“What are we to do with this stiff-necked man?” they would ask themselves. “First he beats us and then he reviles us and puts us all to shame.”

One night, then, when the servant of God was dozing, the devil approached with a spade and wanted to hit him. But suddenly, in great terror, he dashed noisily outside again and vanished like smoke. As he was leaving he gnashed his teeth and exclaimed:

“O Mary, everywhere you burn me, protecting this hardhead.”

Hearing these words, Niphon perceived that the Theotokos



defended and guarded him. And this because every night before lying down to sleep, he would take oil from her vigil lamp and anoint his forehead, ears, and all his sensory organs. Thus was the devil routed and disappeared.

He thenceforth understood the power the oil from the vigil lamp of the Theotokos and all the Saints had, and he would often give it to his acquaintances to anoint themselves before going to sleep.

(*) *An Ascetic Bishop: Stories, Sermons, and Prayers of St. Niphon.*