

*FROM THE ORTHODOX WEEKLY BULLETIN . . . Vestal Cliffwood, New Jersey*

*A LIGHT FROM THE PAST*

Young and old alike need models whom they can emulate in life. Fortunately, our Christian faith provide us with a host of marvelous people, of every conceivable rank in life, who have been proclaimed saints of Christ. They can inspire us in our Christian living.

ST. JOHN THE MERCIFUL is one such great figure. A person does not attain the title of "The Merciful," easily in Christian history. Born in Cyprus in the year 555, John received a fine education and seemed destined for a full and happy family life. But a violent disease claimed the lives of his dear parents and wife, and he then turned himself totally to the service of Christ.

He became a Patriarch of Alexandria and was known as a leader of infinite mercy. With his organizational skills he was able to found hospitals for the sick, orphanages for the homeless, food kitchens for the hungry and agencies for the refugees. His philanthropy and energy knew no bounds.

John devoted his life to the fulfillment of God's commandments and the care of the less fortunate. As he lay dying, this is what John prayed: "I thank thee, O Lord my God, because Thou hast permitted me to return to Thee what is Thine and I am left with no earthly possessions. When I was made Bishop of Alexandria, I found eight thousand pound of gold in the Patriarchate's treasury. I collected much more, which was brought in offering by those who love God. All this I have given to Thee, O Christ, unto Whom I now commit my spirit."