

Russia's Colony

Ioann Veniaminov, St. Innocent (1797-1871)

Born Ivan Popov in a village near Irkutsk, spent eleven years in seminary, from age 9 to 20. He was an excellent student, and mechanically inclined. In 1814 he was given the name of a beloved bishop who had died, Veniaminov. He volunteered for service in Russian America, and after spending a year in Sitka, went to Unalaska. There he helped develop an Aleut alphabet and translated several religious works into the Native language. He had a reputation for effective spirituality as well as practicality and in 1835 was sent to Sitka where he helped build the Orthodox cathedral. He returned to Russia in 1839 where he was appointed the first bishop of Alaska. He continued to serve in America and Kamchatka until 1859 when he was recalled to Russia where he was appointed Metropolitan of Moscow, one of the highest positions in the Church. He died in 1871, and was canonized in 1977.