



**January 3, 2010**  
**SUNDAY BEFORE THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST**  
**PREFEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST;**  
**FEAST OF THE ANCESTORS OF CHRIST**

**RESURRECTIONAL TROPARION - TONE FIVE:**

Let us, the faithful, praise and worship the Word, coeternal with the Father and the Spirit, born for our salvation from the Virgin; for He willed to be lifted upon the Cross in the Flesh, to endure death, and to raise the dead by His glorious Resurrection.

**ANCESTORS OF CHRIST TROPARION – TONE TWO:**

Great are the accomplishments of faith, for the Three Holy Youths rejoiced in the fountain of flames as though in the waters of rest; and the prophet Daniel appeared a shepherd to the lions as though they were sheep. Through their prayers, O Christ God, save our souls!

**PREFEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST TROPARION – TONE FOUR:**

Prepare, O Bethlehem, for Eden has been opened to all! Adorn yourself, O Ephratha, for the tree of life blossoms forth from the Virgin in the cave! Her womb is a spiritual paradise planted with the Divine Fruit: if we eat of it, we shall live forever and not die like Adam. Christ comes to restore the image which He made in the beginning!

**ANCESTORS OF CHRIST KONTAKION – TONE ONE:**

Rejoice, O Bethlehem! Prepare yourself, O Ephratha! The Lamb is on her way to give birth to the Chief Shepherd she carries in her womb. The God-bearing forefathers will rejoice, beholding Him, and together with the shepherds, they will glorify the Virgin nursing Him.

**PREFEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST KONTAKION – TONE THREE:**

Today the Virgin comes to the cave to give birth to the Eternal Word. Hear the glad tidings and rejoice, O universe! Glorify with the angels and the shepherds the Eternal God, who is willing to appear as a little child!



## EPISTLE & COMMENTARY

### **THE PROKIMENON IN THE 4<sup>TH</sup> TONE:**

*Blessed are You, O Lord, God of our fathers, and praised and glorified is Your Name, forever! Amen.*

### **HEBREWS 11: 9-10; 17-23; 32-40**

Brethren, by faith Abraham dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones. By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command.

And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented - of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

### **ALLELUIA VERSES**

*O God, with our ears we have heard, for our fathers have told us.*

*For You have saved us from those who afflict us, and those who hate us You have put to shame.*

### **COMMENTARY**

Faith is simple, but it becomes many-splendored in our lives. For Abraham and Sarah it became a venturesome action; obedience; patience; trust; and confidence. Faith is what moves us from the impermanence and discomfort of living in tents

made by man to the permanence and solace of the city built by God. Faith is like a muscle: it is only strengthened through exercise. As with all exercise, it is not an easy task, but one that is ultimately rewarding and fulfilling. May the Lord, God of our fathers, strengthen our faith, so that we too may participate in His Only-Begotten Son's death and resurrection!

## GOSPEL & COMMENTARY

### **MATTHEW 1: 1-25**

A book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham. Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers. Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram. Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon and Nahshon begot Salmon. Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David the king. David the king begot Solomon by her who had been the wife of Uriah. Solomon begot Rehoboam, Rehoboam begot Abijah and Abijah begot Asa. Asa begot Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat begot Joram, and Joram begot Uzziah. Uzziah begot Jotham, Jotham begot Ahaz, and Ahaz begot Hezekiah. Hezekiah begot Manasseh, Manasseh begot Amon, and Amon begot Josiah. Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brothers about the time they were carried away to Babylon. And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, and Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel begot Abiud, Abiud begot Eliakim, and Eliakim begot Azor. Azor begot Zadok, Zadok begot Achim, and Achim begot Eliud. Eliud begot Eleazar, Eleazar begot Matthan, and Matthan begot Jacob. And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations. Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph, her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying: "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet saying: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated: "God with us." Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus.

## COMMENTARY

Many from today's world have wondered why it is important to read the list of the names of Jesus' ancestors. Is it necessary to know who Jesus Christ's great-great-great grandfather is? It is if one wishes to know God. The lineage of Jesus shows how God has acted and revealed Himself in this world.

Of all of those ancestors named, only five women are named: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, the wife of Uriah, and Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Why were these women named, when all others were not? One has only to look at their stories to see that these women all possess great faith. Tamar, Rahab, and Bathsheba (the wife of Uriah) were harlots, but the nature of their harlotry was for the Glory of God. Tamar was falsely accused of being a harlot. Rahab was a harlot whose faith assisted her in recognizing Joshua's spies as men of God. David's sin, not her own, made Bathsheba into an adulteress. Ruth was a Gentile, whose faith in God, shown through loyalty to her mother-in-law, brought her into favor with Boaz. And Mary's faith was the greatest of all. She took God's Will, and made it her own. She became the greatest example of all human beings. May God bless us to follow in Mary's example, opening ourselves up to Him, allowing our will to be united with His, denying ourselves, and following His Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ.

## SPIRITUAL ARTICLES

**From *The Prologue* for Dec. 21/Jan. 3 by St. Nikolai Velimirovic:**

### **The Holy Martyr Juliana and 630 Martyrs with her**

This glorious virgin and martyr was born in Nicomedia of pagan parents. Hearing the Gospel preached, she turned to Christ with all her heart and began to live in exact observance of the Lord's commandments. Eleusius, a senator, was her betrothed. In order to turn him away, Juliana told him that she would marry him only if he became the eparch of that city. She suggested this to him, thinking that this young man would never attain such a high position. Nevertheless, Eleusius tried and, by flattery and bribery, attained the post of Eparch of Nicomedia. Juliana then revealed to him that she was a Christian and could not enter into marriage with him until he embraced her Faith, saying: "What does it benefit us to be united physically but divided spiritually?" Embittered by this, Eleusius denounced her to her father. The enraged father scorned her, beat her, and then handed her over to the eparch for torture. The eparch ordered that they severely beat her, then she was cast into prison, all wounded and bloody. However, the Lord healed her in prison, and she appeared before the eparch completely well. He then threw her into a glowing furnace but the fire did not burn her. Seeing this miracle, many believed in Christ God. Five hundred men and one hundred and thirty women were converted. The eparch condemned them all to death and ordered them all to be beheaded. Thus their souls entered Paradise. Then the wicked judge condemned holy Juliana to be beheaded. With a joyful spirit, Juliana went out to the place of execution, prayed to God on her knees, and placed her head on the block. Her head was severed and her soul went to the Kingdom of Christ's eternal light in the year 304. God's punishment quickly befell Eleusius: as he was sailing on the sea, his ship broke up and he fell into the water. He did not find death in the water, but swam to an island, where dogs tore him to pieces and devoured him.

## **Saint Peter the Wonderworker, Metropolitan of Russia**

Peter was born in the province of Volhynia and embraced the monastic life at the age of twelve. He was a wonderful ascetic and iconographer. He founded a monastery on the river Rata and became its abbot. Against his will, he was appointed Metropolitan of Kiev and consecrated in Constantinople by Patriarch Athanasius. As metropolitan, he endured much at the hands of the envious and the heretics. He governed the Church for eighteen years as a good and zealous shepherd. During his lifetime he built a crypt for himself in the Church of the Dormition, where his holy and miracle-working relics repose even today. He entered into rest in the year 1326 and went to his true homeland.

## **The Holy Martyr Themistocles**

As a shepherd, the young Themistocles tended sheep in a field near the city of Myra in Lycia. At that time the persecutors of Christians were pursuing St. Dioscorides, and they came upon Themistocles in the field. They asked him if he saw the one being pursued and if he knew where he was hiding. Themistocles, although he knew, refused to say, but instead declared himself a Christian. He was tortured and beheaded at the time of Decius in the year 251.

## **HYMN OF PRAISE**

The Mother of Saint Peter, Metropolitan of Russia  
The glorious mother of Peter the Saint,  
When she was pregnant with Peter,  
Dreamed a dream, and saw in that dream  
That, in her hands, she held a lamb:  
With slender horns, a lamb all white.  
Between the lamb's horns was a most beautiful tree,  
And on the tree were fragrant flowers,  
And fragrant fruits around the flowers.  
The tree's branches were adorned with candles,  
Glowing candles like shining stars,  
Redolent with a heavenly scent.  
The dream of the mother was wonderfully realized:  
The meek lamb prefigured Peter,  
The horns—Peter's bravery,  
The beautiful tree—the soul of the saint,  
The multicolored flowers—his multitude of virtues,  
The fruits—his works of mercy,  
The glowing candles—his faith and prayer.  
That which was revealed in an image to the mother  
Was shown in truth in Peter.

## **REFLECTION**

Whoever climbs to the Kingdom of Christ must encounter obstacles, and these obstacles are numerous and varied. Especially dangerous are the evils of the demons. Therefore, every man zealous for the spiritual life must be especially cautious and not accept every shining

vision from the other world as a divine revelation. That even the devil is able to appear as an angel of light is shown in the life of the Holy Martyr Juliana. When this holy virgin lay in prison, the devil appeared to her in angelic light, and he counseled her to offer sacrifice to the idols so as to end her tortures. The frightened Juliana asked: "Who are you?" The devil replied: "I am an angel of God! God is greatly concerned about you. Therefore, He sent me with the message that you should submit to the eparch, so that your body will not be destroyed by pain; the Lord is gracious and will forgive you because of the weakness of your wounded body." The martyr was horrified at these words. Confused, she fell down in tears in prayer to God, asking Him to reveal who had spoken with her. Then a voice from heaven came to her: "Be brave, Juliana, I am with you; I give you authority and power over him who came to you, and from him alone will you discover who he is." And the devil was bound and forced to acknowledge that he was the same one who had deceived Eve in Paradise, who had told Cain to murder Abel, Herod to slaughter the children of Bethlehem, the Jews to stone Stephen, Nero to crucify Peter upside down and to behead Paul, and so forth. Thus, this holy virgin, girded with the power of God, did not allow herself to be deluded by the evil spirit, but she defeated him by her vigilant and ardent prayers to God.

**IMPORTANT REMINDERS & ANNOUNCEMENTS**

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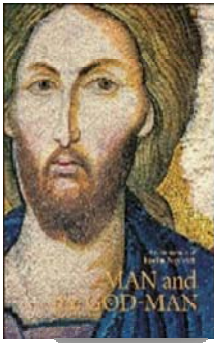
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## **A FEW SEBASTIAN PRESS TITLES...**



### ***2010 Wall Calendar***

The Serbian Orthodox Diocese of Western America is pleased to announce the publication of a beautiful, full-color, trilingual (English, Serbian and Greek) Wall Calendar, which has been compiled and designed by Bishop Maxim, and printed in Serbia. This high quality Calendar is adorned with striking full-color icons by Fr. Stamatis Skliris, a parish priest in Athens who is renowned as an iconographer and as a writer and lecturer on Byzantine iconography. Highly recommended! 27 pages. *Retail price: \$20.00*



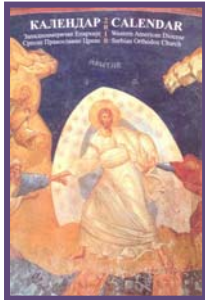
### **MAN AND THE GOD-MAN by Archimandrite Justin Popovic**

*Retail Price: \$15.00*

"Father Justin Popovich, pan-orthodox witness to the God-revealed and Christ-given Eternal Truth, whose testimony can be even seen within this collection of his articles - that "the mystery of Truth is not in material things, not in ideas, not in symbols, but in Personhood, namely the Theanthropic Person of the Lord Christ, Who said: I am the Truth (John 14:6), Truth perfect, never diminished, always one and the same in its complete fullness - yesterday, today, and forever (Heb.13:8)."

The treasure to be found in this anthology of neopatristic syntheses consists of: "Perfect God and perfect man" - Nativity Epistle, where Fr Justin boldly exclaim that "man is only a true man when he is completely united with God, only and solely in God is man a man, true man, perfect man, a man in whom all the fullness of Godhead lives."; "The God-man" - The foundation of the Truth of Orthodoxy - Ava Justinian language of love in Christ-centered reflections of Truth; "The Supreme Value and Infallible Criterion"- contemporary philosophical reflections on visible and invisible realities; "Sentenced to Immortality" - a homily on the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ; "Humanistic and Theanthropic Culture"-criticism of European anti-Christian culture; "Humanistic and Theanthropic Education" - indicative pondering of consequences of education without God.. ; "The Theory of Knowledge of Saint

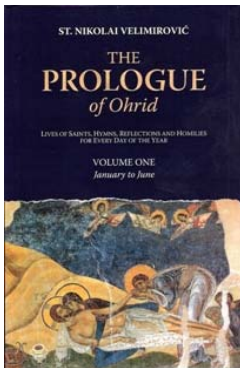
Isaac the Syrian" - Faith, prayer, love, humility, grace and freedom, the purification of the intellect, mystery of knowledge; "A Deer in a Lost Paradise" - Ava's renowned poetic essay, a confession, and deepest longing for all-sweetest Jesus...



### **2010 POCKET DIOCESAN CALENDARS NOW AVAILABLE**

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*Retail Price: \$5.00*



### **THE PROLOGUE OF OHRID**

St Nikolai of Zica (Velimirovic) (1880-1956) has been called the "Serbian Chrysostom" for his theological depth and golden-tongued eloquence. Now for the first time, a complete and unabridged English translation of St. Nikolai's Prologue of Ohrid has been made available. St. Nikolai's Prologue has become a much-loved spiritual classic for Orthodox Christians worldwide. An inspirational source-book of the Orthodox Faith, it contains within its pages a summation of the Church's wisdom and Her experience of sanctity through the Grace of Jesus Christ. Lives of Saints, Hymns, Reflections and Homilies are presented for every day of the year. St. Nikolai's beautiful Hymns have never before appeared in English. – *Retail \$120 per set*

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### **UPCOMING EVENTS**

#### **ANNUAL DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY – Friday, January 29, 2010**

Visit us online at [www.westsrbdio.org/assembly](http://www.westsrbdio.org/assembly)

The Annual Diocesan Assembly will be a one day event this year and will be held at the Saint Simeon Serbian Orthodox Church, Las Vegas, Nevada on **Friday, January 29, 2010**.

#### **Annual Clergy Seminar – Annual KSS Meeting – Annual Diocesan Council Meeting**

*The Clergy Seminary and the Annual KSS Meeting will be held on **Thursday, January 28, 2010** beginning with lunch at 1pm at the Saint Simeon Serbian Orthodox Church.*

*The Diocesan Council Meeting will be held on **Thursday, January 28, 2010 at 7:00 p.m.** at the Saint Simeon Serbian Orthodox Church.*