



# SERBIAN PATRIARCH IRINEJ

A visit to the Diocese of Western America

## Патријарх Српски Господин Господин Иринеј посетио Епархију Западноамеричку



Read about and view photos of the events of the recent visit of His Holiness Patriarch of Serbia Kyr IRINEJ, to our Western American Diocese.

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# JOIN THE CIRCLE OF 100

## Rebuilding Monastery Hilandar

### Our Goal—100 Benefactors

\$1,000 a year for three years

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

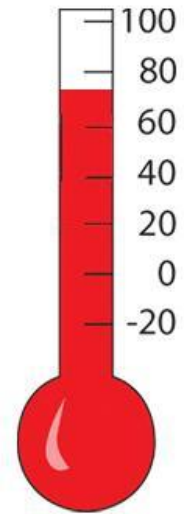
During my recent Pilgrimage to our Most Holy Monastery Hilandar on Mount Athos, it was readily apparent that the reconstruction and restoration following the devastating 2004 fire has slowed considerably for lack of funds. The restoration to date has been outstanding but so much more has to be done.

Recognizing a great need, I thought that our Diocese might take the lead and make a major contribution toward the completion of the restoration by initiating a PLEDGE PROGRAM to be called the CIRCLE OF 100. We are seeking 100 individuals or families who would pledge \$1,000 a year for three years. I have asked our Diocesan vice-president, Ron Radakovich to chair this effort and he has gladly accepted.

Today's Hilandar was founded in 1198 by Saints Sava and Simeon. In course of its long history, Hilandar has suffered damage time and time again as a result of conquering, plundering, earthquakes and fires, always to be restored to its perennial beauty.

We express our gratitude to all people of good will who have so far selflessly and kindly aided the reconstruction of Hilandar. We now pray that more of our people will step forward and support this worthy cause by joining the CIRCLE OF 100.

Bishop MAXIM



**CIRCLE OF 100**

**As of today we  
have 75  
BENEFACTORS**

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BENEFACTOR  
TODAY**

[PLEDGE FORM](#)

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# Sunday, December 11, 2011

## (Nativity Fast)

### **26<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST:** **THE VENERABLE MARTYR STEPHEN THE NEW;** **THE NEW MARTYR CHRISTOS**

#### **RESURRECTIONAL TROPARION - TONE ONE:**

When the stone had been sealed by the Jews; while the soldiers were guarding Your most pure Body; You did rise on the third day, O Savior, granting life to the world. The powers of heaven therefore cried to You, O Giver of Life: Glory to Your Resurrection, O Christ! Glory to Your Kingdom! Glory to Your dispensation, O You who loves mankind.

#### **TROPARION TO THE VENERABLE MARTYR STEPHEN THE NEW - TONE FOUR:**

Trained in asceticism on the mountain, with the weapon of the Cross you destroyed the spiritual assaults of the hostile powers, all-blessed one; again you bravely prepared for combat and slew Copronymus with the sword of faith; for both struggles you have been crowned by God, monk-martyr Stephen of eternal memory.

#### **RESURRECTIONAL KONTAKION - TONE ONE:**

As God, You did arise from the tomb in glory, raising the world with Yourself. Human nature praises You as God, for death has vanished. Adam exults, O Master! Eve rejoices, for she is freed from bondage, and cries to You: You are the giver of resurrection to all, O Christ!

#### **KONTAKION TO THE VENERABLE MARTYR STEPHEN THE NEW - TONE EIGHT:**

Lovers of the feasts, from the heart with hymns let us praise in faith godlike Stephen the lover of the Trinity, for he honored the fair icon icon of the Master and of His Mother. Now let us rejoice together and cry out to him with love: 'Rejoice, ever glorious Father.'

#### **HYMN TO THE MOTHER OF GOD - TONE SIX:**

Steadfast Protectress of Christians and constant advocate before the Creator, do not despise the cry of us sinners; but in your goodness come speedily to help us who call on you in faith. Hasten to hear our petition and to intercede for us, O Theotokos, for you always protect those who honor you!

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## EPISTLE & COMMENTARY

### **THE PROKIMENON IN THE 1<sup>ST</sup> TONE:**

Let Your mercy, O Lord, be upon us as we have set our hope on You.

### **26<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST, EPHESIANS 5: 8-19**

Brethren, you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore He says: “Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.” See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.

### **FOR THE VENERABLE MARTYR STEPHEN THE NEW, 2 TIMOTHY 1: 8-18**

Brethren, do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day. Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain; but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very zealously and found me. The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day—and you know very well how many ways he ministered to me at Ephesus.

### **THE ALLELUIA VERSES:**

God gives vengeance to me and subdues people under me; He magnifies the salvation of the king, and deals mercifully with His Christ, with David and his seed forever.

### **COMMENTARY ON THE EPISTLE READING FROM EPHESIANS**

We must judge what the world says is reasonable on the basis of what God says is true. Besides separating from darkness, Christians are also to expose it. But we must first come out of hiding in order to be exposed ourselves, confessing and repenting of our sins. We renounce the fallenness of the world, but not creation itself.

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## GOSPEL & COMMENTARY

### 26<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST, LUKE 12: 16-21

The Lord told this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul: ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink and be merry.’ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’ So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

### FOR THE VENERABLE MARTYR STEPHEN THE NEW, MATTHEW 10: 23-31

Jesus said, “When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes. A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household! Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops. And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father’s will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.”

### COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL READING FROM LUKE

The rich man is a fool despite his material success because he vainly puts his trust in these possessions rather than in God. To be “rich toward God” is to have a life of communion with Him through a sacramental life in the Church, demonstrable faith and works of love and mercy towards others.

## SPIRITUAL ARTICLES

From The Prologue for November 28/December 11 by St. Nikolai Velimirovic:

### **The Venerable Martyr Stephen the New**

As at one time Hannah, the mother of Samuel, prayed to God to give her a son, so did Anna, the mother of Stephen. Praying thus in the Church of Blachernae before the icon of the Most-holy Theotokos, a light sleep overcame her, and she saw the Most-holy Virgin as radiant as the sun, and heard a voice from the icon: “Woman, depart in peace. In accordance with your prayer, you have a son in your womb.” Anna indeed conceived and gave birth to a son, the holy Stephen. At sixteen, Stephen received the monastic tonsure on Mount Auxentius near Constantinople, from the elder John who also taught him divine wisdom and asceticism. When John entered into rest in the Lord, Stephen remained on the mountain in a life of strict asceticism, taking upon himself labor upon labor. His holiness attracted many disciples to him. When Emperor Constantine Copronymus was

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persecuting icons more ferociously than his foul father, Leo the Isaurian, Stephen showed himself a zealous defender of the veneration of holy icons. The demented emperor accepted various obscene slanders against Stephen and personally plotted intrigues to break Stephen and get him out of the way. Stephen was banished to the island of Proconnesus, then taken to Constantinople, chained and cast into prison, where he was met by 342 monks, brought from all over and imprisoned for their veneration of the icons. There, in prison, they carried out the whole church typicon as in a monastery. Then the wicked emperor condemned Stephen to death. The saint foresaw his death forty days in advance, and asked forgiveness of the brethren. The emperor's servants dragged him from prison and, beating and pulling him, dragged him through the streets of Constantinople calling upon all those loyal to the emperor to stone this "enemy of the emperor." One of the heretics struck the saint on the head with a piece of wood, and the saint gave up his soul. As St. Stephen the Protomartyr suffered at the hands of the Jews, so this Stephen suffered at the hands of the iconoclastic heretics. This glorious soldier of Christ suffered in the year 767 at the age of fifty-three, and was crowned with unfading glory.

### **The New Martyr Christos**

Christos was an Albanian Christian living in Constantinople and a gardener by trade. As he was selling his vegetables one day, he offended a Turk, who then slandered him before a judge, saying that Christos had promised to become a Moslem and then recanted. After interrogation, he was chained and cast into prison. In prison, someone offered him food, which Christos refused, saying: "It is better that I appear before my Christ hungry." After that, he pulled out some money he had concealed under his belt and gave it to one of his fellow prisoners, requesting that the money be used for several Liturgies to be celebrated for his soul. He was beheaded by the Turks in the year 1748, and was glorified forever in the Kingdom of Christ God.

### **The Venerable Anna**

Anna was a woman of noble birth who, after her husband's death, was tonsured into monasticism by St. Stephen the New. Emperor Constantine Copronymus urged her to say that she had engaged in illicit physical relations with St. Stephen, in order to humiliate him before the people. However, this holy woman refused to join in the emperor's intrigue against the saint, whom she venerated as her spiritual father. For that, she was whipped and then cast into prison, where she gave up her holy soul to God.

### **The Holy and Devout Emperor Maurice**

Maurice was murdered with his six sons by Emperor Phocas in the year 602 (see "Reflection" below).

### **HYMN OF PRAISE: The Venerable Martyr Stephen the New**

Of the same name as the first Stephen,  
Stephen the New gave his life in battle, too.  
The proud heretical emperor, coarse power incarnate,  
Was armed to the teeth with earthly weapons.  
Stephen's weapon was power not of a physical source,

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A spiritual weapon, heavenly truth.  
The emperor had soldiers, defenders of falsehood,  
While Stephen was set at ease by the invisible God.  
Serene as heaven, Stephen awaited torture,  
Death and eternal life beyond this age.  
While in his rage, the emperor roared  
And signed the order for death and torment for the righteous man.  
Stephen was not dismayed, though beaten and pressed,  
Bound as he was by spirit and prayer to the heavens.  
The emperor, stronger than the saint's body, crushed his body;  
Yet the saint was stronger in spirit, and finished in victory.  
O Saint Stephen, spiritual knight,  
Help us avoid the nets of the devil,  
And to venerate the holy icons with honor,  
And that we might always follow your wondrous example.

### **REFLECTION**

Reading the examples of perseverance in the Faith and generosity of the saints of God, we also become persevering in the Faith and generous. When Copronymus's men urged St. Stephen to reject the veneration of icons to please the iconoclastic emperor, Stephen extended his hand, clenched his fist and said: "If I had in myself only a fist full of blood, I would shed it for the icon of Christ." Emperor Maurice had six sons of which the sixth and youngest was not yet weaned. For this youngest son, the emperor kept a special wet-nurse at court who fed it. A terrible fate came upon Emperor Maurice: Phocas ousted him from the throne and condemned him to death together with all of his six sons. Before Maurice's eyes, his sons were slain, one after the other. When the wet-nurse had to hand over the emperor's sixth son to be slain, she genuinely felt sorrow over the fate of the unfortunate emperor and his children, and in a moment, decided to save the life of at least one of the emperor's sons. So, when they sought the emperor's son from her breast, she gave them her own young son and he was beheaded. Finally, the Emperor Maurice was beheaded. The emperor's youngest son grew up believing his wet-nurse to be his mother. However, when the wet-nurse revealed the secret to him, he became very serious, then resolutely left the world and withdrew to Mount Sinai, where he was tonsured a monk and dedicated himself to God. He did this to requite that innocent young child who was put to death in his place.

### **CONTEMPLATION**

Contemplate God's wonderful Paradise (Genesis 2):

1. How it was a kingdom of innocence, purity and righteousness;
2. How there was not a trace of sickness or death, for there was not even a thought of sin.

### **HOMILY**

**on how the faithful must grow**

*But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ (Ephesians 4:15).*

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Brethren, here is all that is asked of us on this earthly journey: that we hold to the truth and that we live in love. Truth is revealed by Christ the Lord, and the example of love is given in Christ the Lord. Neither can one come to the truth apart from Christ the Lord nor find an example of true love apart from Him. Seeing this only true path to light and salvation in the confusion of many false paths, the Apostle Paul reminds us beforehand: *That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine* (Ephesians 4:14). Only God can reveal the truth; only God can show true love. One man can know more than another man, but only God can reveal the truth. Thoughts come to man like the wind, and illusions can seem to be truth to him. Deluded by his own thoughts, one man deludes another; deceived by illusions, one man then deceives another; but truth is in God and of God. Brethren, Christ is our whole truth and our whole love. When we think of Christ, we think of truth; when we act according to Christ, we act correctly; when we love Christ, we love Love itself. By Christ we live, by Christ we grow, by Christ we become immortal and are glorified. He is our Head—not merely the titular head of a group, but the actual head of a living body, of which we are members. Adhering to truth and love, we are made worthy to dwell eternally in this Body of Christ. O Lord Christ, our most wonderful truth and our endearing love, enter into us and receive us into Thyself. To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

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