



December 27, 2009

2ND SUNDAY BEFORE THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST

FEAST OF THE HOLY FOREFATHERS

RESURRECTIONAL TROPARION - TONE FOUR:

When the women disciples of the Lord learned from the angel the joyous message of Your Resurrection; they cast away the ancestral curse and elatedly told the apostles: Death is overthrown! Christ God is Risen, granting the world great mercy.

HOLY FOREFATHERS TROPARION – TONE TWO:

Through faith You justified the Forefathers, betrothing through them the Church of the gentiles. These saints exult in glory, for from their seed came forth a glorious fruit: She who bore You without seed. So by their prayers, O Christ God, have mercy on us!

HOLY FOREFATHERS KONTAKION – TONE SIX:

You did not worship the graven image, O thrice-blessed ones, but armed with the immaterial Essence of God, you were glorified glorified in a trial by fire. From the midst of unbearable flames you called on God, crying: Hasten, O compassionate One! Speedily come to our aid, for You are merciful and able to do as You will.



EPISTLE & COMMENTARY

THE PROKIMENON IN THE 4TH TONE:

O Lord, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom, You have made them all!

COLOSSIANS 3: 4-11

Brethren, when Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

ALLELUIA VERSES: PSALM 45: 4, 7

Go forth and prosper and reign, because of truth and meekness and righteousness.

You love righteousness and hate iniquity.

COMMENTARY

Our lives in this fallen world can be torn between serving two masters: Christ and the things of this world. And yet, we are told by Christ that, "no man can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24). As Orthodox Christians, we must daily die to this world and the temptations therein, in order to participate in the life of the world to come. This means that we must denounce the sins and transgressions we so often embrace in an unconscious death-grip. St. Paul is affirming in this passage that one may be baptized in Christ, but still fall away from Him. May the Lord our God give us the determination and zeal to continue to put on Christ, taking up our crosses and following Him, so that we too might see Christ as being all and in all!

GOSPEL & COMMENTARY

LUKE 14: 16-24

The Lord spoke this parable: “A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, ‘Come, for all things are now ready.’ But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it; I ask you to have me excused.’ And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them; I ask you to have me excused.’ Still another said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.’ So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.’ And the servant said, ‘Master, it is done as you commanded and still there is room.’ Then the master said to the servant, ‘Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say to you, that none of these men who were invited shall taste my supper.’”

COMMENTARY

This parable describes a banquet held by the Lord God. And yet, those who are originally invited choose not to go, giving very specific excuses. Would we give an excuse if the President of the United States, or a royal figure invited us to a banquet? The nature of these excuses opens one up to the possibility that there is an implied meaning to this banquet. One only has to read the Book of Deuteronomy to understand that these excuses are the very ones God provides for getting out of a Holy War. These men are not simply rejecting God’s hospitality; they are saying that they want no part of the ultimate holy war. This banquet involves communion with Christ. All who are in communion with Jesus Christ are continuously “fighting the good fight...” the battle between Good and Evil. We too are invited to this banquet. We too are called to take up our crosses and follow Christ. We too must answer this call. May the Lord God grant us the endurance and perseverance necessary to accept the invitation to the Lord’s Banquet!



SPIRITUAL ARTICLES

From *The Prologue* for Dec. 14/Dec. 27 by St. Nikolai Velimirovic:

The Holy Martyrs Thyrsus, Leucius and Callinicus

Saints Thyrsus and Leucius were honorable citizens of Caesarea of Bithynia, the former being baptized and the latter being a Christian catechumen. Callinicus, however, was a pagan priest. When Emperor Decius's heir, Cumbricius, began to mercilessly torture and murder Christians, the fearless Leucius appeared before him and, reproaching him, said: "Why have you waged war against your own soul, O Cumbricius?" The enraged judge ordered that he be flogged, tortured and finally beheaded. The tortured Leucius went to his beheading as joyfully as if he were going to a wedding. Witnessing the death of the courageous Leucius, blessed Thyrsus, inflamed with divine zeal like that of Leucius, also appeared before the judge and reproached him for his evil crimes and for his unbelief in the One True God. He also was flogged and cast into prison. The invisible hand of God healed him of his wounds, opened the prison door and led him out. Thyrsus immediately went to Phileas, the Bishop of Caesarea, to be baptized by him. After his baptism, he was again seized and tortured, but he endured the tortures, bearing them as though in a dream and not in reality. By the power of his prayer, many idols fell down. The pagan priest Callinicus, upon seeing this, converted to the Christian Faith, and both he and Thyrsus were condemned to death. Callinicus was beheaded, and they placed Thyrsus in a wooden coffin to be sawn in half. However, the power of God would not permit this, and the saw was unable to cut into the wood. Then St. Thyrsus arose from the coffin and prayed to God, rendering Him thanks for the tortures, and he peacefully gave up his soul to his Lord. At the end of the fourth century, the Emperor Flavian built a church to St. Thyrsus near Constantinople and placed his holy relics in it. The saint appeared in a vision to Empress Pulcheria and counseled her to bury the relics of the Forty Martyrs alongside his.

The Holy Martyrs Philemon, Apollonius, Arianus and others

During the reign of Diocletian, a certain judge Arianus cruelly persecuted the Christians of Egypt. He seized Apollonius and threatened him with tortures. Apollonius, afraid of the tortures, bribed a certain well-known pagan musician, Philemon, to offer sacrifices to the idols in his place, disguised in his clothes. When Philemon appeared before the idols, the light of the Christian Faith suddenly shone in his heart, and he made the sign of the Cross. After he came out of the temple, he began to shout: "I am a Christian! A servant of Christ the Living God!" Hearing this, the judge laughed, thinking that Philemon was mocking the Christians. Later, Philemon endured horrible tortures. Rain fell from heaven and baptized him. Finally, Philemon and Apollonius were beheaded by Arianus the judge. Then, because his blind eye was healed in a miraculous manner at Philemon's grave, Arianus himself became a Christian. Arianus was condemned to death by Emperor Diocletian and was slain with four soldiers who likewise declared themselves Christians.

HYMN OF PRAISE

The Holy Martyrs Thyrsus, Leucius, and Callinicus
You knew the Faith, you acknowledged Christ,
You gave your bodies to save your souls:
For this your names shine in the heavens,

And an unquenchable fire glows in the Church.
Immortal heroes, pray for us,
That sinful clouds be turned away from us.
Blessed Leucius and noble Thyrsus,
Glorious Callinicus and worthy Philemon,
And the others in order, who endured grievous torments—
Now you are citizens of a better universe.
O beautiful beacons, pray for us;
Martyrs of God, pray for the Church.
You knew love, a heavenly possession,
The earth knew it not, not even its true name;
You saw it wholly in the Son of God,
In the sign of the Crucifixion and in His bloody brow.
Now, you are near to God and behold His face.
You cover our sins by your prayers.

REFLECTION

There are three types of praiseworthy zeal: zeal in cleansing oneself of sinful desires and thoughts, zeal for the truth of the Faith, and zeal for God's justice among men. All three of these filled the soul of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker to perfection. He showed zeal in purifying himself throughout his life, vigilantly guarding over his heart. He especially showed zeal for the truth of the Faith at the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea [325] when he entered into a fearful confrontation with Arius. His zeal for God's justice among men was seen particularly in two notable events, when on each occasion he saved three innocent men from the punishment of death. Once, in his absence from the city of Myra, the avaricious commander Eustathius condemned three men to be beheaded, receiving a bribe for this from some of their enemies. Informed of this, St. Nicholas returned to Myra with the greatest haste. The condemned men had already been brought to the place of execution, and the executioner had already raised the sword over the innocent men. At that moment, Nicholas grabbed the sword, pulled it out of the executioner's hand, and freed the condemned men. Afterward, he rebuked the commander Eustathius and brought him to shame and repentance. In a similar way, three imperial commanders—Nepotian, Ursus and Herpylion—were slandered before Eulavius the Eparch of Constantinople and before the emperor himself. The emperor signed their death sentence. On the eve of their execution, the three commanders prayed to God, saying: "O God of Nicholas, deliver us innocent ones from death!" That night, St. Nicholas appeared to both the emperor and the eparch in a dream, rebuked them for this injustice, and ordered them to free the three commanders from prison immediately. The next day, the emperor and eparch each related to the other the same dream and they immediately freed the commanders, both from the death sentence and from prison.

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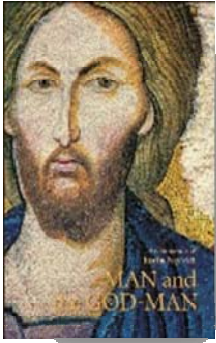
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2010 Wall Calendar

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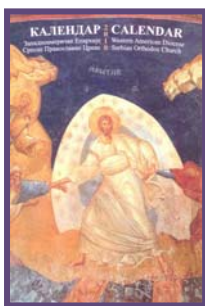


MAN AND THE GOD-MAN
by Archimandrite
Justin Popovic

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)."

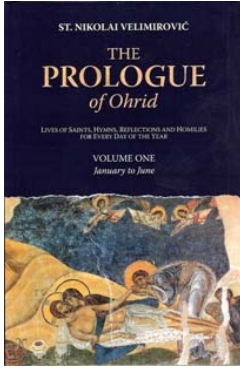
The treasure to be found in this anthology of neopatristic syntheses consists of: "Perfect God and perfect man" - Nativity Epistle, where Fr Justin boldly exclaim that "man is only a true man when he is completely united with God, only and solely in God is man a man, true man, perfect man, a man in whom 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...



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UPCOMING EVENTS

ANNUAL DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY – Friday, January 29, 2010

Visit us online at 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.*