



DIOCESAN EVENTS

2011 Dates to Remember

Third Annual Orthodox Clergy Retreat

December 6-8, 2011

Guest Speaker: Rev. Alkiviades Calivas, PhD

"The Divine Liturgy Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow:
Tradition, Criteria and Praxis"

Saint Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center
Dunlap, California

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Diocesan KSS Slava

December 4, 2011

Feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos

Sunday, November 20, 2011

23RD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

HOLY MARTYR HIERON & THE 33 MARTYRS IN MELITENE

RESURRECTIONAL TROPARION - TONE SIX:

The angelic powers were at Your tomb; and the guards became as dead men; and Mary stood by Your grave, seeking Your most pure Body. You did capture hell, not being tempted by it. You did come to the Virgin, granting life. O Lord who did rise from the dead: Glory to You!

TROPARION TO THE MARTYR HIERON AND THE 33 MARTYRS - TONE FOUR:

Your thirty-three holy martyrs, O Lord, through their sufferings have received incorruptible crowns from You, our God. For having Your strength, they laid low their adversaries, and shattered the powerless boldness of demons. Through their intercessions, save our souls!

RESURRECTIONAL KONTAKION - TONE SIX:

When Christ God, the Giver of Life, raised all of the dead from the valleys of misery with His mighty hand, He bestowed resurrection on the human race. He is the Savior of all, the Resurrection, the Life, and God of all.

KONTAKION TO THE MARTYR HIERON AND THE 33 MARTYRS - TONE TWO:

The radiant choir of martyrs, the light-bearing company, spiritually descends to us, enlightening the Church with brilliant rays. Therefore as we celebrate their honored memory, we ask You, our Savior: through their prayers deliver us from misfortunes so that we may sing to You: ðAlleluia.ö

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!

EPISTLE & COMMENTARY

THE PROKIMENON IN THE 6TH TONE:

O Lord, save Your people and bless Your inheritance.

23RD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST, EPHESIANS 2: 4 – 10

Brethren, God who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

THE ALLELUIA VERSES:

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the heavenly God. He will say to the Lord: My Protector and my Refuge; my God in whom I trust.

COMMENTARY ON THE EPISTLE READING FROM EPHESIANS

God rules His kingdom by mercy and love, providing redemption to eternal life for those who willfully desire to become His subjects, offer Him thanksgiving and glorify Him for this gift of grace. God's grace which is uncreated and infinite, united with a believer's faith which is limited but can grow, leads to good works that flow from him. Works cannot earn God's grace ó it is a pure gift ó but those who receive this gift in their heart do good. Believers are not saved *by* good works but *for* good works.

GOSPEL & COMMENTARY

23RD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST, LUKE 8: 26-39

At that time, Jesus and His disciples sailed to the country of the Gadarenes, which is opposite Galilee. And when He stepped out on the land, there met Him a certain man from the city who had demons for a long time. And he wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me!" For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had often seized him, and he was kept under guard, bound with chains and shackles; and he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the wilderness. Jesus asked him saying, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion," because many demons had entered him. And they begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss. Now a herd of many swine was feeding there on the mountain. So they begged Him that He would permit them to enter them. And He permitted them. Then the demons went out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the lake and drowned. When those who fed them saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country. Then they went out to see what had happened, and came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. They also who had seen it told them by what means he who had been demon-possessed was healed. Then the whole multitude of the surrounding region of the Gadarenes asked Him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear. And He got into the boat and returned. Now the man from whom the demons had departed begged Him that he might be with Him. But Jesus sent him away, saying, "Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you." And he went his way and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.

COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL READING FROM ST. LUKE

The destruction of the herd reveals: 1) while animals are a venerable part of the creation, man is of far greater value; 2) Christ removes a source of sin ó swine herding was an abomination to the Jews; 3) demons are subject to the will of God.

SPIRITUAL ARTICLES

From The Prologue for November 7/20 by St. Nikolai Velimirovic:

The Holy Martyr Hieron and His Companions

Hieron was born in Tyana in Cappadocia of a good and devout mother, Stratonika, who was blind. Hieron was a very zealous Christian and served his blind mother with great filial love. For two reasons he did not wish to join the army, and he resisted and drove off those who had been sent to take him. Hieron was loath to leave his helpless mother, and it was grievous for him even to consider that, as a soldier, he would be compelled to offer sacrifices to idols. Finally, Hieron was arrested along with other Christians, and they were all taken before the eparch of the town of Melitene. While they were still on the road, a man clad in a brilliant white garment appeared to Hieron one night and said: "Behold, Hieron, I proclaim salvation to you: you shall not wage war for an earthly king, but for the Heavenly King you will complete your struggle, and you shall soon come to Him to receive honor and glory." At this, Hieron's heart was filled with inexpressible joy. In Melitene they were all thrown into prison and Hieron, with great zeal, strengthened all the prisoners in the Faith, urging that not even one of them fall away, but that all willingly offer their bodies to torture and death for Christ. All but one confessed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The exception was Hieron's kinsman Victor, who fell away from the Faith. The tormentors cut one of Hieron's hands off, then flogged and tortured him in various ways until they beheaded him and the others. Going to the place of execution, these thirty-three martyrs chanted the Psalm: Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord (Psalms 118:1). Here we will name the honorable martyrs whose names are written with his in the Book of Life: Hesy chius, Nicander, Athanasius, Mamas, Barachus, Callinicus, Theogenes, Nikon, Longinus, Theodore, Valerius, Xanthius, Theodulus, Callimachus, Eugenius, Theodochus, Ostrichius, Epiphanius, Maximian, Ducitius, Claudian, Theophilus, Gigantius, Dorotheus, Theodotus, Castrichius, Anicetus, Themilius, Euty chius, Hilarion, Diodotus and Amonitus. A man named Chrysanthus purchased Hieron's severed head and honorably buried it, later building a church over it in the saint's name. The martyr's severed hand was brought to his blind mother. St. Hieron, with his companions, suffered in the year 298 and entered the glory of Christ.

The Holy Martyr Thessalonica with Auctus and Taurion

This maiden was the daughter of a pagan priest, Cleon, a rich and arrogant man. Because of her faith in Christ, her father drove her from the house and city. Two honorable citizens, Auctus and Taurion, reproached Cleon for his inhuman treatment of his daughter, and he in turn denounced them as Christians. They were bitterly tortured and beheaded for Christ. Thessalonica was then tortured and slain as well. They suffered in the Macedonian city of Amphipolis near present day Kavala. Thus, these martyrs were made worthy of the Immortal Kingdom by their honorable suffering.

The Venerable Lazarus of Galesius

A pillar of light appeared above the house where he was born. Lazarus left his village of Magnesia and went to Jerusalem on a pilgrimage to the holy places. There, he was tonsured a monk in the Monastery of St. Sava the Sanctified. After ten years, he settled

on Mount Galesius and lived a life of asceticism on a pillar as a stylite. Lazarus was a miracle-worker both during his life and after death. Emperor Constantine Monomachus had great respect for him. Attaining old age, St. Lazarus entered into eternity toward the end of the eleventh century.

HYMN OF PRAISE: The Holy Martyr Hieron and His Companions

Prisons are peculiar palaces!

In prison, St. Hieron spoke:

ōO my brethren, thirty companions,

Hold to God's word,

To God's word and His law.

Behold, from time immemorial, the serpent has risen up,

Seeking to ensnare you with a glance,

So that, one by one, you would follow it to hell.

Do not succumb, brethren, true believers,

Oh, hearken to humble Hieron!

Whatever the serpent promises you

Is as fleeting as the green grass.

Courageously endure your sufferings:

Do not trade the eternal for the temporal;

Today or tomorrow, death will arrive,

Then all must go to the judgment of God.

Blessed is he who is not ashamed

When he sees his Judge before him.

Even more so is he who can show the Judge

The blood he has shed for Him,

And the wounds he bears for His name.

Such a one will reign eternally with Him.ō

REFLECTION

There are decisive moments in life upon which a man's eternal life or eternal death depend. We do not know when this decisive moment will come for us—perhaps today—and because of this we must be unceasingly vigilant. Victor, a kinsman of St. Hieron, was arrested with him. On the day before their torture, Victor, in terror of the impending tortures, went to the prison warden and begged him to take his name off the list of the condemned and release him, promising to give him his land. The warden removed his name and released him. However, upon returning home, Victor died of natural causes in the same moment that St. Hieron and his companions died in torments for Christ. Thus Victor vainly missed the decisive moment: he lost his land, his friends and both his earthly and heavenly life. In that same decisive moment, Hieron gained all. No one vied for Victor's body, while many vied for Hieron's body. When Christians sought the head of Hieron from the eparch, he asked as much gold for it as it weighed. Chrysanthus, a wealthy and devout man, paid that much gold for the martyr's honorable head. Anthony and Matronian hid one of St. Hieron's severed hands and brought it to Hieron's mother, the blind Stratonika. She took her son's hand and wept bitterly: "ōO my beloved son, I gave birth to you whole, and now I have only one part of you!ō"

CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate the malignant power of an evil spirit over those who serve him (Acts 19):

1. How seven Jews tried to imitate Paul in driving out spirits from possessed people, attempting this for their own gain;
2. How the evil spirit answered them, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?
3. How the man with the evil spirit leaped on them and overwhelmed them.

HOMILY

on the dark paths of mankind before and apart from Christ

í in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience (Ephesians 2:2).

This is all one and the same pathô the path to destruction. According to the course of this world means inclination toward sinfulness; according to the prince of the power of the air means according to the will of those chiefs of the demons who inhabit the air; in the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience means that in the same way that the opponents and adversaries of God now live, all men lived before the advent of Christ, including those to whom the Apostle writes the epistle. What is this power of the air, brethren? This is the order of evil spirits who exist in constant movement in the air. They make the air lethal and they impede the souls of the departed as they make their way to heaven. They deceive the spirit of man to work every evil; they tempt it with every sin. Yet, they do not command the spirit to sin, for they lack the power to do that; they can only tempt and corrupt. They acted more strongly and directly on the pagans than on the Israelites. They fell upon the pagans as a swarm of flies on a carcass, but the Israelites they watched from a distance, corrupting and tempting them more subtly. They stood at a distance from Israel because of the name of God, which was preserved and spoken among the Israelites. The Lord Jesus Christ scattered them all and plucked out their poisonous stings, so that they remained only as empty phantoms, as miserable, inconstant shadows that vanish instantly at the mention of the name of Christ or at the tracing of the sign of Christ's Cross. O Lord Jesus, our Commander and Deliverer, help us to live in Thy freedom. To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.
