



June 27, 2010

**FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST;
FEAST OF THE HOLY PROPHET ELISHA
AND ST. METHODIUS, PATRIARCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE**

RESURRECTION 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 PROPHET ELISHA TROPARION - TONE FOUR:

An angel in the flesh and the cornerstone of the prophets, the second forerunner of the coming of Christ, Glorious Elijah sent grace from on high to Elisha, to dispel diseases and to cleanse lepers. Therefore, he pours forth healings on those who honor him.

ST. METHODIUS TROPARION - TONE FOUR:

You appeared to your flock as a rule of faith, An image of humility, and a teacher of abstinence. Because of your lowliness, heaven was opened to you; Because of your poverty, riches were granted to you! O Holy Bishop Methodius, pray to Christ our God to save our souls!

RESURRECTIONAL KONTAKION - TONE FOUR:

My Savior and my Redeemer as God rose from the tomb and delivered the earthborn from their chains. And He has shattered the gates of hell, and as Master, He has risen on the third day!

HOLY PROPHET ELISHA KONTAKION - TONE TWO:

You were revealed as a Prophet of God, when you received from Elijah a double portion of the grace which you deserved; you were his contemporary, blessed Elisha, and together with him you unceasingly pray to Christ God for us all!

ST. METHODIUS KONTAKION - TONE TWO:

You contended on earth as one already delivered from the body, and thus you deserved heaven, O Methodius! You proclaimed throughout the world the righteousness of venerating Icons, Spending your days in hardship and effort, and now you still rebuke those who do not honor the image of Christ.

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 4TH TONE:

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

ROMANS 10: 1-10

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, "The man who does those things shall live by them." But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, "Who will descend into the abyss?" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

ALLELUIA

*Go forth and prosper and reign, because of truth and meekness and righteousness.
You love righteousness and hate iniquity.*

COMMENTARY

Christ is, and has always been, the Way of Salvation in both testaments. The law prepared people for Him, while His coming was the end of the law and the fulfillment of God's Righteousness. Many times, in our sinfulness, we believe that we can make ourselves righteous before God. This is the same temptation that Israel faced. We can do nothing of ourselves except submit to God's Righteousness. The Way of Salvation is found only through living faith in Jesus Christ, which transforms the whole person, heart, soul mind and body. May our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen our faith, so that it transforms us as it becomes alive in Him!



GOSPEL & COMMENTARY

MATTHEW 8:28 - 9:1

At that time, when Jesus had come to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two demon-possessed men, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way. And suddenly they cried out, saying, "What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?" Now a good way off from them there was a herd of many swine feeding. So the demons begged Him, saying, "If You cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine." And He said to them, "Go." So when they had come out they went into the herd of swine. And suddenly the whole herd of swine ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and perished in the water. Then those who kept them fled; and they went away into the city and told everything, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men. And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus. And when they saw Him, they begged Him to depart from their region. So He got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city.

COMMENTARY

The demons, recognizing Jesus as the Son of God, are surprised that their power is being terminated before the time of the last judgment. Though the malice of the demons is great, they can do nothing against the will of God, and thus can only enter the swine at Christ's command. The immediate destruction of the herd shows that the men had been protected by God's care; otherwise, they would have perished under the demonic influence. Further, it reinforces that swineherding was not lawful for Jews, and shows the incomparable value of human beings, whose salvation is worth every sacrifice.



SPIRITUAL ARTICLES

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

The Holy Prophet Elisha [Eliseus]

Elisha lived nine hundred years before Christ. When the Lord willed to take the aged Prophet Elias to Himself, He revealed to him that He had designated Elisha, the son of Shaphat, of the tribe of Reuben and from the town of Abelmeholah, as his successor in the prophetic service. Elias informed Elisha of God's will and draped him with his mantle, imploring God for a double portion of the grace of prophecy for him. Elisha immediately left his home and family and followed Elias. When the Lord took Elias in a fiery chariot, Elisha remained to continue the prophetic service with yet greater power than Elias. By his purity and zeal, he was equal to the greatest prophets, and by the miraculous power that was given to him by God, he exceeded them all. He parted the waters of the Jordan as Moses once parted the Red Sea; he made drinkable the bitter waters in Jericho; he brought forth water into the excavated trenches during the war with the Moabites; he multiplied the oil in the pots of the poor widow; he resurrected the dead son of the Shunammite woman; he fed a hundred people with twenty small loaves of bread; he healed the commander Naaman of leprosy; he called down leprosy upon his servant Gehazi because of the latter's greed; he blinded the entire Syrian army and also forced another army to flee; he foretold many events to the nation as well as to individuals. He reposed in deep old age.

Saint Methodius, Patriarch of Constantinople

Methodius was born in the town of Syracuse in Sicily. After the completion of his secular studies, he was tonsured a monk and began to live a life of asceticism in a monastery. Patriarch Nicephorus took him into his service. During the reign of the iconoclastic emperors, he became widely known as a firm defender of the veneration of icons. For this, the wicked Emperor Theophilus exiled him to an island with two common criminals, where he languished in a damp prison for seven years, without light and without sufficient food, as though in a grave. During the time of the pious Empress Theodora and her son Michael, Methodius was freed and was chosen as patriarch (in accordance with an earlier prophecy of St. Ioannicius the Great). On the first Sunday of Great Lent, Methodius solemnly carried the icons into the church, and he also wrote a canon in honor of the icons. Unable to outwit him, the vile heretics hired a woman who declared that the patriarch had engaged in an impure relationship with her. The whole of Constantinople was horrified at this slander. Nevertheless, not knowing how he could otherwise prove his innocence, the patriarch overcame his embarrassment, removed his clothes and stood naked before the court, which had assembled at his request, and showed his withered body, debilitated from fasting. The court was clearly convinced that the patriarch had been slandered. Hearing of this, the people rejoiced and the heretics were put to shame. Then the woman admitted that she had been persuaded and paid to bring this slander against the saint of God. Thus, those who thought to bring shame upon Methodius, unintentionally increased his fame. This great confessor of the Faith reposed peacefully in the year 846 and took up his habitation in the Kingdom of God.

Saint John, Metropolitan of Euchaita

John was surnamed Mavron [the Black]. He was a very educated man and at the same time a spiritual man. In his old age, during the reign of Emperor Alexius Comnenis, John became Metropolitan of Euchaita. He is especially well known for the fact that St. Basil, St. Gregory the Theologian and St. John Chrysostom (see January 30) appeared to him and explained how all three of them are equally glorified in heaven. After this vision the dispute among the people—concerning which of the three saints was the greatest and which was the least—quieted down. St. John also wrote the famous canon to the Most Sweet Jesus and a canon to the Guardian Angel as well as other beneficial writings. He reposed peacefully in the year 1100.

The Venerable Niphon

Niphon was born in the region of Argyrokastron in the village of Lukov and was the son of a priest. From his youth he was attracted to solitude and prayer. That desire finally led him to Mount Athos, where he lived a life of asceticism, at first in the cave of St. Peter the Athonite and later in the wilderness of St. Anna. He did not even want to eat bread but ate vegetation and roots. Some envious people accused him of having an aversion to bread, but he easily and quickly cleared himself of this accusation. Finally he became associated with St. Maximus of Kapsokalyvia. Because of his sincere love for God, Niphon was endowed with the gift of miracle-working and clairvoyance. He healed the sick by his prayer and by anointing with oil, and he clearly saw events both past and future. About himself he prophesied that he would die during the Fast of St. Peter [the Apostles' Fast]. When the day of his death dawned, he said to the brethren assembled around him: "Do not weep, but rather rejoice, for in me you will have an intercessor before God for your salvation." At the end he said, "It is time for me to depart," and he gave up his holy soul to God on June 14, 1330.

HYMN OF PRAISE

The Prophet Elisha and the Commander Naaman (II Kings 5)

What good are riches and this beautiful world,
What good are authority and power, when a man is leprous?
Naaman is a commander, but is covered with leprosy,
Completely white from leprosy, as though covered with purulence.
But the commander hurries to the man of God,
Hoping for a cure only from him,
With his entire caravan of clothing and gold.
Let this be a payment to the man of God!
Elisha told him to go to the Jordan,
And to bathe seven times in the water.
Naaman became angry at his misfortune:
"Do we not have a river clearer and larger?"
And he wanted to quickly return home,
But his wise servant dissuaded him from this.
"O Master," said he, "do not give up quickly.
Behold, the Jordan is nearby; go and bathe!"
Naaman hearkened to him and hastened to the Jordan,
And in the river he immersed himself seven times.

Naaman was made whole and the leprosy disappeared;
Naaman was made whole and clean as a child.
He cried out: "God is One, the God of Israel;
He works glorious miracles in abundance!"

REFLECTION

The all-wise St. John Chrysostom said: "A place will not save us if we do not carry out the will of God." There is a tale of a certain monk who lived in a monastery where five brethren loved him and one brother offended him. Because of this one brother who offended him, he moved to another monastery. However, in this monastery eight of the brethren loved him and two of the brethren offended him. He then fled to a third monastery. But here, seven of the brethren loved him and five of the brethren offended him. He set out for a fourth monastery, but along the way he thought: "How long will I flee from place to place? I will never find peace in the whole world. It would be better for me to become patient." He pulled out a piece of paper and wrote in bold letters: "I will endure all for the sake of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." When he entered the fourth monastery, here only one loved him and the others offended him. But he patiently began to endure the offenses. As soon as someone offended him, he would take out that piece of paper and read: "I will endure all for the sake of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." So with patience he succeeded and all came to love him, and he remained in that monastery until his death.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Residents of Heaven – An Exhibit of Byzantine and Modern Orthodox Icons

with *V. Rev. Stamatis Skliris, Iconographer*

at the "*David Allan Hubbard Library, Fuller Theological Seminary*"

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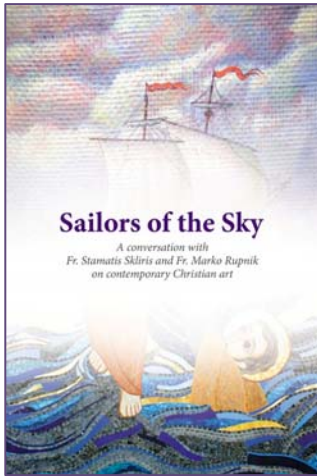
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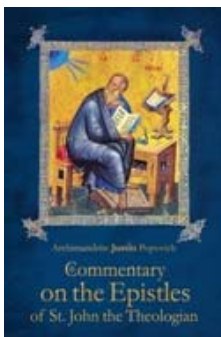
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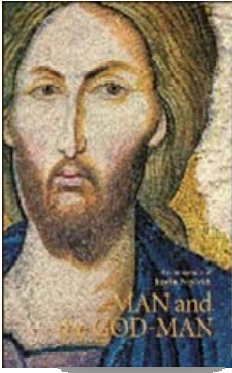
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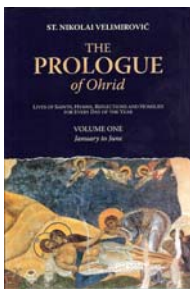


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