



Sunday, September 25, 2011

15TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**SUNDAY BEFORE THE EXALTATION OF THE LIFE-GIVING
CROSS; LEAVE-TAKING OF THE NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS;
HOLY HIEROMARTYR AUTONOMUS**

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!

NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS TROPARION - TONE FOUR:

Your nativity, O Virgin Theotokos, has proclaimed joy to the whole universe, for from you has shone forth the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God; by annulling the curse He has bestowed a blessing; by destroying death He has granted us eternal life.

TROPARION TO SAINT AUTONOMUS - TONE FOUR:

By sharing in the ways of the Apostles, you became a successor to their throne. Through the practice of virtue, you found the way to divine contemplation, O inspired one of God; by teaching the word of truth without error, you defended the Faith, even to the shedding of your blood. O Hieromartyr Autonómus, entreat Christ God to save our souls.

RESURRECTIONAL KONTAKION - TONE SIX:

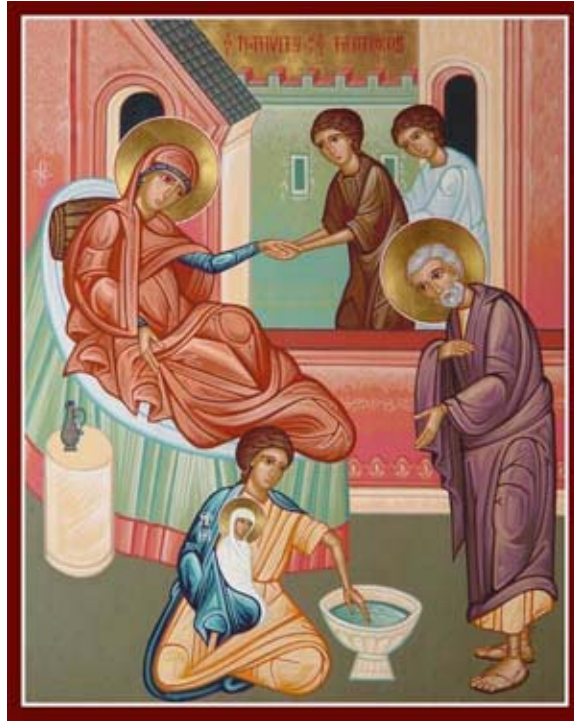
When Christ God, the Giver of Life, raised all of the dead from the valleys of misery with His mighty hand, He bestowed resurrection on the human race. He is the Savior of all, the Resurrection, the Life, and God of all.

NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS KONTAKION - TONE FOUR:

By your nativity, O most pure Virgin, Joachim and Anna are freed from the reproach of childlessness, Adam and Eve from the corruption of death, and we, your people, freed from the guilt of sin, celebrate and sing to you: 'The barren woman gives birth to the Theotokos, the Nourisher of our life!'

HYMN TO THE THEOTOKOS (REPLACES "IT IS TRULY MEET"):

Virginity is foreign to mothers; childbearing is strange for virgins. But in you, O Theotokos, both were accomplished! For this, all the earthly nations unceasingly magnify you!



Nativity of the Theotokos

EPISTLE & COMMENTARY

THE PROKIMENON IN THE 6TH TONE:

O Lord, save Your people and bless Your inheritance.

SUNDAY BEFORE THE CROSS, GALATIANS 6: 11-18

Brethren, see with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand! As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised, that they may boast in your flesh. But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

15TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST, SECOND CORINTHIANS 4: 6-15

Brethren, for it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed - always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of

Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you. And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak, knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.

LEAVE-TAKING OF THE NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS, PHILIPPIANS 2: 5-11

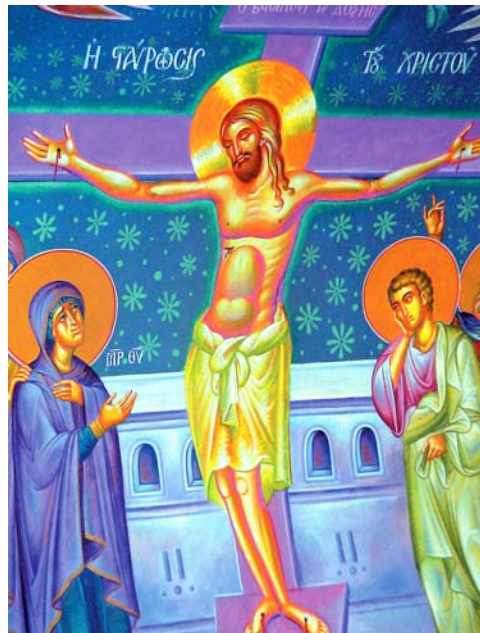
Brethren, let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

THE ALLELUIA VERSES:

I have raised up one chosen out of My people; with My holy oil have I anointed him. For My hand shall be unto him an ally, and My arm shall strengthen him.

COMMENTARY ON SECOND CORINTHIANS 4: 6-15

Our preaching of the Gospel of Christ is for His glorification, not ours. This can only happen when we humble ourselves and allow the light of God's glory in Christ to shine through our 'earthen vessel.' Then we can be prepared, as Saint Paul was, to be "persecuted, but not forsaken," because the true value is in the Word, not us as preachers of it. As Jesus similarly taught: "You blind men! For which is greater, the gift or the altar which makes the gift sacred?" (Matthew 23: 19)



GOSPEL & COMMENTARY

SUNDAY BEFORE THE CROSS, JOHN 3: 13-17

Jesus said, "No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."

15TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST, MATTHEW 22: 35-46

At that time, a certain lawyer asked Jesus a question, testing Him, and saying, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?" They said to Him, "The Son of David." He said to them, "How then does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying, 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool."' If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his Son?" And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on, did anyone dare question Him anymore.

LEAVE-TAKING OF THE NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS, LUKE 10: 38-42; 11: 27-28

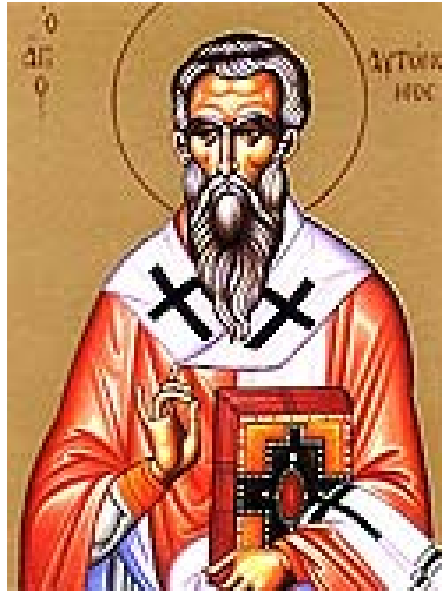
At that time, it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me." And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her." And it happened, as He spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!" But He said, "More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"

COMMENTARY ON MATTHEW 22: 35-46

The commandments that Jesus sets forth constitute a grand summary of the entire Law of Moses. It is on this basis that all other laws derive their potency. And yet the Pharisees, like many of us today, argue over the minutia of the law and lose sight of the greater meaning! As a result we, like them, find ourselves unable to answer before God when we're led by selfishness and hypocrisy.

SPIRITUAL ARTICLES

From The Prologue for September 12/25 by St. Nikolai Velimirovic:



The Hieromartyr Autonomus

During Diocletian's persecution, Autonomus left Italy for Asian Bithynia, for a place called Soreoi. There, he converted many to Christianity, and built a church for them dedicated to the holy Archangel Michael. Autonomus lived in the home of a devout Christian, Cornelius, whom he first ordained as a presbyter, and then consecrated to the episcopacy. Not far from Soreoi there was a place called Limnae, inhabited entirely by pagans. St. Autonomus went to this place and soon enlightened many with the Gospel of Christ. This embittered the pagans, and one day they rushed into the Church of the Holy Archangel Michael in Soreoi during the divine service and slew Autonomus in the sanctuary, and killed many other Christians in the church. During the reign of the Emperor Constantine, Severian, a royal nobleman, built a church over the tomb of St. Autonomus. Two hundred years after his death, St. Autonomus appeared to a soldier named John. John exhumed the relics of the saint and found them to be completely incorrupt, and many who were sick received healing from Autonomus's relics. Thus, God glorifies the one who glorified Him while living in the flesh.

The Hieromartyr Coronatus, Bishop of Iconium

Coronatus was born in Nicomedia, in the village of Salate. He was already quite old when the persecution under Decius and Valerian began. Perinius, a torturer of Christians, came to Nicomedia and began a search for Christians. Many Christians left the city and hid, but their aged bishop did not want to leave. Instead, he presented himself to Perinius and declared himself to be a Christian. The torturer bound him completely, and ordered that he be dragged through the town until much blood flowed. Then, under the sword, Coronatus gave his holy soul to God.

The Holy Martyr Julian with Forty Companions

They all suffered in about the year 300. First they were tortured, and then beheaded. Before his death, Julian prayed to God in this manner: “To those who take of my dust, grant to them, O Lord, forgiveness of sins and the subduing of their passions; let no ravaging birds, or grasshoppers, or caterpillars, or any other death-carrying destruction attack their fields. And receive my spirit in peace.”

The Venerable Daniel of Thasos

Daniel was an ascetic, the founder of a great monastery and a contemporary of St. Ioannicius the Great. Daniel was present when Ioannicius visited the island of Thasos. The people there implored the celebrated Ioannicius to free them from snakes. The saint prayed to God and the snakes, in large number, rushed into the sea and drowned.

The Holy Martyrs Macedonius, Tatianus and Theodulus

They all suffered for Christ the Lord at Myropolis in Phrygia, during the reign of Julian the Apostate. They were harshly tortured for destroying the statue of an idol, and were burned on an iron grid until they gave up their souls to God. While burning over the fire, these brave men cried out mockingly to their torturer, saying: “Wouldn’t you like to try our meat to see if it is well cooked?” And also, like the glorious Archdeacon Lawrence, they said: “Turn us over onto the other side, for this side is done!” Witnessing the holy martyrs on the fire, the torturer was more perplexed and frightened than they were.

HYMN OF PRAISE: The Hieromartyr Autonomus

Autonomus, most glorious, feared no torture,
But, because of his mission, was not bound to stay.
Fleeing the wrath of cruel torturers
He sowed the seed of the Holy Gospel,
Baptizing in the name of Christ,
And working miracles in His name.
But when he completed his task, having pleased God,
When his hour tolled to enter eternity,
The persecutors raged into the temple
And slew the saint at the holy altar
While the saint was offering the Bloodless Sacrifice—
The Bloodless and the bloody, commingled!
O Saint Autonomus, servant of God—
To God’s servant, even torture is befitting—
Save us from fear in the face of tortures,
And be the helper of our salvation,
That we not fear to endure all for the Cross,
To die gladly for Christ.
O wondrous healer of every disease,
Preserve us from demonic deceptions,
That we immerse our minds in the Most-high God,
That we become worthy of that eternal life
In which you now reign like a king,

And joyfully exult with the holy angels.

REFLECTION

What kind of bond should there be between man and God? An unbreakable and continual bond. “Adhere to God as a son adheres to his father,” counseled St. Anthony. And St. Alonius said: “If a man is not set in his heart that there is no one else in the world but himself and God, he cannot find peace in his soul.” The one God is enough, and more than enough, for all that the heart of man can desire. Without a single protest, Blessed Theodora received a stranger’s child, given to her by slanderers, as if it were her own. Theodora raised this child with love, and reared it in the fear of God. Before her death, this is how she counseled the child: “What is more necessary for man than God and His divine love? He is our refuge, He is our treasure, He is our food and drink, He is our raiment and shelter, He is our health and strength, He is our happiness and joy, He is our hope and our trust. Strive then, my son, to gain Him. If you succeed in gaining the One God, it will be sufficient for you; you will rejoice more in Him than if you had gained the entire world.” In saying this, St. Theodora did not speak from a book or from someone else’s words, but on the basis of her own personal experience. She lived for seven years, driven out and scorned by all men, and during that time she learned by experience that God was everything to her, and that the One God was sufficient for all that the heart of man desires.

CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate the division of Solomon’s kingdom (I Kings 11):

1. How, because of Solomon’s sins, the kingdom of Israel was divided;
2. How Jeroboam, the king’s servant, became king over ten tribes; and Rehoboam, the king’s son, became king over two tribes;
3. How, even today, it happens that the sins of the father bring down misfortune on the son; and the sins of the elders of the nation, on the people.

HOMILY

on how the soul must feed on Christ in order to live

He that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me (John 6:57).

Thus speaks Christ the Lord, the Life and Source of life. A tree feeds on the earth, air and light. If a tree does not feed on the earth, the air and the light, will it be able to grow and live? What does an infant at its mother’s breast feed on, except its mother? If it does not feed on its mother, will it grow and live? So it is that our soul will not grow or live, if it does not feed on Christ, the Living and Immortal One. The words here are not about life in general, by which nature lives, nor about the stunted life by which pagans live, but rather about the special, divine and eternal life—a life full and joyful. Only Christ gives this life to men, and it comes only to those who feed on Christ. Each man is as great as the food he feeds on, and each man is as alive as the food he feeds on. The words here are not about bodily food, for only man’s body—not man’s soul—is fed by bodily food. Men differ both in physical growth and physical life, but these differences are totally insignificant. However, the difference in spiritual growth and life among men is enormous. While some men, by the growth of their souls, barely raise themselves above the earth, others raise themselves to the heavens. The difference between Herod and John

the Baptist is no less than the difference between a king and an angel. While the former drags his body and soul through the earth and wickedly defends his throne on earth, the latter stands his body on a rock in the wilderness, and is raised in soul to the heavens among the angels. O my brethren, let us lift up our souls to the heavens, where Christ the Lord sits on the throne of eternal glory, and let us feed and nourish our soul and heart with Him, the pure and almighty Life. Only then will we be made worthy to be His fellow heirs in the Kingdom of Heaven. O Lord Jesus, our true God, our sweet food and our man-loving Nourisher; cast us not away from Thy divine bosom, for we are weak and helpless. Nourish us with Thyself, O our merciful Nourisher. To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.
