



March 14, 2010

**FOURTH SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT:
SUNDAY OF ST. JOHN OF THE LADDER (CLIMACUS)**

RESURRECTIONAL TROPARION - TONE SEVEN:

By Your Cross, You did destroy death! To the thief, You did open Paradise! For the myrrh bearers, You did change weeping into joy! And You did command Your disciples, O Christ God, to proclaim that You are risen, granting the world great mercy!

ST. JOHN OF THE LADDER TROPARION - TONE ONE:

O dweller of the wilderness and angel in the body! You were a wonder-worker, O our God-bearing father John! You received heavenly gifts through fasting, vigil and prayer: healing the sick and the souls of those drawn to you by faith. Glory to Him who gave you strength! Glory to Him who granted you a crown! Glory to Him who through you grants healing to all!

RESURRECTIONAL KONTAKION - TONE SEVEN:

The dominion of death can no longer hold man captive, for Christ descended, shattering and destroying its powers! Hell is bound, while the prophets rejoice and cry: The Savior has come to those in faith! Enter you faithful into the Resurrection.

ST. JOHN OF THE LADDER KONTAKION - TONE FOUR:

The Lord truly set you on the heights of abstinence, to be a guiding star, showing the way to the universe, O our father and teacher John.

KONTAKION TO THE THEOTOKOS - 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!

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

All of creation rejoices in you, O full of grace; the assembly of angels and the race of men. O sanctified temple and spiritual paradise, the glory of virgins, from whom God was incarnate and became a Child, our God before the ages. He made your body into a throne, and your womb He made more spacious than the heavens. All of creation rejoices in you, O full of grace. Glory to you!

EPISTLE & COMMENTARY

THE PROKIMENON IN THE 7TH TONE:

The Lord shall give strength to His people; the Lord shall bless His people with peace!

HEBREWS 6: 13-20

Brethren, for when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you." And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

EPHESIANS 5: 8-19

Brethren, for 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.

ALLELUIA

Come let us rejoice in the Lord! Let us make a joyful noise to God our Savior! Let us come before His face with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to Him with psalms!

COMMENTARY on EPHESIANS 5: 8-19

The spiritual journey of Great Lent brings us to face our sinfulness. It challenges our souls to aspire to unite ourselves with Christ (and thereby with God) rather than to the things of this world. Christ calls for all Christians to embrace His light, which illumines all things. Thus, we are to expose all darkness we encounter with the light of Christ. First, we must expose all darkness within ourselves...and illuminate the dark corners of our own hearts. Then, and only then, can we illuminate the darkness in the world, not to abandon it, but to redeem as much as is possible through keeping ourselves in Christ. We are called to renounce the darkness--the fallenness of the world--and to reunite the world to God, through Jesus Christ. May Christ our God illuminate our dark and secret places, bringing His light into our lives and enlivening our souls with His love.

GOSPEL & COMMENTARY

MARK 9: 17-31

At that time, one of the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not." He answered him and said, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me." Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth. So He asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord I believe; help my unbelief!" When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!" Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, "He is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" So He said to them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting." Then they departed from there and passed through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know it. For He taught His disciples and said to them, "The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day."

MATTHEW 4:25 - 5:12

At that time, great multitudes followed Him -- from Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan. And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying: "Blessed [are] the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

COMMENTARY on MARK 9: 17-31

The Lenten Fast is a spiritual journey of preparation which helps us to experience the Joy of Christ's Resurrection. It also prepares us (and arms us) for the spiritual warfare we are

battling daily in this fallen world. As the pericope of the demon-possessed mute illustrates, it is only through faith in Christ, prayer and fasting that we can ever hope to win the battle. There is no healing and no victory in spiritual warfare without all three. Jesus Christ realizes that we may not have the fulfillment of these three elements, but just as the father of the demoniac did, we must have the humility to ask Him, "...help our unbelief." May our Savior bless us with His Divine Grace, and help us to complete the course of the fast, enabling us to enjoy the Light of His Resurrection!

SPIRITUAL ARTICLES

From *The Prologue for Mar. 1/Mar. 14* by St. Nikolai Velimirovic:

The Venerable Martyr Eudocia

Eudocia lived in the Phoenician city of Heliopolis during the reign of Trajan. Initially, Eudocia was a great debauchee, but afterward she was a penitent, an ascetic, and finally a martyr. Through her harlotry she amassed a huge fortune. The change in her life occurred inadvertently, through God's providence and a certain elder, the monk Germanus. Having come into the city on an obedience, Germanus was residing at the home of a Christian whose house was adjacent to that of Eudocia. In the evening, according to monastic practice, he began to recite the Psalter and a book on the Dread Judgment. Eudocia heard him and eavesdropped attentively to the end. Fear and terror overcame her, and she remained awake until dawn. At daybreak she sent her servant to beseech the monk to come to her. Germanus came, and a lengthy conversation took place between them about what the elderly monk had been reading the night before, and about faith and salvation in general. As a result of their conversation, Eudocia petitioned the local bishop to baptize her. Following her baptism, Eudocia bequeathed her entire estate to the Church, to be distributed among the poor. After dismissing her servants and slaves, she withdrew to a convent. Thus, Eudocia resolved to dedicate herself to the monastic life: obedience, patience, vigils, prayer and fasting. After thirteen months Eudocia was elected abbess. She lived in the convent for fifty-six years and was found worthy before God. He endowed her with such grace that she even raised the dead. When the persecution of Christians began under Prince Vincent, St. Eudocia was beheaded. Eudocia is a glorious example of how a vessel of impurity can be purified, sanctified and filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit, the precious fragrance of heaven.

The Venerable Agapius

He was a novice under the spiritual father of Vatopedi Monastery on Mount Athos. Captured by pirates, Agapius was sold as a slave in Magnesia. After twelve years he was miraculously freed and returned to Vatopedi through the help of the All-holy Mother of God. He baptized his former master and became his spiritual father. Agapius spent the remainder of his life in asceticism in Vatopedi and reposed peacefully in the Lord.

The Holy Martyr Antonina

Antonina was born in Nicaea. Because of her faith in Christ, she was arrested and brutally tortured. Finally she was sewn in a sack and drowned in a lake, in the year 302. But God saved her soul and has glorified her forever among the angels in heaven and the faithful on earth.

HYMN OF PRAISE

Saint Eudocia
Once a woman filled with sin,
And finally a meek penitent,
Eudocia prayed to God,
All the while kneeling, shedding tears.
This enkindled the rage of Satan,
And to the heavens he cried out:
"O Michael, heavenly commander,
You speak justice, but you do me injustice.
You intend to empty my sheepfold completely,
And to seize from me the last sheep.
Why do you take this sinful woman?
Her sins are greater than mine!
For some minor disobedience
I fell to hades and into eternal torments.
Her sins are as the stagnant sea,
Encompassing everything that comes near her."
Thus, malice rages against good;
For every penitent it wishes evil.
But Michael, the guardian of the penitent,
With angels came to Eudocia
And took her under his protection.
By his breath he dispelled the demons.
At that moment a song echoed from heaven:
The mercy of God so willed
That every penitent be embraced,
That every penitent be forgiven.
Repentance, and for all mankind salvation:
That is both God's mercy and will.
God's will overcomes the evil will of Satan.

REFLECTION

Faithfulness and obedience to the will of God must adorn the life of every Christian. God glorifies the faithful and the obedient, as is seen in the life of St. Agapius. When Agapius was a young man, he was captured by pirates, taken to Asia, and sold to a certain Arab. For twelve years Agapius remained quietly and obediently a slave of this Arab. And for twelve years he prayed to the All-holy Mother of God to help him gain his freedom from bondage. One night the Virgin Mother of God appeared to him and told him to arise and go without fear to his elder. Agapius rose and went to his elder on the Holy Mountain. When the elder saw Agapius, he was saddened, thinking that Agapius had fled from his master. He said to

him: "My child Agapius, you have deceived your master, but you can never deceive God. On the day of the Dread Judgment you will have to render an answer for that money with which your master purchased you to serve him. Therefore, you must return and faithfully serve your master." Agapius, faithful and obedient to the will of God, returned immediately to Asia, reported to his master, and informed him of everything that had happened. Learning of all this, the Arab was amazed at the virtue of Christians, and he desired to see Agapius's elder. Thus he took his two sons and went to the Holy Mountain. There he and his two sons were baptized, and all three of them were tonsured as monks. They remained there until their deaths, living in asceticism at first under the guidance of Agapius's spiritual father, and later under Agapius himself. Thus, the previously cruel masters became the obedient disciples of their former slave, the faithful Agapius, who was himself submissive to the will of God.

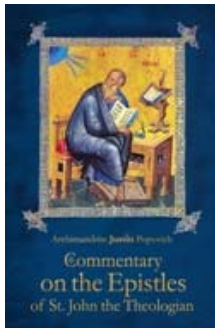
IMPORTANT REMINDERS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Annual Woman's Lenten Retreat

Friday & Saturday, March 19 & 20, 2010

St. Sava Mission, Jackson, CA

FROM SEBASTIAN PRESS:

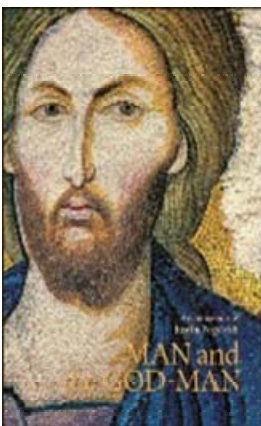


Commentary on the Epistles of St. John the Theologian

By Archimandrite Justin Popovic

Retail price: \$7.

This Commentary on the Epistles of St. John the Theologian - published now, three years after the blessed repose of Venerable Fr. Justin (on the Feast of the Annunciation, 1979) - was written by the tireless Messenger of Christ forty years ago, in circumstances similar to those in which Christ's Holy Evangelist John wrote his sacred Epistles. The text of this 93-page soft-bound book has been translated from the Serbian by Radomir M. Plavsic. Published by Sebastian Press, Western American Diocese of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Contemporary Christian Thought Series, number 5, First Edition

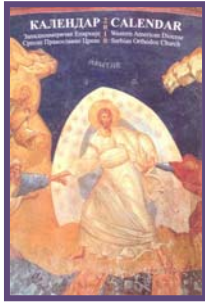


MAN AND THE GOD-MAN by Archimandrite Justin Popovic

This newest publication of our Sebastian Press Publishing House is now available for purchase online at:

http://www.westsrbdio.org/ads/man_and_the_godman.html

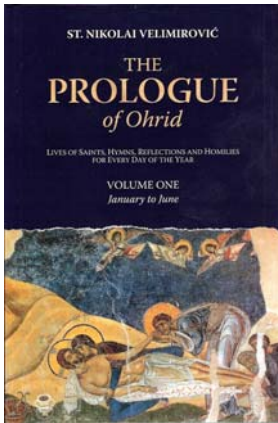
Retail Price: \$15.00



2010 POCKET DIOCESAN CALENDARS NOW AVAILABLE

Be sure to watch for your order in the mail. If you have not already received them, you will shortly! Contact the Diocesan office if you have any questions.

Retail Price: \$5.00



THE PROLOGUE OF OHRID

St Nikolai of Zica (Velimirovic) (1880-1956) has been called the "Serbian Chrysostom" for his theological depth and golden-tongued eloquence. Now for the first time, a complete and unabridged English translation of St. Nikolai's Prologue of Ohrid has been made available. St. Nikolai's Prologue has become a much-loved spiritual classic for Orthodox Christians worldwide. An inspirational source-book of the Orthodox Faith, it contains within its pages a summation of the Church's wisdom and Her experience of sanctity through the Grace of Jesus Christ. Lives of

Saints, Hymns, Reflections and Homilies are presented for every day of the year. St. Nikolai's beautiful Hymns have never before appeared in English. – *Retail \$120 per set*

