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Sunday, April 3, 2011

**FOURTH SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT  
(SAINT JOHN CLIMACUS);  
SAINT JAMES THE CONFESSOR, BISHOP OF CATANA**

**(THE DIVINE LITURGY OF ST. BASIL THE GREAT)**

**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.

**TROPARION TO SAINT JOHN CLIMACUS - 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!

**TROPARION TO SAINT JAMES THE CONFESSOR - TONE FIVE:**

Shining forth in holy abstinence, you rightly divide the inspired word of truth as a hierarch and minister of God the Word. By your virtuous struggle you revealed and confirmed the grace granted to you, O James, instructing all to venerate the image of the Savior, to whom you pray for us all.

**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!

**KONTAKION TO SAINT JOHN CLIMACUS - 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 SAINT JAMES THE CONFESSOR - TONE EIGHT:**

You excelled in the gifts of the priesthood, and through your labors you became illustrious in confessing the faith. Since you are a fruitful branch of Christ the True Vine, grant the new wine of forgiveness and salvation to those who cry: "Rejoice, O Father James!"

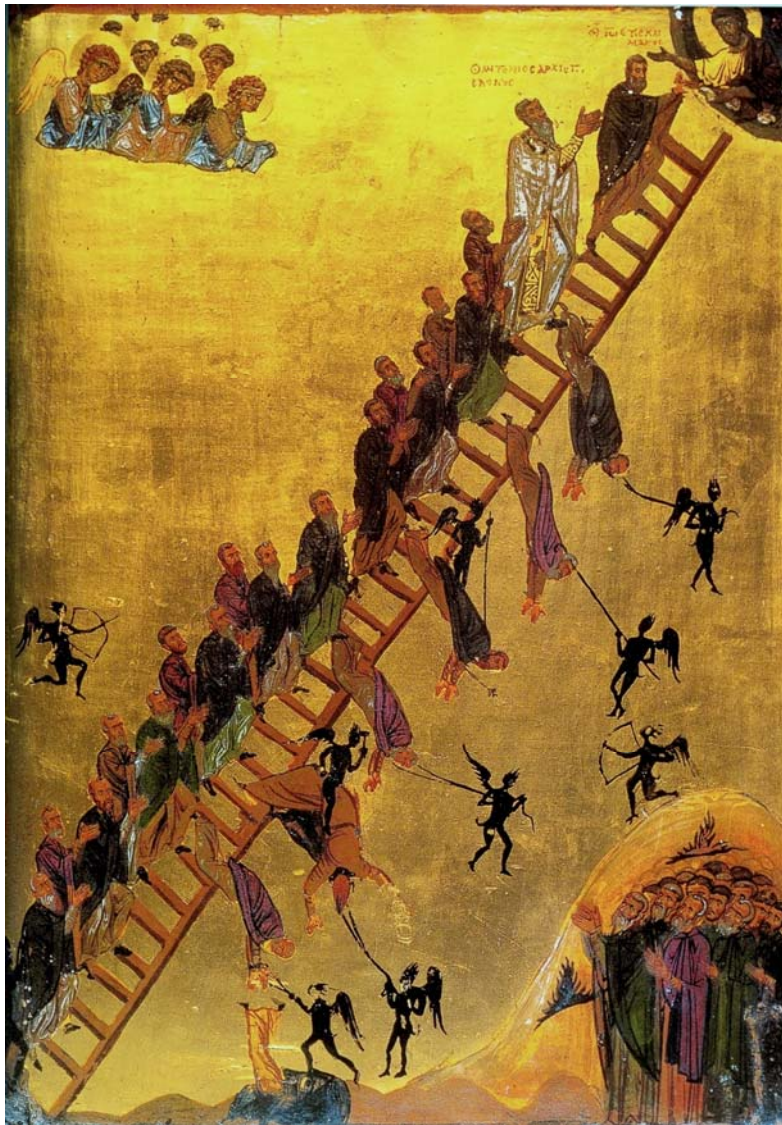
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HYMN TO THE THEOTOKOS - TONE SIX:

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!



*The Heavenly Ladder of Saint John Climacus, late 12th century,  
The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt*

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## EPISTLE & COMMENTARY

### THE PROKIMENON IN THE 7<sup>TH</sup> 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.

### FOR SAINT JOHN CLIMACUS, EPHESIANS 5: 9-19

Brethren, 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.

### THE ALLELUIA VERSES:

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 HEBREWS 6: 13-20

The “Presence behind the veil” refers to the tabernacle God instructed Moses to build during the forty years in the wilderness. The Ark of the Covenant, God’s presence, was kept behind the inner veil of the tabernacle and thus the people could not draw near to God in the Old Covenant liturgical practice. With the establishment of the New Covenant liturgical practice by His death and resurrection, Christ resolved this alienation and thus His people commune with Him through His very body and blood.

### COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS 5: 9-19

Besides separating from darkness, Christians are also to expose it. But first we, too, must expose our own darkness by confessing our sins and repenting of them. Being “wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil” is a call to keep oneself in Christ in order

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to make the most of this fallen world. Christians are to renounce the sinful corruption of creation, but not God's creation in and of itself.



*The Sermon on the Mount, Ravenna, Italy, 6th century*

### 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

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is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day.”

FOR SAINT JOHN CLIMACUS, 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 existence of doubt does not imply the absence of faith: the father “immediately...cried out...with tears” that he believed but then also asked for help with his unbelief. Christ accepts whatever sincere faith we possess and will increase it when we humbly desire Him.

COMMENTARY ON MATTHEW 4: 25 – 5: 12

In the Old Testament, only a select few were chosen to hear God directly. Here, God Incarnate speaks to the multitudes face to face. The mountain is a place where divine action enters human history, where God reveals Himself to man (Matthew 17: 1; Genesis 22: 2; Exodus 3: 1, 19: 2; III Kings 18: 20). Matthew writing that Jesus “opened His mouth” emphasizes that Jesus is there to teach, not discuss or debate; the disciples are to listen as quietly and attentively as all those gathered.



*Saint John Climacus*



*Saint James the Confessor*

## SPIRITUAL ARTICLES

From The Prologue for March 21/April 3 by St. Nikolai Velimirovic:

### **Saint James, Bishop and Confessor**

Neither the place of his birth nor the place where James served as bishop are known. Only this is known: he fulfilled the Law of Christ and spent much time laboring ascetically in strict fasting and prayer. During the reign of Copronymus, James endured great hardships and suffering, such as hunger, imprisonment and ridicule of all sorts at the hands of the iconoclasts. Finally, he gave up his soul to God, Whom he had faithfully served in this life. He lived and suffered in the eighth century.

### **The Venerable Cyril, Bishop of Catania in Sicily**

Born in Antioch, Cyril was a disciple of St. Peter. He governed the flock of Christ well. With the aid of prayer, he had the gift of working many miracles. Once in a place that during the summer had only bitter water, which was unfit to drink, he changed it into sweet, drinkable water through prayer. He reposed peacefully.

### **Saint Thomas, Patriarch of Constantinople**

Thomas lived during the reigns of the Emperors Maurice and Phocas and Patriarchs St. John the Faster and Cyriacus. Because of his great piety and zeal, Thomas attracted the attention of St. John and was advanced to the rank of patriarchal deputy by that saint. Following the death of Cyriacus, Thomas was elected patriarch. At this time, an extraordinary event occurred. Once, when there was a procession with crosses, the crosses began to sway on their own and began to strike one another. All the people were amazed at this. When Patriarch Thomas learned of this, he summoned Theodore the Sykeote, a renowned hermit who possessed the gift of clairvoyance. The patriarch implored Theodore to explain to him what this incident foretold. Theodore prayed to God and revealed to the patriarch that this occurrence portended great misfortunes, both for the Church and for the Greek Empire. These would transpire as a result of internal religious and political dissensions; Christians would fight and annihilate each other. All of this was shortly fulfilled. Thomas implored Theodore to pray for him that God would take him before these tragedies began. "Do you command that I come to you, or shall we meet in the other world before God?" This is how Theodore replied to the patriarch, indicating that the patriarch would die soon. That very same day the patriarch became ill and died. Shortly after him, St. Theodore also reposed. St. Thomas died and took up his habitation with the Lord in 610.

### **The Venerable Serapion**

Serapion was a companion of St. Anthony the Great. He was the abbot of the Monastery of Arsina in the Nitrian wilderness, where there were over eleven thousand monks. Palladius and Sozomenes called him "the Great." He reposed in about the year 366. St. Serapion wrote: "Do not think that sickness is grievous; only sin is grievous. Sickness accompanies us only to the grave, but sin follows the sinner even after the grave."

### **HYMN OF PRAISE: Saint Serapion**

Serapion wanted to save a sinner,  
And so took the appearance of a sinner upon himself.

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He entered the room of the sinner as if to commit sin,  
But before sinning he spoke to her in this manner:  
“You wait for a while—we have the entire night—  
Until I complete my prayer; then we will proceed to the misdeed!”  
Serapion began to read the prayers,  
Raising his mind toward God, that it not wander anywhere.  
And prayer after prayer he began to recite,  
Sigh after sigh he raised to the Most High.  
He read the entire Psalter and other prayers,  
And began lengthy prayers for the sinner.  
He interrupted his prayers with sobbing and sighing,  
Until even the sinful woman began to moan,  
To groan and sob as never before in her life.  
She realized that the saint had not come to commit sin,  
But rather to save her from her perversion,  
To raise her to God and to cleanse her from filth.  
Then the woman exclaimed: “What should I do?  
Behold, I am ashamed and repulsed with myself!”  
Serapion then gave her instructions  
And committed her to the care of wise sisters.  
Then he took his path to the wilderness,  
Joyful, because a sinful soul had been saved.

#### REFLECTION

You will hear this kind of justification from many who pursue riches: “When I become rich, I will be able to perform good works!” Do not believe them, for they deceive both you and themselves. St. John Climacus knew in depth the most secret motives of men’s souls when he said: “The beginning of love of money is the pretext of almsgiving and the end of it is hatred of the poor” (Step 16). This is confirmed by all lovers of money, both the very rich and the less rich. The average man says: “If only I had money, I would carry out this and that good work!” Do not believe him. Let him not believe himself. Let him look, as in a mirror, at those who have money and who are not willing to do this or that good work. That is how he would be if he acquired some money. Again, the wise John says: “Do not say that you must collect money for the poor, that through this assistance you might gain the Kingdom. Remember, for two mites the Kingdom was purchased” (Step 16) (cf. Luke 21:2). Truly, the widow in the Gospel purchased it for two mites, and the rich man, before whose gates Lazarus lay, could not purchase it for all of his countless riches. If you have nothing to give to the poor, pray to God that He will give to them, and by this you have performed almsgiving and purchased the Heavenly Kingdom. When St. Basil the New prophesied to the empress, the wife of Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus, that she would first give birth to a daughter and then to a son, the empress offered him much gold. The saint refused it. The empress implored him in the name of the Holy Trinity that he take the gold. Then St. Basil took only three pieces of gold and gave it to his needy servant, Theodora, saying: “We do not need too much of these thorns, for they prick much.”

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## CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate the Lord Jesus crucified on the Cross:

1. His head, sorely wounded by the thorny wreath;
2. His eyes, closed from pain;
3. His mouth, dry from thirst.

## HOMILY

on the First and Last Who lives

*Fear not; I am the First and the Last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore (Revelation 1:17-18).*

Thus says the Lord Jesus to His beloved disciple John in a vision on the island of Patmos. Do not be afraid of what? Do not be afraid of the pagan persecution of the Church. Do not be afraid of the tormentors who persecute My faithful on all sides. Do not be afraid of emperors who raise up persecutions against the Christians. Do not be afraid of this world's powerful tyrants, who mock and ridicule My humility in My death. Do not be afraid of demons, who blind men with passions so that they cannot see the truth which I brought to the world. Do not be afraid of anything! How can I not be afraid, O Lord? Why then should we not be afraid when the entire world is armed to the teeth and assembled against us, who are small in number and unarmed? Do not be afraid, for I am the First and the Last, the Alpha and the Omega. All of those forces armed against you are nothing but a whirlwind of the dead. I am before time and I am after time; before the beginning of all and after the end of all things that were created, I Am! They are all locked in one span of time, which I measured out to every created thing; and outside of this span of time they cannot extend. Do not be afraid, for "I was dead; and behold, I am alive." Do not be afraid, not even of death. I am before death and after death. Death is My servant, and I permit My servant to serve Me in the world. I gave Myself up to My servant for three days and ordered him to release Me, and now I am alive. I am the Master of death as well as of life. I am the Master of time as well as of eternity. Do not be afraid! I am alive forever and ever. And you will be alive with Me. All they who remain faithful to Me and are not afraid will live with Me. Do not be afraid; *I am Alpha and Omega (Revelation 1:11).*

O Lord, eternal and immortal, allow these holy words of Thine to ring always in the souls of Thy faithful whenever a persecution is raised up against Thy Holy Church, so that, holding on to Thy right hand, we may not be afraid. To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

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## **DIOCESAN EVENTS**

### **2011 Dates to Remember**

#### **April 8-9**

Annual Lenten Women's Retreat

St. Paisius Monastery, Safford, Arizona

Visit [www.westsrbdio.org](http://www.westsrbdio.org) for Registration Forms and Information

#### **July 17 – August 6**

Diocesan Summer Camp - Saint Sava Mission, Jackson, California

#### **Thursday, September 1<sup>st</sup>**

Saint Steven's Serbian Orthodox Cathedral, Alhambra, CA

Annual KSS Assembly

Clergy Seminar

Diocesan Council Meeting

#### **Friday, September 2<sup>nd</sup>**

Annual Diocesan Assembly

Saint Steven's Serbian Orthodox Cathedral, Alhambra, CA

#### **Friday, September 2<sup>nd</sup> – Sunday, September 4<sup>th</sup>**

15<sup>th</sup> Annual Diocesan Days Gathering

Saint Steven's Serbian Orthodox Cathedral, Alhambra, CA

#### **October 7<sup>th</sup>**

Cathedral Slava

Saint Steven's Serbian Orthodox Cathedral, Alhambra, CA

#### **December 4, 2011**

Diocesan KSS Slava

Feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos

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## **History, Truth, Holiness**

**by Bishop Maxim Vasiljevic**



Bishop Maxim's first book, described by Fr. John Breck as an "exceptionally important collection of essays" contributing to both the theology of being and also contemporary theological questions, is now available! Christos Yannaras describes Bishop Maxim as "a theologian who illumines" and Fr. John McGuckin identifies his work as "deeply biblical and patristic, academically learned yet spiritually rich." The first half of the book collects papers emphasizing theological ontology and epistemology, reminding us how both the mystery of the Holy Trinity and that of the Incarnation demand that we rethink every

philosophical supposition; it includes chapters on holiness as otherness, truth and history, and the biochemistry of freedom. The second half of the book features lectures dedicated to the theological questions posed by modern theology, including studies of Orthodox and Roman Catholic ecclesiology, liturgics, and the theology of icons.

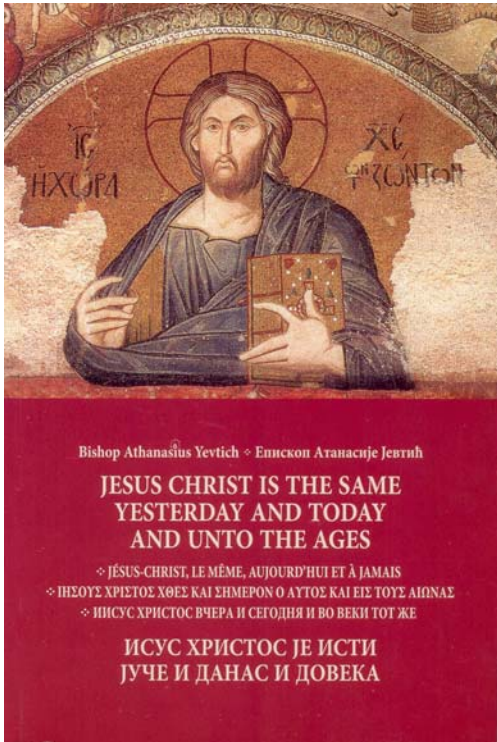
Regular Retail Price: \$20.00, Soft Cover

**Special Introductory Offer: \$18.00**

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# JESUS CHRIST IS THE SAME YESTERDAY AND TODAY AND UNTO THE AGES

Bishop Athanasius Yevtich



In this latest and, in every respect, meaningful study, Bishop Athanasius, in the manner of the Holy Fathers, and firmly relying upon the Apostles John and Paul, argues that the Old Testament name of God, “YHWH,” a revealed to Moses at Sinai, was translated by both Apostles (both being Hebrews) into the language of the New Testament in a completely original and articulate manner. In this sense, they do not follow the Septuagint, in which the name, “YHWH,” appears together with the phrase “the one who is”, a word which is, in a certain sense, a philosophical-ontological translation

(that term would undoubtedly become significant for the conversion of the Greeks in the Gospels). The two Apostles, rather, translate this in a providential, historical-eschatological, i.e. in a specifically Christological sense. Thus, John carries the word “YHWH” over with “the One Who Is, Who was and Who is to Come” (Rev. 1:8 & 22...), while for Paul “Jesus Christ is the Same Yesterday, Today and Unto the Ages” (Heb. 13:8).

256 Pages, Soft Cover

Regular Retail Price \$18

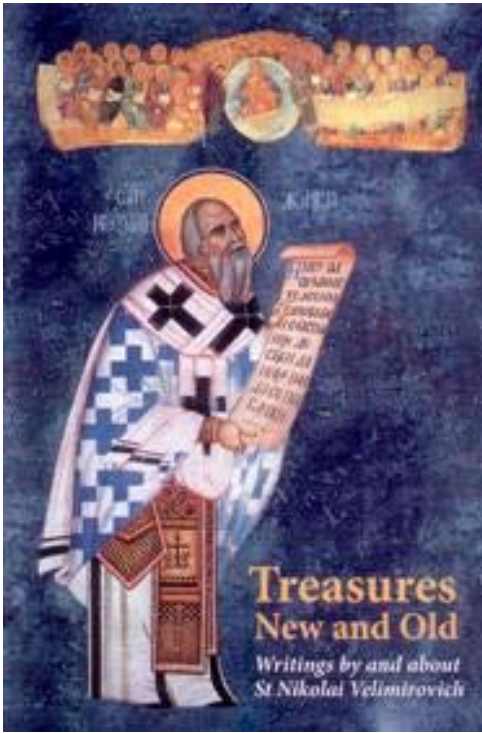
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# Treasures New and Old

Writing by and about St. Nikolai Velimirovich

Before us is a book about a theologian, a minister, a missionary, a writer, a poet, an apostle, a saint, a man of dialogue: this book is about



St. Nikolai Velimirovich, Bishop of Ohrid and Zhicha (1880 - 1956), who along with his many other attributes is regarded, with good reason, as an Enlightener of the Americas. The renewed interest in this man and his works has resulted in the materialization of this book for English-speaking readers who wish to become acquainted with this extraordinary person. The collected texts provide an extensive overview of his life, present important testimonies about his personality, and offer essential insights into his theology. The authors penetrate the depths of his thought with remarkable precision and also

elucidate his actions. The authors agree that the appearance of Nikolai Velimirovich marks an era of change in the ecclesiastical and theological paradigm as a result of his spirituality, ecclesiastical work, and theological position.

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