



January 31, 2010

SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON

RESURRECTIONAL TROPARION - TONE ONE:

When the stone had been sealed by the Jews; while the soldiers were guarding Your most pure Body; You did rise on the third day, O Savior, granting life to the world. The powers of heaven therefore cried to You, O Giver of Life: Glory to Your Resurrection, O Christ! Glory to Your Kingdom! Glory to Your dispensation, O You who loves mankind.

RESURRECTIONAL KONTAKION - TONE ONE:

As God, You did arise from the tomb in glory, raising the world with Yourself. Human nature praises You as God, for death has vanished. Adam exults, O Master! Eve rejoices, for she is freed from bondage, and cries to You: You are the giver of resurrection to all, O Christ!

SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON KONTAKION - TONE THREE:

I have recklessly forgotten Your glory, O Father; and among sinners I have scattered the riches which You had given me. Therefore, I cry to You like the Prodigal: "I have sinned before You, O compassionate Father; receive me a penitent, and make me as one of Your hired servants."



EPISTLE & COMMENTARY

THE PROKIMENON IN THE 1ST TONE:

Let Your mercy, O Lord, be upon us, as we have set our hope in You.

I CORINTHIANS 6: 12-20

Brethren, all things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For "the two," He says, "shall become one flesh." But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.

Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

ALLELUIA VERSES

God gives vengeance to me and subdues people under me; He magnifies the salvation of the king, and deals mercifully with His Christ, with David and his seed forever.

COMMENTARY

The temptations of this world are truly great--yet Christ gives us the grace and strength by which to overcome these temptations. Many times we forget that, as creatures of God, our bodies are not our own. Our bodies are temples of God...but instead of using them to worship Him, we choose to defile them through gluttony, drunkenness and sexual immorality. We see the Chalice every Sunday from which we receive the Body and Blood of Christ. This is just a vessel, as are our bodies. Would we use the Chalice in order to go out and fill it with beer to have a drink with our friends? Certainly not. And yet our bodies are so much more valuable to God than this! Why do we insist on defiling them with overeating, drunkenness, or sex outside of its appropriate context within marriage? May our Lord, Jesus Christ, grant us the perseverance and strength to overcome these temptations of the flesh as we struggle to imitate Him as we prepare for the Great Fast.

GOSPEL & COMMENTARY

LUKE 15: 11-32

Jesus said this parable: "A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants."' And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry. Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.' But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots; you killed the fatted calf for him.' And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.'"

COMMENTARY

The son's request for his "portion of goods" is very interesting: in the Greek, the word used is ουσία, which literally means "essence." Thus, the son is asking for his free will and rational mind from God. As Adam did in Eden, the younger son uses these possessions to rebel against his father. This rebellion drives him away to the far country, which represents life in exile from God. When the son "comes to himself", we are reminded that a person immersed in sin is living outside his true self (Rom 7: 17-20). The prodigal realizes his hopeless condition and repents. Just as the Father ran toward his son, so too God runs toward us so long as we are truly repentant. He actively seeks us--and thus sent His Only-begotten Son to be sacrificed for our sake. May God grant us the humility to accept this sacrifice, repent, and return to Him through uniting ourselves with His Son, Jesus Christ!

SPIRITUAL ARTICLES

From *The Prologue* for Jan. 18/Jan. 31 by St. Nikolai Velimirovic:

Saint Athanasius the Great, Archbishop of Alexandria

Athanasius was born in Alexandria in the year 296, and from his early childhood he had an inclination to the spiritual life. He was a deacon to Archbishop Alexander and accompanied him to the First Ecumenical Council [Nicaea, 325]. It was at this Council that Athanasius became renowned for his knowledge of, devotion to, and zeal for Orthodoxy. He contributed greatly to the destruction of the heresy of Arius and the strengthening of Orthodoxy. He wrote the Symbol of Faith [the Creed] which was adopted at the Council. Following the death of Alexander, Athanasius was elected Archbishop of Alexandria. He remained in his calling as Archbishop of Alexandria for forty years, although not for the entire time on the archiepiscopal throne. With few exceptions, he was persecuted by heretics throughout his life. Of the emperors, he was persecuted the most by Constantius, Julian and Valens; of the bishops, by Eusebius of Nicomedia and many others; and of heretics in general, by Arius and his followers. Athanasius was forced to hide from his persecutors at various times: once in a well, once in a grave, and sometimes in private homes or in the deserts. Twice he was forced to flee to Rome. Only for a while before his death did he live peacefully, as a good shepherd among his good flock, who truly loved him. Few are the saints who were so mercilessly slandered and so criminally persecuted as was St. Athanasius. His great soul patiently endured all for the love of Christ and, in the end, emerged victorious from this entire terrible and long-lasting struggle. For counsel, for comfort and for moral support, Athanasius often visited St. Anthony the Great, whom he respected as his spiritual father. A man who formulated the greatest truth, Athanasius had much to suffer for that truth—until the Lord gave him repose in His Kingdom as His faithful servant, in the year 373.

Saint Maxim, Archbishop of Wallachia

Maxim was the son of the Serbian Despot Stefan the Blind and his wife, Despotica Angelina. He was tonsured a monk in the Monastery of Manasija. Pressured by the Turks, he fled to Romania, where he was consecrated to the vacant throne of the Archbishop of Wallachia. He negotiated a truce between the warring commanders Radul and Bogdan and averted a war between them. In his later years, he returned to Krušedol, where he built a monastery and, after a lengthy ascetic life, reposed on January 18, 1546. His incorrupt and miracle-working relics repose, even now, in this monastery.

HYMN OF PRAISE

Christ as the measure of all things

Through Athanasius, wisdom shone,
And the truth of God enlightened men.
The people recognized that wisdom is not bitter,
But, to all who drink it to the bottom, it is sweet;
To all who suffer for it, it is dear.
Whoever in the world feels all hope extinguished,
Whoever walks through the world as over an old cemetery,
Whoever thinks about human life as about weak slavery,

Whoever thinks about the five earthly continents as about five threshing floors,
Whoever thinks about five oceans as about five puddles—
To him, let Christ be the measure by which eternity is measured;
Let him adhere to that measure, and be confirmed in faith.
Whoever recognizes this measure will never abandon it;
He will find no other measure by which to understand the mysteries of the world.
All other measures, in spite of exertion,
Do not reach to the Alpha or the Omega:
They are as deceiving as the moon that crawls over the water,
But appears to reach the bottom of the water.
Christ surpasses both ends of the world,
Where the drama ends and where it began.
Of all the mysteries, the greatest mystery is Him.
From His Nativity to His Crucifixion on the Cross,
From His Crucifixion on the Cross to His Resurrection—
He is the true measure of all God's creation.
Through Him, measuring suffering in the midst of worldly tumult,
The saints of God suffered—without pain.

REFLECTION

To the question, “Why did the Son of God appear on earth in a human body and not in another form of creation?” the brilliant St. Athanasius replied in this manner: “If they ask why He did not appear in some other, better form of creation—for example, as the sun or the moon, or the stars or fire, or the wind—but just as a man, let them know that the Lord did not come to show Himself, but to heal and teach sufferers. For to reveal Himself only to amaze the viewers would mean to come for a show. It was necessary for the Healer and the Teacher, not only to come, but to serve for the benefit of the suffering ones, and to reveal Himself in such a way that this revelation would be bearable for the sufferers. Not one single creature was in error in the eyes of God, except man alone: neither the sun, nor the moon, nor the sky, nor the stars, nor the water, nor the wind betrayed their ranks. On the contrary, knowing their Creator and their King—the Word—they all remained as they were created. Only human beings separated themselves from good and replaced truth with deceit; and the honor belonging to God (as well as the knowledge about Him) they transferred to devils and to men carved out of stone [idols]. What, therefore, is so unbelievable in this, that the Logos appeared as a man to save mankind?” Indeed, we also ask the unbelievers of our day: “In what form would you wish God to appear, if not as a man?”

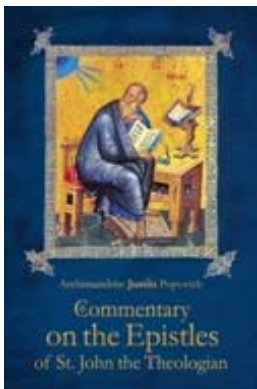
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ANNUAL DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY - January 28-29, 2010

Mark Your Calendars

Saint Simeon Serbian Orthodox Church, Las Vegas, Nevada will host the Annual Diocesan Assembly on January 28-29, 2010.

FROM SEBASTIAN PRESS:



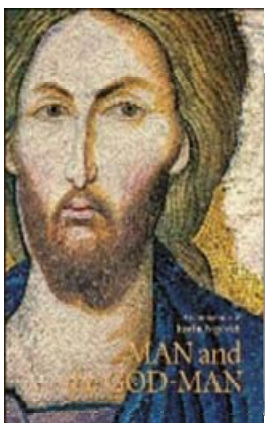
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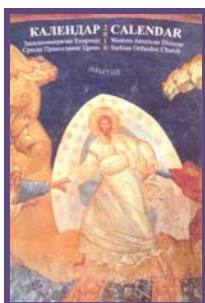


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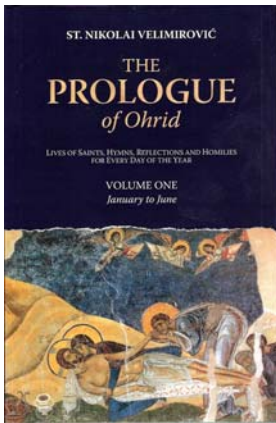
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