



**April 11, 2010**  
**ANTIPASCHA;**  
**ST. THOMAS SUNDAY**

**PASCHAL TROPARION - TONE ONE:**

Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life!

**THOMAS SUNDAY TROPARION - TONE SEVEN:**

From the sealed tomb, You shone forth, O Life! Through closed doors You came to Your Disciples, O Christ God. Renew in us, through them, an upright spirit, by the greatness of Your mercy, O Resurrection of all!

**THOMAS SUNDAY KONTAKION - TONE EIGHT:**

Thomas touched Your life-giving side with an eager hand, O Christ God, when You came to Your Apostles through closed doors. He cried out with all: "You are my Lord and my God!"

**PASCHAL KONTAKION - TONE EIGHT:**

You did descend into the tomb, O Immortal. You did destroy the power of death. In victory did you arise, O Christ God, proclaiming, "Rejoice" to the myrrh-bearing women, granting peace to Your Apostles and bestowing Resurrection on the fallen!

**INSTEAD OF 'IT IS TRULY MEET...' we sing:**

The Angel cried to the Lady, full of grace: "Rejoice, O pure Virgin! Again, I say: 'Rejoice, your Son is risen from His three days in the tomb! With Himself He has raised all the dead.'"

Rejoice, O ye people!

Shine, shine, O New Jerusalem! The glory of the Lord has shone on you! Exult now, and be glad, O Zion! Be radiant, O pure Theotokos, in the Resurrection of your Son!



## EPISTLE & COMMENTARY

### **THE PROKIMENON IN THE 3<sup>RD</sup> TONE:**

*Great is our Lord, and abundant in power! His understanding is beyond measure!*

### **ACTS 5: 12-20**

In those days, through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch. Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly. And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed. Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison. But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, "Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life."

### **ALLELUIA**

*Come let us rejoice in the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to God our Savior!*

*For the Lord our God is a great God; a Great King over all the earth!*

### **COMMENTARY**

The Grace of the Holy Spirit, sent by the Risen Christ, works signs and wonders, not as ends in themselves, but to encourage and strengthen the Apostles to preach the Good News, uniting all people to the Church. The power of God rests in His Church. While many people had great faith, St. Peter is given a particular grace to heal in order to draw people to the unity of the Church. Even more so, this passage reveals how Christ's Resurrection redeems and works through physical creation, for even light and shadow are given divine power. May the Light of the Risen Lord shine as beacons through all of us, drawing the world into the unity of His Church!



## **GOSPEL & COMMENTARY**

### **JOHN 20: 19-31**

At that time, the same day at evening being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." And when He said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." And after eight days His disciples were again inside and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!" Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing." And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

### **COMMENTARY**

The Holy Church calls the doubt of the Apostle Thomas "blessed doubt." This is because his doubt did not resist the truth, but desperately desired the truth. Blessed doubt gives birth to faith when it receives an answer. St. Thomas' doubt now teaches Christ's Passion and Resurrection to all, and leads him to the clearest confession of Christ's Divinity, addressing Jesus as "my Lord and my God." May we all learn from the blessed doubt of St. Thomas that Christ is truly risen, and allow His Resurrection to transform our lives, just as it did for the doubting apostle!

## **SPIRITUAL ARTICLES**

***From The Prologue for Mar. 29/Apr. 11 by St. Nikolai Velimirovic:***

### **Saint Mark, Confessor and Bishop of Arethusa in Syria**

We are told about Mark's suffering by St. Gregory the Theologian and by Blessed Theodoretus. According to these reports, during Emperor Constantine's reign Mark destroyed a pagan temple and converted many to the Christian Faith. When Julian ascended the throne and shortly thereafter apostatized from the Faith of Christ, some citizens of

Arethusa also denied Christ and reverted to paganism. Then they rose up against Mark because he had destroyed their temple, seeking that he either rebuild the temple or pay a large sum of money. Since the aged Mark refused to do either of the two, he was flogged, mocked and dragged through the streets. After that they severed his ears with a fine but strong thread. They then stripped him, smeared him with honey, and left him tied to a tree in the heat of summer to be bitten by wasps, mosquitoes and hornets. The martyr of Christ endured all without complaint. Mark was very old, but his countenance shone like an angel. The pagans reduced the price for their temple even more and finally sought from Mark an insignificant sum. This he could have easily given, but he refused to give even one coin for this purpose. His patience made an enormous impression on the citizens, gaining him their admiration and pity. They then lowered the cost of the temple to practically nothing, in order to allow him to live. Finally they permitted him to go free, and one by one they all received instruction from him and returned to the Christian Faith. At the same time, in the city of Heliopolis at the foot of Mount Lebanon, the deacon Cyril suffered for a similar act. During the time when Christianity enjoyed freedom, Cyril destroyed some idols, and was later brutally tortured under Julian the Apostate. So embittered were the pagans against him that, when they killed him, they ripped him open with their teeth and tore out his entrails. The same day on which St. Cyril suffered, many others also suffered. The spiteful pagans carved their bodies into pieces, mixed them with barley and fed them to the swine. Punishment reached them swiftly: all of their teeth fell out and an unbearable stench came forth from their mouths.

### **The Venerable John the Hermit**

John was the son of Juliana, a Christian woman in Armenia. As a young boy, he left his mother and withdrew into the wilderness, completely aflame with love for Christ the Lord. In the wilderness, he first surrendered himself to the guidance of a spiritual director, Pharmutius, who had been found so worthy before God that an angel brought him bread daily. Later, the young John departed and withdrew into solitude. He lowered himself into a dry well, where he spent ten years in fasting, prayer and vigils. St. Pharmutius brought bread from the angel and gave it to him. So that the young John would not become proud, the angel of God did not give bread to him personally, but rather through his spiritual father Pharmutius. After ten years of difficult ascetic labors in the well, St. John reposed in the Lord. His relics revealed themselves to be wonderworking. He lived and was glorified by God and men in the fourth century.

### **HYMN OF PRAISE**

The Lord, Hero of Heroes  
The Heroic Lord gathers all heroes,  
All who can maintain the Faith  
And remain faithful to God unto death,  
And who can endure sufferings,  
Offering thanksgiving to God,  
Being proud of their sufferings;  
And who can forgive others,  
And receive insults as praise;  
And who can still instruct others

To return from the sinful path to righteousness  
With a sorrowful, compassionate soul;  
And who can be merciful,  
And rejoice in the joy of others,  
And cry with a weeping heart;  
And who can restrain themselves  
From evil deeds, words and thoughts,  
From over-indulging in drink and food;  
Who do not please their bodies,  
But consider them to be temporary chariots  
From which they struggle on the battlefield,  
To preserve their God-given souls,  
To preserve the Christian Faith,  
So that they might enter the city of Paradise,  
Wherein is the Kingdom of the Lord of Heroes,  
Wherein, with heroes, the Hero reigns,  
With heroes not of this world.

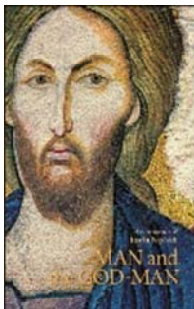
## REFLECTION

Spiritists of our day accept every manifestation from the spiritual world as though sent by God, and immediately they boast that God has been “revealed” to them. I knew an eighty-year-old monk whom everyone respected as a great spiritual director. To my question, “Have you ever in your life seen anything from the spiritual world?” the monk answered me, “No, never, praise be to God’s mercy.” Seeing that I was astonished at this, he said: “I have constantly prayed to God that nothing would appear to me, so that I would not have occasion to fall into deception and receive a fallen devil as an angel. Thus far, God has heard my prayers.”

The following recorded example shows how humble and cautious the elders were. The devil, clothed in the light of an angel, appeared to a certain monk and said to him: “I am the Archangel Gabriel, and I am sent to you.” To this the brother responded: “Think—were you not sent to someone else? For I am not worthy to see an angel.” The devil instantly became invisible and vanished.

## IMPORTANT REMINDERS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

### FROM SEBASTIAN PRESS:



#### **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](http://www.westsrbdio.org/ads/man_and_the_godman.html)

*Retail Price: \$15.00*



**Special Offer**

**Spend \$50 or more on our Sebastian Press Titles  
and receive a FREE Wall Calendar!**

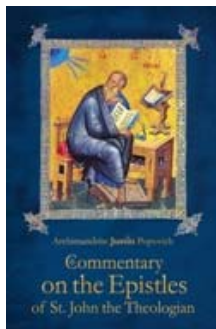
**2010 Wall Calendar  
adorned with icons by Fr. Stamatis Skliris**

The Serbian Orthodox Diocese of Western America is pleased to announce the publication of a beautiful, full-color, trilingual (English, Serbian and Greek) Wall Calendar, which has been compiled and designed by Bishop Maxim and Interklima (Vrnjci), and printed in Serbia. This high quality, trilingual (English, Serbian

and Greek) Calendar is adorned with striking full-color icons by Fr. Stamatis Skliris, a parish priest in Athens who is renowned as an iconographer and as a writer and lecturer on Byzantine iconography. Highly recommended! 27 pages. - \$20 retail

For a complete list of Sebastian Press Titles please visit:

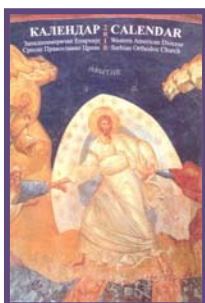
[http://www.westsrbdio.org/SEBASTIAN\\_PRESS/Sebastian\\_Press.html](http://www.westsrbdio.org/SEBASTIAN_PRESS/Sebastian_Press.html)



**Commentary on the Epistles of St. John the Theologian**

By Archimandrite Justin Popovic

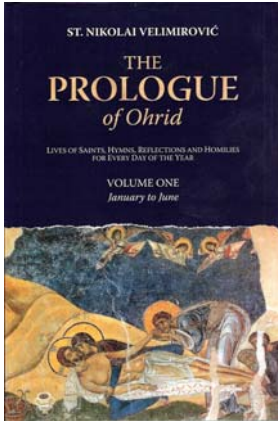
This Commentary on the Epistles of St. John the Theologian - published now, three years after the blessed repose of Venerable Fr. Justin (on the Feast of the Annunciation, 1979) - was written by the tireless Messenger of Christ forty years ago, in circumstances similar to those in which Christ's Holy 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 *Retail price: \$7.*



**2010 POCKET DIOCESAN CALENDARS**

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