



September 13, 2009

14TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**FEAST OF PLACING THE SASH OF THE MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS;
SYNAXIS OF THE ENLIGHTENERS AND TEACHERS OF THE SERBIAN PEOPLE**

RESURRECTIONAL TROPARION - TONE FIVE:

Let us, the faithful, praise and worship the Word, co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit, born for our salvation from the Virgin; for He willed to be lifted up on the Cross in the flesh, to endure death, and to raise the dead by His glorious Resurrection.

TROPARION TO THE SYNAXIS OF SERBIAN SAINTS - TONE FOUR:

As the Enlighteners of the Serbs, O God-bearing Fathers, Holy Patriarchs and Great Shepherds, guardians of the Apostolic Traditions, unshakeable pillars and teachers of Orthodoxy: beseech Christ, the Master of All, to grant Peace to the world and to our souls, great mercy.

TROPARION OF THE PLACING OF THE SASH OF THE THEOTOKOS - TONE FOUR:

O Ever-Virgin Theotokos, shelter of mankind, you have bestowed upon your people a mighty vestment, even your immaculate body's raiment and sash, which by your seedless childbirth has remained incorrupt; for in you nature and time are made new. Wherefore, we implore you to grant peace to the world, and great mercy to our souls.

RESURRECTIONAL KONTAKION - TONE FIVE:

You did descend into hell, O my Savior, shattering its gates as Almighty; resurrecting the dead as Creator, and destroying the sting of death. You have delivered Adam from the curse, O Lover of Man, and we all cry to You: O Lord, save us!

KONTAKION TO THE SYNAXIS OF SERBIAN SAINTS - TONE THREE:

Enthroned as hierarchs, and living lives worthy of praise, in God-pleasing manner you guided your people to the knowledge of God: because of this, you were glorified by Him through miracles and incorruption, as befits pupils of the Grace of God.

KONTAKION OF THE PLACING OF THE SASH OF THE THEOTOKOS - TONE FOUR:

Your precious sash, O Theotokos, which encompassed your God-receiving womb, is an invincible force for thy flock, and an un failing treasury of every good, O only Ever-virgin Mother.

HYMN TO THE MOTHER OF GOD - 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!

EPISTLE & COMMENTARY

THE PROKIMENON (PSALM 12:7) IN THE 5TH TONE:

Thou, O Lord, shall protect us and preserve us from this generation forever!

2 Corinthians, 1:21- 2:4

Brethren, now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. Moreover I call God as witness against my soul, that to spare you I came no more to Corinth. Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith you stand. But I determined this within myself, that I would not come again to you in sorrow. For if I make you sorrowful, then who is he who makes me glad but the one who is made sorrowful by me? And I wrote this very thing to you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow over those from whom I ought to have joy, having confidence in you all that my joy is the joy of you all. For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you.

Hebrews, 13: 7-16

Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them. We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come. Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of [our] lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

THE ALLELUIA VERSES: PSALM 89: 1, 2

I will sing of Thy mercies, O Lord, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim Thy truth from generation to generation.

Thou hast said: Mercy will be established forever, and My truth will be prepared in the heavens.

Epistle Commentary on 2 Corinthians

The Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians the true reason why he does no longer come among them: he is sparing them from a confrontation. It is through graciousness that he does not return to them. The pastor never rejoices when his flock errs and moves away from God. The purpose of Church discipline is never for the leader to exercise harsh authority or dominion, but rather to call for repentance, reconciliation with the Church, and a true renewal in the joy of the Spirit. Pastoral correction brings both agony to the overseer and abundant love for the one being corrected. Church discipline is never punishment. It will never be too severe. Rather, it is a spiritual medicine meant to reunite the sinful person to God.

GOSPEL & COMMENTARY

Matthew 22: 1-14

At that time Jesus told this parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. Again, he sent out other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding."' But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.' So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen."

Matthew 5: 14-19, 30

"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. "Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. "For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. "Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches [them,] he

shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. "And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast [it] from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

Gospel Commentary on Matthew 22: 1-14

Christ's parable speaks directly about the steadfast love of God the Father. He loves the world so much, that he repeatedly sends out His servants—first Moses and the Patriarchs, then the Prophets, to bring His people to His Heavenly Banquet. And yet, not only did they refuse, but they killed the messengers sent to call them! So, what does God do? He invites everyone from the highways and byways—those who were not originally chosen. The Banquet is full of people—all of whom are given a wedding garment to wear. The man who does not have this garment on, like many of us, has chosen to attend the Lord's Banquet on *his own terms*, rejecting God's plan for him. The dire consequence of being thrown out of the Banquet is a direct result of the man's rejection of God.

SPIRITUAL ARTICLES

Reflection from *The Prologue* for August 31/Sept. 13 by St. Nikolai Velimirovic

Christians do not believe in *kismet*—fate or destiny. Even if God determines the main outlines of our life, He can change them according to our prayers and merit. Thus, He prolonged King Hezekiah's life for fifteen years (Isaiah 38:5), and He prolonged the Venerable Dius's life (July 19) for fifteen years. St. Basil the Great prayed to God, and God granted that Basil's life be extended for one day so that he could baptize his physician, Joseph the Jew. Yet, even as God can prolong life at the prayerful behest of the righteous, He can also shorten life because of sin. Emperor Anastasius adhered to the heresy of the Severians (also called the acephalites, or "headless ones"), who spread the foolishness that the Church does not need bishops and priests, and insisted that everyone is a bishop and a priest unto himself, and that everyone has the right to interpret Holy Scripture according to his own understanding, and teach others as he understands and believes! In vain, St. John the Patriarch counseled the emperor to return to the truth of Orthodoxy. The emperor did not simply reject the patriarch's counsel, but ill-treated the patriarch in various ways and considered having him banished. One night, the emperor had a dream of an awesome man on an exalted throne, who held a book in his hand. This man opened the book, found the emperor's name in it, and said: "I had wanted to let you live for a while longer, but—because of your heresy—behold, I am erasing fourteen years from your life." And the awesome figure erased something from the book. Terrified, the emperor leaped out of bed and related his dream to his followers. A few days later, lightning struck the imperial court and killed Emperor Anastasius.

1. The Synaxis of the Holy Serbian Enlighteners and Teachers

Today we do not commemorate all the Serbian saints in general, but only several archbishops and patriarchs:

St. Sava, the first Archbishop of the Serbs and Equal to the Apostles.

Arsenije, the successor to St. Sava, a great hierarch and miracle-worker.

St. Sava II, son of King Stefan the First-crowned, who lived in Jerusalem for a long time and is called “like unto Moses in meekness.”

Nikodim, who lived a life of asceticism on the Holy Mountain, was Abbot of Hilandar, and following that was Archbishop of all the Serbian and Coastal Lands.

Joanikije, at first an archbishop, and then patriarch from 1346 to his repose in 1349.

Ephraim, an ascetic who was elected Patriarch against his will in the time of Prince Lazar in 1376, and who crowned Lazar king. After that, he resigned the patriarchal throne and retreated into solitude.

Spyridon, who was the successor to Ephraim, and who reposed in the year 1388.

Makarije, who renovated many ancient monasteries and printed many ecclesiastical books in Skadar, Venice, Belgrade and other places. He also built the famous refectory in the monastery at Peć and labored much to advance the Church with the assistance of his brother Mehmed Sokolović, the Grand Vizier. Makarije died in the year 1574.

Gabriel, by birth a nobleman of the Rajić family, who participated in the Moscow Church council under Patriarch Nikon, for which he was tortured for treason by the Turks, and hanged in the year 1656.

With these we also commemorate Jevstatije, Jakov, Danilo, Sava III, Grigorije, Jovan, Maxim and Nikon. Many of them lived a life of asceticism on Mount Athos, and all were meek and faithful servants in the vineyard of the Lord.

2. The Feast of the Cincture of the Holy Theotokos

After her Dormition, the Holy Theotokos gave her cincture to the Apostle Thomas. That cincture was later brought to Constantinople and kept in a sealed reliquary in the Church of the Mother of God at Blachernae, founded by Empress Pulcheria. This reliquary was not opened until the time of Emperor Leo the Wise (886–912). Leo’s wife, Empress Zoe, became mentally ill and, in accord with a heavenly vision, she desired that the cincture of the Most-holy Theotokos be placed on her. The emperor implored the patriarch, and the reliquary was opened. Then the cincture was removed and placed on the ailing empress. The empress was healed immediately. Today’s feast was instituted in commemoration of that miracle. Currently, one part of the cincture is to be found in Zugdidi, Georgia, because the daughter of Emperor Romanus was healed by the aid of this cincture—and when her father married her to the Georgian Emperor Abuchaz, she took part of the cincture with her. By order of the Russian Emperor Alexander I, a special church was built at Mingrelia, in Zugdidi, where that relic of the miracle-working garment of the Most-holy Theotokos is kept.

3. Saint Gennadius, Patriarch of Constantinople

Gennadius succeeded St. Anatolius as patriarch. He was a contemporary of St. Marcian (January 10) and St. Daniel the Stylite (December 11). During his time, the glorious Studite Monastery was founded. It was named for the Roman Senator Studius, who came to Constantinople and, with the blessing of Patriarch Gennadius, built the Church of St. John the Forerunner and the monastery beside it. Gennadius was very gentle and restrained. He refused to ordain those who did not know the Psalter by heart. He presided at a local council in Constantinople, at which simony in the Church was anathematized. He worked miracles, and had a vision that foretold his death. Gennadius governed the Church for thirteen years, and peacefully presented himself to the Lord in the year 471.

4. The Hieromartyr Cyprian

Cyprian was born of unbelieving parents, and was himself educated in polytheism. He became famous in Carthage as a teacher of philosophy and rhetoric. He was married, but

when he became a Christian he ceased to live with his wife, dedicating himself to the constant study of Holy Scripture and to spiritual perfection. Because of his unusual virtues, he was chosen as a presbyter and soon after that as a bishop. He was as merciful toward Christians as he was firm toward heretics. Guided by the Holy Spirit, he wrote many works of instruction. He wrote against idolatry, Judaism and the Novatian heresy with especial vehemence. His works on virginity are especially beautiful and sweet, as are also his writings on martyrdom, charity, patience, the Lord's Prayer and other edifying themes. He was martyred, and reposed in the time of Valerian, in the year 258. Before his death he prayed to God, blessed the people, and left twenty-five gold coins to be given to the executioner who would behead him—the astonishing greatness and generosity of a true Christian!

5. Saint John, Metropolitan of Kiev

John was a Bulgarian by birth. He came to Kiev in the year 1080 and immediately attained such esteem that he was soon elevated to the throne of the Metropolitan. John governed the Church for eight years. He wrote an epistle to Pope Clement, in which he reprimanded him for the innovations that had been introduced by the Roman Church. He died peacefully in the year 1089.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

For **Continual Education in Liturgy and Theology**, we recommend the following article:

[http://www.westsrbdio.org/Theology/The Eucharist and the Kingdom of God.doc](http://www.westsrbdio.org/Theology/The_Eucharist_and_the_Kingdom_of_God.doc)

Serbian version: http://www.verujem.org/pdf/zizijulas_evharistija.pdf