



**1st Sunday after Pentecost
Sunday of All Saints
June 14, 2009**

RESURRECTIONAL TROPARION – TONE EIGHT:

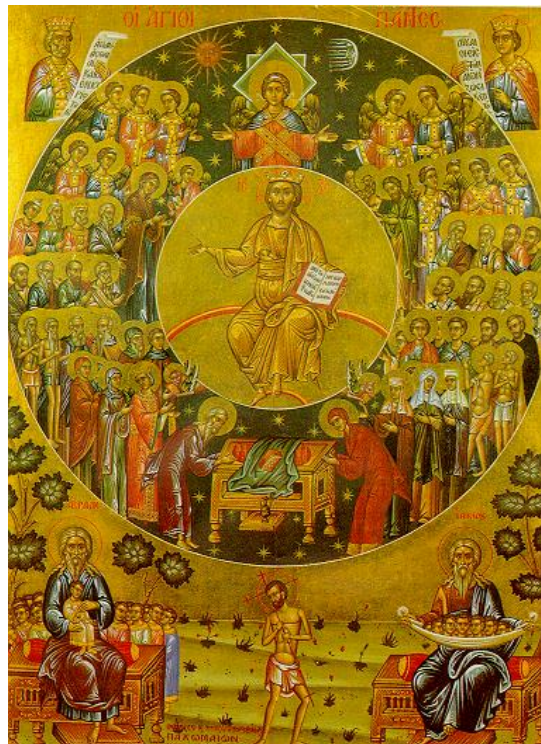
You did descend from on high, O Merciful One! You did accept the three day burial to free us from our sufferings! O Lord, our Life and Resurrection: Glory to You!

TROPARION TO THE SAINTS - TONE FOUR:

As with fine porphyry and royal purple, Your Church has been adorned with Your martyrs' blood, shed throughout all the world. She cries to You, O Christ God: 'Send down Your bounties on Your people; grant peace to Your habitation, and great mercy to our souls!'

KONTAKION TO THE SAINTS - TONE EIGHT:

The universe offers You the God-bearing martyrs as the first-fruits of creation, O Lord and Creator. By their prayers keep Your Church, Your habitation, in abiding peace, through the Theotokos, O Most Merciful One.



EPISTLE & COMMENTARY

The Prokeimenon—Psalm 76: 11 in the Eighth Tone:

Pray and make your vows before the Lord our God.

(**To the Saints, in the Fourth Tone:** God is wonderful in His saints, the God of Israel.)

Hebrews 11: 33-40; 12: 1, 2

Brethren, who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented - of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise. God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us. Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

The Alleluia Verses – Psalm 34: 17, 19

The righteous called, and the Lord heard them. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers them out of them all.

Epistle Commentary

The great **cloud of witnesses** includes not only the Old Testament saints referred to earlier in the reading but the saints and martyrs of the Lord throughout the ages. In 6: 12, Saint Paul says, “imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” Here, he continues the encouragement with the ultimate example to imitate: **run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus...who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross.**

GOSPEL & COMMENTARY

Matthew 10: 32,33,37,38; 19: 27-30

At that time Jesus said, “Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.” Then Peter answered and said to Him, “See, we have left all and followed You.

Therefore what shall we have?” So Jesus said to him, “Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands for My name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

Gospel Commentary

It should not surprise us that to **confess [Christ] before men** includes family members as well. The Gospel itself can create sharp conflict within families because of unbelief and evil in people. Therefore, to carry **his cross** to the end, a true disciple must be ready to sacrifice even family relationships, as the Apostle Peter expressed on behalf of the Apostles then, and on behalf of all true disciples following throughout the ages: **See, we have left all and followed You.**



SPIRITUAL ARTICLES

Reflection from *The Prologue* for June 1/June 14 by St. Nikolai Velimirovic

No one has ever spread as much shameful slander about Christ the Lord as the Jews. Their Talmud seethes with evil and malice toward the Lord. But all of those worthless calumnies are refuted by the most prominent historian of the Jews, Josephus Flavius, a rabbi and scholar who lived near the end of the first century after Christ. Josephus writes: “Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call Him a man; for He was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to Himself both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was the Christ. And when Pilate, at the denunciation of the most eminent men among us, had Him condemned to the cross, those that had loved Him from the first did not forsake Him. He appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold, and they foretold many other things concerning Him. And the sect of Christians, so named after Him, remains to the present day.” Thus wrote a man who did not believe in Christ but was a scholar free of prejudice and malice.

From, *The Holy Spirit and His Varieties of Gifts*, by Rev. George Mastrantonis (www.goarch.org). Continued from last week.

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Holy Trinity, of the same essence and equal rank as the Father and the Son.

“And the Spirit is the witness, because the Spirit is the truth. There are three witnesses, the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree”, (1 John 5: 7-8).

The Holy Spirit as God is revealed in many verses in Scripture: “Why has Satan filled your hearts to lie to the Holy Spirit...you have not lied to men, but to God” (Acts 5: 3, 4); also, “There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit...the same Lord...it is the same God” (1 Corinthians 12: 5 {cf. Mat. 28: 19; 2 Cor. 13: 13}). The Godhead of the Holy Spirit comes directly from the Father. As the Son is begotten by the Father, the Holy Spirit also is proceeded from the Father, for:

“When the Counselor [the Holy Spirit] comes, whom I [Christ] shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me” (John 15: 26).

The Church has proclaimed this truth that the Holy Spirit is of the same substance with the Father and the Son in the Godhead of the Trinity. The Church has incorporated this truth in the Nicene Creed as pronounced by the Second Ecumenical Synod (381). It states:

[I believe] *“And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, Who proceedeth from the Father, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; Who spoke by the prophets.”*

The Holy Spirit in truth remains in the Church, protects and preserves its Truths and sanctifies its members. The Holy Spirit is the Power and Comforter of the believers, and was promised by Christ. Being the third Person of the Holy Trinity does not mean He is not equal in substance with the Father and Son. The Spirit is the life-giving energy and bower which makes the Church “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3: 15). The Holy Spirit was the divine instrument in the birth of Jesus Christ as God-Man.

“The Holy Spirit will come upon you (Virgin Mary), and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the child to be born will be called Holy, the Son of God” (Luke 1: 35).

The Holy Spirit is the Author of the Bible and the Source of inspiration for its writers through those years. This is why the Bible, although it was written by different persons and in different eras over the span of 1000 years, is coherent and consistent in substance and meaning. This is a remarkable and overwhelming fact. There is no other literature in the world which has this outstanding coherence, while written over such a period of time and by different writers. What was prophesied in the Old Testament, dating back hundreds of years, was fulfilled in time, and in detail, in the New Testament. This is an extraordinary phenomenon. This coherence of the Old with the New was an evolutionary process in the course of time between the divine promise and its realization. This was not because of any change of the Truth as such, but because of its development for human acceptance, for:

“...when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son...God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts” (Gal. 4: 4, 6).

The Holy Spirit throughout the centuries revealed the divine Truths and inspired chosen Prophets and Apostles to spread and proclaim them to all peoples of the inhabited earth. It was in the Design of Almighty God that chosen personalities were indispensable in teaching and preaching these Truths to “all nations.” These chosen personalities did not proclaim their own ideas or philosophies, but only used their own abilities, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to serve the Will of God. These chosen personalities proved themselves outstanding co-workers of God. The Prophets, Apostles and an chosen personalities considered themselves instruments of the Holy Spirit, and they spoke with authority, as Christ said to the Apostles: “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20: 22). The “gift” of the Holy Spirit is not a static one, but a transforming and sanctifying power leading the chosen one to accomplish the Will of God. Chosen personalities are exhorted to:

“Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you guardians, to feed the church of the Lord” (Acts 20: 28).

This “gift” of the Holy Spirit is given to both the clergy and laity who belong to the true Church.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

TIME IS RUNNING OUT to be part of the *Western American Diocese 2009 Annual*

Submit an ad or greeting form to the Diocesan office by June 15th for inclusion in the beautiful, full-color publication from our own Sebastian Press that will be available during the Diocesan Days weekend, September 4-6, 2009, at the St. Sava Mission in Jackson, CA.

Mark your calendars for Diocesan Days, September 4-6, 2009

Follow this link for information on the 13th Annual Diocesan Days:

http://www.westsrbdio.org/Diocesan_Days/Diocesan_Days_2009/xhtmll/index.html

Diocesan Summer Camp

Our Diocesan Summer Camp held each year at the St. Sava Mission in Jackson, CA, will begin on Sunday, July 12, 2009. *Camp forms will not be mailed out this year.* Instead, they will be made available on the Camp website: www.campstsava.org. Other important camp information can also be found by following the above link.

Historical Decision Concerning the Serbian Orthodox Church in North & South America

The Holy Assembly of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church, during its regular session on 21 May 2009, based on a recommendation of the Episcopal Council of the Serbian Orthodox Church in North and South America, relative to the restructuring of the existing Dioceses in North and South America, rendered the following decision confirming the Constitution of the Serbian Orthodox Church in North and South America, according to which the Dioceses of our Church on that territory will be restructured:

1. THE METROPOLITANATE OF LIBERTYVILLE-CHICAGO, with its see at the Monastery of St. Sava in Libertyville (encompassing the Monastery of St. Sava in

Libertyville and the Cathedral Church of the Holy Resurrection with its three parishes), whose Metropolitan shall be the President of the Episcopal and Central Church Councils and the Clergy-Laity Assembly, and therefore the ex officio representative of the Serbian Orthodox Church on that territory.

2. THE DIOCESE OF NEW GRACANICA-MIDWESTERN AMERICA, with its see at the Monastery of New Gracanica (encompassing all the Church-School Congregations, Parishes and Monasteries in Chicago - save the Holy Resurrection Cathedral - and the other Midwestern American States of the previous Metropolitanate of Midwestern American, as well as all of the Church-School Congregations, Parishes and Monasteries of the previous Diocese for America and Canada of the New Gracanica Metropolitanate on the territory of the previous Metropolitanate of Midwestern America).

3. THE DIOCESE OF EASTERN AMERICA, with its see in Pittsburgh/Mars (encompassing all of the Church-School Congregations, Parishes and Monasteries of the current Eastern American Diocese and the Church-School Congregations, Parishes and Monasteries of the previous Diocese for America and Canada of the New Gracanica Metropolitanate on the territory of Eastern America).

4. THE DIOCESE OF WESTERN AMERICA, with its see in Los Angeles/Alhambra (encompassing all of the Church-School Congregations, Parishes and Monasteries of the current Western American Diocese and the Church-School Congregations, and Parishes of the previous Diocese for America and Canada of the New Gracanica Metropolitanate on the territory of Western America).

5. THE DIOCESE OF CANADA, with its see in Toronto/Milton (encompassing all of the Church-School Congregations, Parishes and Monasteries of the current Canadian Diocese and the Church-School Congregations and Parishes of the previous Diocese for America and Canada of the New Gracanica Metropolitanate on the territory of Canada). With this decision on the said redistribution, Article 8 of the Constitution of the Serbian Orthodox Church in North and South America, and by it the previous titles "Metropolitanate of Midwestern America" and the "Diocese for America and Canada of the New Gracanica Metropolitanate" cease to exist, and the new borders for these Dioceses of the Serbian Orthodox Church in North and South America are rendered effective.

Bishop Irinej of Backa, Spokesman of the Holy Assembly of Bishops