



**Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council;
Afterfeast of the Ascension
May 31, 2009**

RESURRECTIONAL TROPARION - TONE SIX:

The angelic powers were at Your tomb; and the guards became as dead men; and Mary stood by Your grave, seeking Your most pure Body. You did capture hell, not being tempted by it. You did come to the Virgin, granting life. O Lord who did rise from the dead: Glory to You!

ASCENSION TROPARION - TONE FOUR:

Thou hast ascended in glory, O Christ our God, granting joy to Thy disciples by the promise of the Holy Spirit. Through the blessing they were assured that Thou art the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world!

TROPARION TO THE HOLY FATHERS - TONE EIGHT:

You are most glorious, O Christ our God! You have established the Holy Fathers as lights on the earth. Through them You have guided us to the true faith. O greatly Compassionate One, glory to You!

KONTAKION TO THE HOLY FATHERS - TONE EIGHT:

The apostles' preaching and the fathers' doctrines have established one faith for the Church. Adorned with the robe of truth, woven from heavenly theology, it defines and glorifies the great mystery of piety.

ASCENSION KONTAKION - TONE SIX:

When Thou didst fulfill the dispensation for our sake, and unite earth to heaven: Thou didst ascend in glory, O Christ our God, not being parted from those who love Thee, but remaining with them and crying: I am with you and no one will be against you!

INSTEAD OF "IT IS TRULY MEET...":

Magnify, O my soul, Christ the Giver of Life, who has ascended from earth to heaven! We magnify you, the Mother of God, who beyond reason and understanding gave birth in time to the Timeless One!

INSTEAD OF "WE HAVE SEEN THE TRUE LIGHT..."

Thou hast ascended in glory, O Christ our God, granting joy to Thy disciples by the promise of the Holy Spirit. Through the blessing they were assured that Thou art the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world!

EPISTLE & COMMENTARY

The Prokeimenon— Psalm 119: 12; 86: 12 in the Fourth Tone:

Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our Fathers, and praised and glorified is Thy name forever!

Acts 20: 16-18; 28-36

In those days, it happened that Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost. From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. And when they had come to him, he said to them, “You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you; therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel. Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ ” And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.

The Alleluia Verses – Psalm 50: 1, 5

The Lord, the God of gods, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting! Gather to me my venerable ones, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice.

Epistle Commentary

Before the Apostle of the Seventy and Evangelist Luke composed the Book of Acts, Paul described this expected difficulty in **Ephesus** in his letters to the Corinthians: “I have fought with beasts at Ephesus” (I Cor. 15: 32); “For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia [where Ephesus is]: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life” (II Cor. 1: 8). **Savage wolves** and men **speaking perverse things** refer to external and internal trials in the future. Ephesus would be the scene of the Third Ecumenical Council in 431, AD, which preserved the doctrine of two natures of Christ in one divine Person against the heretical teaching of Nestorius.



GOSPEL & COMMENTARY

John 17: 1-13

At that time, Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me. I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves.”

Gospel Commentary

The Apostles are they who receive the Word of the Father from the Son and pass it on to those “who will believe in Me through their word” (verse 20). This is what is meant by “apostolic tradition.” Isaiah 52:6 prophesies that in the messianic days the knowledge of the Name, an extension of the being/power of God, will be revealed. In Old Testament times the term “the Name” was reverently used as a substitute for God’s actual name, Yahweh. Thus, Jesus prays to God the Father: **“I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world.”** Here, **the world** is the portion of humanity which exists in direct opposition to Christ, preferring darkness to His light, rejecting Him and standing under judgment.

SPIRITUAL ARTICLES

Reflection from *The Prologue* for May 18/31 by St. Nikolai Velimirovic

To conceal one’s virtues and ascetic labors has been the custom of ascetics, both female and male, not only in the earliest times of Christianity but throughout all ages to the present time. Eudocia, wife of the glorious Prince Dimitri Donskoy, the liberator of Russia from the Tartars, was left a widow in 1389, while still fairly young. Imbued with devotion, this princess built many churches, distributed alms, and secretly weakened her body by fasting and long vigils. She wore an iron chain around her body. Meanwhile, she always appeared happy before the public, clothed in opulence and adorned with pearls. The public said many things about her, and they began to spread rumors that she

was leading an immoral life. Her sons also heard about this and, insulted and embittered, openly informed their mother of what was being said about her. Their mother opened her luxurious robe and her sons, with great horror, saw her body, completely withered, dried up and bound with iron chains.

From, *Time Management: an Orthodox Perspective*, by Albert Rossi, PhD and Julia Wickes (www.oca.org)

The first thing to say, from an Orthodox perspective, is that there is no such thing as time management. We don't manage time. Time manages us if we allow the Lord to have a place in our schedule.

Whose time is it?

Christ is everything, including the giver and owner of our time. He is the Way we format our schedule, the Truth about the meaning of time, and the flow of Life that moves us through time. C. S. Lewis makes a profound point about time. He says that we usually regard time as our own. We start our day with the curious assumption that we are the lawful possessors of an upcoming twenty-four hours. With that hazardous assumption we then plot a matrix for our day, filling in time slots with tasks or restful moments. We might hope that we are managing our time in a way that will somehow please God. But when we begin with the assumption that time is ours, inconveniences and unexpected interruptions become intrusions into "my time." By contrast, we can begin with the assertion that time is not our own. Time belongs to the Lord and He has a plan for time that He desires us to accept for our own peace and joy.

Adjusting our expectations

Those who are trying to use their time to do the Lord's will must begin every day, and every moment, with Jesus Christ. One question might be, "Lord, what do you want me to do, now?" But an even better question is, "Lord, what do *You* want to do through me now?" This takes the emphasis from the ego and places it on the Lord. If we believe that God has a plan for each moment, we can then be sensitive to each moment as it unfolds in unexpected ways. When we receive each moment as from the Lord we will begin to experience our time on earth as a series of small deaths and resurrections. Every loss is a gift that God gives us so that He can give us more. It might be saying goodbye to high school or college days, a move from the old neighborhood, the loss of a job, the loss of physical or mental health. We might lose loved ones through separation or death. In degrees, the reactive thought might be, "This is the beginning of the end." A more truthful thought would be, "This is the beginning of the beginning." Death is the beginning of a new relationship with Christ, a fresh beginning of an entirely new life. Each loss and little death is a new beginning towards our ultimate beginning – heaven. As we adjust our expectations time takes on a new meaning.

Sacrament of the present moment

Simple awareness of the presence of God is the power within the present moment. The present moment – now – is the only place where God is. He discloses Himself through the reality of the present moment. Nowhere else. This is a mystery we can participate in by simply trying to be aware of His presence. Awareness, conscious contact with God, is the key.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Be a 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/xhtml/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

