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READER'S TYPIKA ON SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2023

(16th Sunday after Pentecost & 1st Sunday of Luke)

The Proto-Martyr Thekla, Equal-to-the-Apostles;

The Venerable Silouan of Mt. Athos

Leader: Through the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us, and save us.

Reader: Amen.

THE TRISAGION PRAYERS

People: Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal: have mercy on us. (*Thrice*)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Both now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen

All-holy Trinity, have mercy on us. Lord, cleanse us from our sins. Master, pardon our iniquities. Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities for thy Name's sake.

Lord, have mercy. (*Thrice*)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Both now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Leader: O Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us.

All: Amen.

Reader: Lord, have mercy. (*12 times*)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Both now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

O come, let us worship and fall down before God our King.

O come, let us worship and fall down before Christ, our King and our God.

O come, let us worship and fall down before the Very Christ, our King and our God.

THE FIRST ANTIPHON: PSALM 102

Reader: Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all that He hath done for thee, Who is gracious unto all thine iniquities, Who healeth all thine infirmities, Who redeemeth thy life from corruption, Who crowneth thee with mercy and compassion, Who fulfilleth thy desire with good things; thy youth shall be renewed as the eagle's. The Lord performeth deeds of mercy, and executeth judgement for all them that are wronged. He hath made His ways known unto Moses, unto the sons of Israel the things that He hath willed. Compassionate and merciful is the Lord, long-suffering and plenteous in mercy; not unto the end will He be angered, neither unto eternity will He be wroth. Not according to our iniquities hath He dealt with us, neither according to our sins hath He rewarded us. For according to the height of heaven from the earth, the Lord hath made His mercy to prevail over them that fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our iniquities from

us. Like as a father hath compassion upon his sons, so hath the Lord had compassion upon them that fear Him; for He knoweth whereof we are made, He hath remembered that we are dust. As for man, his days are as the grass; as a flower of the field, so shall he blossom forth. For when the wind is passed over it, then it shall be gone, and no longer will it know the place thereof. But the mercy of the Lord is from eternity, even unto eternity, upon them that fear Him. And His righteousness is upon sons of sons, upon them that keep His testament and remember His commandments to do them. The Lord in heaven hath prepared His throne, and His kingdom ruleth over all. Bless the Lord, all ye His angels, mighty in strength, that perform His word, to hear the voice of His words. Bless the Lord, all ye His hosts, His ministers that do His will. Bless the Lord, all ye His works, in every place of His dominion.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Both now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen

And again: Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy Name; blessed art Thou, O Lord.

THE SECOND ANTIPHON: PSALM 145

Reader: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

Praise the Lord, O my soul. I will praise the Lord in my life, I will chant unto my God for as long as I have my being. Trust ye not in princes, in the sons of men, in whom there is no salvation. His spirit shall go forth, and he shall return unto his earth. In that day all his thoughts shall perish. Blessed is he of whom the God of Jacob is his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God, Who hath made heaven and the earth, the sea and all that is therein, Who keepeth truth unto eternity, Who executeth judgement for the wronged, Who giveth food unto the hungry. The Lord looseth the fettered; the Lord maketh wise the blind; the Lord setteth aright the fallen; the Lord loveth the righteous; the Lord preserveth the proselytes. He shall adopt for His own the orphan and widow, and the way of sinners shall He destroy. The Lord shall be king unto eternity; thy God, O Sion, unto generation and generation.

Both now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

THE HYMN OF JUSTINIAN

Choir: Only-begotten Son and Word of God, who art im-mortal, who for our salvation willed to be incarnate of the Holy Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary, and without change became man; and wast crucified, O Christ our God, and trampled down death by death; who art one of the Holy Trinity, glorified together with the Father and the Holy Spirit: save us.

THE BEATITUDES IN TONE SEVEN

In Thy kingdom remember us, O Lord, when Thou comest in Thy kingdom.

- Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

For the Resurrection in Tone Seven

Verse 10: Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Comely to behold and good for eating was the fruit that slew me. Christ is the Tree of Life, and eating thereof, I shall not die; but I cry out with the thief: Remember me, O Lord, in Thy Kingdom.

Verse 9: Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.

When Thou wast raised up on the Cross, O Compassionate One, Thou didst blot out the handwriting that was against Adam for the sin of old, and Thou didst save the whole race of mortals from error. Wherefore, we praise Thee, O Benefactor and Lord.

Verse 8: Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

Thou didst nail our sins to the Cross, O Compassionate One, and by Thy death, O Christ, Thou didst put death to death; and Thou didst raise from the dead them that had died. Wherefore, we worship Thine august Resurrection.

Verse 7: Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

The serpent once poured forth venom into the ears of Eve. But Christ, while upon the Tree of the Cross, poured forth the sweetness of life for the world. Remember me, O Lord, in Thy Kingdom.

Verse 6: Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God.

Thou wast placed in a tomb as a mortal, O Christ, Thou Life of all. Thou didst break the bars of Hades, and arising in glory on the third day as one mighty, Thou didst enlighten all. Glory be to Thine Arising.

Verse 5: Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

When the Lord arose from the dead on the third day, He gave His peace unto the disciples; and having blessed them, He sent them forth, saying: Bring ye all men into My Kingdom.

For St. Thekla¹ in Tone Eight

Verse 4: Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

O thy love, which passeth all understanding, O all-venerable Thekla! Whereby, in Christ, thou wast bound to Paul and united to the Spirit.

Verse 3: Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in the heavens.

Pleasurable enjoyment of earthly things could not wound her that was wounded in heart with spiritual love for Thee.

Verse 2: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

Once thou hadst clean departed from the passions of the flesh, thou wast not softened by the words of thy mother, O all-lauded prizewinner.

Verse 1: Both now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Give us help through thine entreaties, O all-pure Virgin, warding off the assaults of terrible calamities.

THE SUNDAY EISODIKON

Verse: O come, let us worship and fall down before Christ.

Choir: O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead; save us who sing unto Thee: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Apolytikia:

RESURRECTIONAL APOLYTIKION IN TONE SEVEN

Thou didst shatter death by Thy Cross, Thou didst open paradise to the thief; Thou didst turn the sadness of the ointment-bearing women into joy. And didst bid Thine Apostles proclaim a warning, that Thou hast risen O Christ, granting to the world the Great Mercy.

APOLYTIKION OF ST. THEKLA IN TONE THREE

(By Cyril, Patriarch of Constantinople, 1813)

O glorious Thekla, companion of Paul the divine, thou wast enflamed with the love of thy Creator, by the teaching of the divine preacher. Thou didst despise the passing earthly pleasures, and

¹ Troparia from 3rd Ode of the Matins canon of the Saint.

offered thyself to God as an acceptable and pleasing sacrifice, disregarding all suffering. Intercede with Christ thy Groom to grant us His Great Mercy.

APOLYTIKION OF ST. SILOUAN IN TONE FOUR

By prayer thou didst receive Christ as thy teacher in the way of humility, and the Spirit bore witness to salvation in thy heart. Wherefore, all peoples called unto hope rejoice in this day of thy memorial, O sacred Father Silouan. Pray unto Christ our God for the salvation of our souls.

APOLYTIKION OF ST. MARY MAGDALENE IN TONE ONE

*(**The soldiers standing guard**)*

When Christ God had been born for our sakes from the Virgin, thou faith-fully didst follow Him, keeping His statutes and heeding His sacred laws, O august Mary Magdalene. Hence, as we today observe thy holy remembrance, we receive the loosing of our sins and transgressions through thy holy prayer(s) for us.

THE TRISAGION HYMN

Holy God, Holy mighty, Holy Immortal have mercy on us. *(thrice)*

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, both now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Holy Immortal have mercy on us.

Holy God, Holy mighty, Holy Immortal have mercy on us.

THE APOSTOLOS & THE GOSPEL

PROKEIMENON, TONE 4

Wondrous is God in His saints; even the God of Israel. *(Ps. 67:35a) {twice}*

Verse: In congregations bless ye God, the Lord from the well-springs of Israel. *(Ps.67:27)*

Wondrous is God in His saints; even the God of Israel.

APOSTOLOS FOR ST. THEKLA:

Reader: The reading is from the Second Epistle of St. Paul to St. Timothy §296 (3:10-15).

Timothy, my son, you have observed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions, my sufferings, what befell me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra. What persecutions I endured! Yet from them all, the Lord rescued me. Indeed, all, who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceivers and deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

ALLELUIA, IN TONE 1

Choir: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Verse 1: With patience I waited patiently for the Lord, and He was attentive unto me, and He hearkened unto my supplication. *(Ps. 39:1)*

Choir: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Verse 2: And He set my feet upon a rock, and He ordered my steps aright. *(Ps. 39:3)*

Choir: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

GOSPEL FOR THE 1ST SUNDAY OF LUKE:

Reader: The reading is from the Holy Gospel according to St. Luke § 17 (5:1-11).

Choir: Glory the Thee O Lord, Glory to Thee.

Reader: At that time, Jesus was standing by the lake of Gennesaret. And He saw two boats by the lake; but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. Getting into one

of the boats, which was Simon's, Jesus asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the people from the boat. And when Jesus had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at Thy word I will let down the nets." And when they had done this, they enclosed a great shoal of fish; and as their nets were breaking, they beckoned to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the catch of fish, which they had taken; and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; henceforth you will be catching men." And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him.

Choir: Glory to Thee O Lord, Glory to Thee.

Then we sing the following, in tone 6

Choir: Remember us, O Lord, when Thou comest in Thy kingdom.

- Remember us, O Master, when Thou comest in Thy kingdom.
- Remember us, O Holy One, when Thou comest in Thy kingdom.

The heavenly choir praiseth Thee and saith: Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Sabaoth; heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.

Verse: Come unto Him, and be enlightened and your faces shall not be ashamed.

The heavenly choir praiseth Thee and saith: Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Sabaoth; heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

The choir of Holy angels and archangels, with all the heavenly hosts praiseth Thee and saith: Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Sabaoth; heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.

Both now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

THE SYMBOL OF FAITH

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible;

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Only-begotten, Begotten of the Father before all worlds, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, Begotten, not made; of one essence with the Father, by whom all things were made: Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and was made man; And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried; And the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; And ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of the Father; And He shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead, Whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, Who proceedeth from the Father, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, Who spake by the Prophets;

And I believe in One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins. I look for the Resurrection of the dead, And the Life of the world to come. Amen.

Leader: Remit, pardon, forgive, O God, our offenses, both voluntary and involuntary, in deed and word, in knowledge and ignorance, by day and by night, in mind and thought; forgive us all things, for Thou art good and the Lover of mankind.

All: Amen

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Leader: O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us.

All: Amen.

Kontakia:

KONTAKION OF THE RESURRECTION IN TONE SEVEN

No longer will the dominion of death be able to keep men captive; for Christ hath descended, destroying and dispelling the powers' thereof. Hades is bound; the Prophets rejoice with one accord, saying: A Savior hath come for them that have faith. Come forth, ye faithful, for the Resurrection.

KONTAKION OF ST. THEKLA IN TONE EIGHT

*(**As first-fruits of our nature**)*

O glorious virgin, thou wast entrusted with an apostolate, * while shining brightly with virginal beauty and adorned with crowns of martyrdom. * And, O Thekla, thou also * didst subdue the bull's fury and change the fire to dew * by thine entreaties, O first contestant among all woman-kind.

KONTAKION OF ST. SILOUAN IN TONE TWO

In thine earthly life thou didst serve Christ, following in His steps; and now in heaven thou seest Him Whom thou didst love, and abidest with Him according to the promise. Wherefore, O Father Silouan, teach us the path wherein thou didst walk.

SEASONAL KONTAKION IN TONE TWO

O protection of Christians that cannot be put to shame, mediation unto the Creator most constant: O despise not the suppliant voices of those who have sinned; but be thou quick, O good one, to come unto our aid, who in faith cry unto thee: Hasten to intercession, and speed thou to make supplication, thou who dost ever protect, O Theotokos, them that honor thee.

Leader: Lord, have mercy. *(12 times)*

O All-Holy Trinity, the consubstantial dominion, the indivisible Kingdom, and cause of every Good: Show Thy good will even unto me a sinner; make steadfast my heart and grant it understanding, and take away mine every defilement; enlighten my mind that I may glorify, hymn, worship, and say:

Choir: One is Holy, One is Lord, Jesus Christ, to the Glory of God the Father. Amen.

PSALM 33

Reader: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Both now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen

I will bless the Lord at all times, His praise shall continually be in my mouth. In the Lord shall my soul be praised; let the meek hear and be glad. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together. I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my tribulations. Come unto Him, and be enlightened, and your faces shall not be ashamed. This poor man cried,

and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his tribulations. The angel of the Lord will encamp round about them that fear Him, and will deliver them. O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that hopeth in Him. O fear the Lord, all ye His saints; for there is no want to them that fear Him. Rich men have turned poor and gone hungry; but they that seek the Lord shall not be deprived of any good thing. Come ye children, hearken unto me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord. What man is there that desireth life, who loveth to see good days? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Turn away from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are opened unto their supplication. The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, utterly to destroy the remembrance of them from the earth. The righteous cried, and the Lord heard them, and He delivered them out of all their tribulations. The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart, and He will save the humble of spirit. Many are the tribulations of the righteous, and the Lord shall deliver them out of them all. The Lord keepeth all their bones, not one of them shall be broken. The death of sinners is evil, and they that hate the righteous shall do wrong. The Lord will redeem the souls of His servants, and none of them will do wrong that hope in Him.

THE HYMN TO THE THEOTOKOS

It is truly meet and right to bless thee, O Theotokos, who art ever blessed and all-blameless, and the Mother of our God. More honourable than the cherubim and more glorious beyond compare than the seraphim, thou who without corruption bearest God the Word and art truly Theotokos: We magnify thee.

READING(S)

THE HOLY PROTO-MARTYR THEKLA, THE EQUAL TO THE APOSTLES

The Holy First-Martyress and Equal-to-the-Apostles Thekla was born in the city of Iconium. She was the daughter of rich and illustrious parents, and moreover she was distinguished by extraordinary beauty. At 18 years of age they betrothed her to an eminent youth. But having heard the preaching of the holy Apostle Paul about the Saviour, Saint Thekla with all her heart came to love the Lord Jesus Christ, and she steadfastly resolved not to enter into marriage, but rather to devote all her life to preaching the Gospel. The mother of Saint Thekla was opposed to her daughter's plans and demanded that she enter into marriage with the bridegroom betrothed to her. Saint Thekla's fiancée likewise made a complaint to the governor of the city against the Apostle Paul, accusing him of turning his bride against him. The governor locked up Saint Paul in prison. During the night Saint Thekla secretly ran away from her house, and she bribed the prison guards, giving them all her gold ornaments, and so made her way into the prison to the prisoner. For three days she sat at the feet of the Apostle Paul, hearkening to his fatherly precepts. The disappearance of Thekla was discovered, and servants were sent out everywhere in search of her. Finally they found her in the prison and brought her home by force.

At his trial the Apostle Paul was sentenced to banishment from the city. And with Saint Thekla they again began urging her to consent to the marriage, but she would not change her mind. Neither the tears of her mother, nor her wrath, nor the threats of the governor were able to separate Saint Thekla from her love for the Heavenly Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ. Her mother in a insane rage demanded from the judges a death sentence against her unyielding daughter, and Saint Thekla was sentenced to burning. Without flinching, the holy martyress went into the bon-fire and made the sign of the cross over herself. At this moment the Saviour appeared to her, blessing

her present deed, and inexpressible joy filled her holy soul. The flames of the bon-fire shot up high, but the martyress was surrounded by an halo and the flames did not touch her. Thunder boomed, and a strong downpour of rain with hail extinguished the bon-fire. The torturers scattered in fear. Saint Thekla, kept safe by the Lord, quit the city and with the help of a certain Christian youth searched out the Apostle Paul. The holy apostle and his companions, among which was also the Disciple Barnabas, were hidden away in a cave not far from the city, praying fervently, that the Lord would give strength to Saint Thekla in her sufferings.

After this, Saint Thekla went together with them preaching the Gospel in Antioch. In this city she was pursued by a certain dignitary named Alexander, who was captivated by her beauty. Saint Thekla refused his offer to enter into marriage, and so for being a Christian she was condemned to death. Twice they set loose upon her hungry wild animals, but they would not touch the holy virgin, but instead lay down meekly and licking at her feet. The Providence of God preserved the holy martyress unharmed through all her torments. Finally, they tied her to two oxen and began to chase after her with red-hot rods, but the strong cords broke asunder like cob-webs, and the oxen ran off, leaving Saint Thekla unharmed. And the people began shouting: "Great is the God of the Christians!" The governor himself became terrified, reasoning it out finally, that the holy martyress was being kept safe by the Almighty God, Whom she served. He then gave orders to set free the servant of God Thekla.

With the blessing of the Apostle Paul, Saint Thekla then settled in the desolate surroundings of Isaurian Seleucia and dwelt there for many years, constantly preaching the Word of God and healing the sick through her prayer. Saint Thekla converted many pagans to Christ, and the Church names her worthily as "Equal-to-the-Apostles" ("Ravnoapostol'na"). Even a pagan priest, seeking to assault her purity and punished for his impudence, was brought by her to holy Baptism. More than once the enemy of the race of man tried to destroy Saint Thekla through people blinded by sin, but the power of God always preserved this faithful servant of Christ.

When Saint Thekla was already a 90 year old woman, pagan sorcerers became incensed at her for treating the sick for free. They were unable to comprehend that the saint was healing the sick by the power of the grace of Christ, and they presumed that the virgin-goddess Artemis (Diana) was her especial patroness. Out of envy against Saint Thekla, they sent their followers to defile her. When they had already approached quite close to her, Saint Thekla cried out for help to Christ the Savior, and the hill split open and hid the holy virgin, the bride of Christ. And thus did Saint Thekla offer up her holy soul to the Lord.

Holy Church glorifies the "First-Suffering" Thekla as "of women the glory and guide for suffering, opening up the way through every torment". From of old many a temple was dedicated to her, one of which was built at Tsargrad (Constantinople) by the holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Constantine (Comm. 21 May). And then too, the name of the First-Martyress Equal-to-the-Apostles Thekla, a prayer intercessor for the ascetic, is remembered during the tonsure of women into monasticism. [From holytrinityorthodox.com]

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THE VENERABLE SILOUAN THE ATHONITE

Saint Silouan the Athonite, also sometimes referred to as Saint Silvanus the Athonite or Staretz Silouan (1866, Russia – 1938, Mount Athos), was an Eastern Orthodox monk of Russian origin. He was born Simeon Ivanovich Antonov, of Russian Orthodox parents who came from the village of Sovsk in Russia's Tambov region. At the age of twenty-seven, after a period of military service, he left his native Russia and came to the monastic state of Mt. Athos (an autonomous peninsula

in Greece) where he became a monk at the Monastery of St Panteleimon, known as "Rossikon", an Orthodox monastery that houses Russian monks yet is, as all the Athonite monasteries, under the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Constantinople, and was given the name Silouan (the Russian version of the Biblical name Silvanus.)

An ardent ascetic, he received the grace of unceasing prayer and saw Christ in a vision. After long years of spiritual trial, he acquired great humility and inner stillness. He prayed and wept for the whole world as for himself, and he put the highest value on love for enemies. He became widely known as an elder. Thomas Merton has described Silouan as "the most authentic monk of the twentieth century." St Silouan reposed on September 24, 1938.

Though barely literate, he was sought out by pilgrims for his wise counsel. His writings were edited by his disciple and pupil, Archimandrite Sophrony. Father Sophrony has written the life of the saint along with a record of St. Silouan's teachings in the book Saint Silouan the Athonite. Starets Silouan was canonized by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 1987. [From holyresurrection.us (via archive.org)]

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THE ICON OF THE MOTHER OF GOD OF "THE MYRTLE TREE"

The Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos "Of the Myrtle Tree" (Myrtidiotissa) is in the monastery church of Myrtides on the Greek island of Kythera. It derives its name from the fact that it was found in a myrtle bush in the fourteenth century.

At that time, a shepherd was tending his sheep in a deserted valley which was filled with myrtle bushes. On September 24, forty days after the Dormition, the Mother of God appeared to him and told him to seek her icon which had been brought to that place many years before.

The shepherd fell to the ground in amazement, praying to the Theotokos. As soon as he got up and turned around, he saw the icon in the branches of a myrtle bush. Weeping for joy, he brought the icon home and told his friends and relatives about how he had found it.

When he awoke the next morning, the shepherd found the icon missing, and thought that perhaps someone had stolen it during the night. With a heavy heart, he led his sheep back to the spot where he had found the icon. To his amazement, he saw the icon once again in the branches of the myrtle bush. Glorifying God, the man took the icon home with him once more. The next morning, it had disappeared just as it had before. When this happened a third time, the shepherd realized that the Mother of God wanted her icon to remain where it had first appeared.

A small church was built to house the icon, and was called "Of the Myrtle Tree," after the icon. The building was replaced and enlarged over the years, and many miracles took place there.

At the end of the sixteenth century Theodore Koumprianos, a descendant of the shepherd who found the icon, lived in the village of Kousoumari. He was a paralytic, and had an unshakeable faith that the Mother of God would heal him. Each year on September 24 he sent a family member to the church to light candles for him. One year he asked to be carried there by his family so that he might venerate the icon himself. During the Vigil, a great noise was heard coming from the direction of the sea. People fled the church, thinking that pirates were attacking. The paralytic remained in the church by himself, entreating the Mother of God for protection. Suddenly, he heard a voice from the icon telling him to get up and flee. He stood up, and then walked out of the church. Soon he was able to run and catch up with his relatives, who rejoiced upon seeing this miracle. As it turned out, there was no pirate attack, and the noise was regarded as a sign of God's providence so that the paralytic could remain alone in church with the icon. Since that time the

Koumprianos family has celebrated the icon's Feast Day with a special reverence, since Theodore had been healed on that day.

Some of the other miracles associated with the Most Holy Theotokos and her icon "Of the Myrtle Tree" include protection of the island from the plague, ending the barrenness of a Jewish woman from Alexandria, saving people from death, and many other great wonders.

Pilgrims come to venerate the icon on the Feast of the Dormition (August 15), and also on the day of its discovery (September 24). [From oca.org]

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OUR RIGHTEOUS FATHER NICANDER THE FASTER, WONDERWORKER OF PSKOV

Saint Nicander of Pskov (in Baptism Nikon) was born on 24 July 1507 into the peasant family of Philip and Anastasia in the village of Videlebo in the Pskov lands.

From childhood he dreamed of continuing the ascetic exploits of his fellow villager, Saint Euphrosynus of Spasoeleazar, the original Pskov wilderness-dweller (May 15). The first in Nikon's family to accept monasticism was his older brother Arsenius. After the death of his father, the seventeen-year-old Nikon was able to convince his mother to dispose of the property and withdraw into a monastery, where she lived until her own end.

After visiting the monasteries of Pskov, and having venerated at the relics of Saint Euphrosynus and his disciple Saint Savva of Krypetsk (August 28), Nikon became firmly convinced of his calling to the solitary life.

In order to have the possibility of reading the Word of God, Nikon was employed as a worker for the Pskov resident Philip, who rewarded his ardor by sending him to study with an experienced teacher. Seeing the zeal of the youth, the Lord Himself directed him to the place of his ascetic effort. Intensely praying in one of the Pskov churches, he heard a voice from the altar commanding him to go to the wilderness place which the Lord would point out through His servant Theodore. The peasant Theodore led him off to the River Demyanka, between Pskov and Porkhov. Afterwards, both Philip and Theodore, who helped Saint Nicander attain his goal, were themselves to enter upon the path of monasticism, and were tonsured at the Krypetsk monastery with the names Philaret and Theodosius.

After several years of silence and severe ascetic deeds, emaciating his flesh, Nikon went to the monastery founded by Saint Savva of Krypetsk. The igumen, seeing his weakened body, would not agree to accept him at once, fearing that the difficulties of monastic life would be too much for him. Nikon fell down at the crypt of Saint Savva, and spoke to him as if to one alive, entreating him to take him into his monastery. The igumen relented and tonsured Nikon with the name Nicander.

Saint Nicander endured many temptations and woes on the path of asceticism. Blessed Nicholas (February 28) while still at Pskov predicted Saint Nicander's "wilderness sufferings." Through the prayers of all the Pskov Saints and Saint Alexander of Svir (August 30 and April 17), who twice appeared to him, guiding and strengthening him, and with the help of the grace of God, he overcame all the manifold snares of the Evil One.

By the power of prayer the monk conquered the weakness of flesh, human failings and diabolical apparitions. Once, robbers nearly killed him, running off with the hermit's sole, very precious possessions, his books and icons. Through the prayers of the saint, two of them, taking fright at the sudden death of one of their comrades, repented of their wicked deeds and received forgiveness from the Elder.

Saint Nicander did not long live at the Krypetsk monastery, and he obtained a blessing to return to his own wilderness. Later, he came to live at the Krypetsk monastery once again, where he fulfilled the obediences of ecclesiarch and cellarer, and then he went into the wilderness again and lived there in fasting and prayer, meditating on the Word the God.

Once a year, during Great Lent, Saint Nicander came to the Damianov monastery, where he made his confession and received the Holy Mysteries of Christ. Eight years before his death he received the Great Schema. Many people began to come to the monk “for benefit,” since in the words of Saint John of the Ladder, “monastic life is a light for all mankind.” Believers turned to Saint Nicander for prayerful help, since the Lord had bestowed on him many gifts of grace.

The wilderness-dweller had regard for all the needs of the visitors and even built lodging for them, “the guest-house at the oak,” for which he provided heat. The monk did not permit himself to show off his spiritual gifts. Going secretly to his cell, people always heard him praying with bitter tears. When he noticed there were people nearby, he immediately began to pray, concealing from them the gift of tears that he had received.

Saint Nicander to the end of his life remained a wilderness-dweller, but he gave final instructions that after his death the place of his ascetic efforts should not be forsaken, promising his protection to the settlers of a future monastery. The saint gave final directions to the deacon Peter of the Porkhov women’s monastery to build a church at his grave and transfer there the icon of the Annunciation of the Most Holy Theotokos from the Tishanka church cemetery.

He foresaw his own death, predicting that he would die when enemies invaded the fatherland, and foretelling this imminent assault. On September 24, 1581, during an invasion by the army of the Polish king Stephen Bathory, a certain peasant found the monk dead. He lay on his cot with his hands crossed on his chest. From Pskov came clergy and people who revered the monk, and among whom was also the deacon Peter, and they performed the rite of Christian burial.

In 1584 at the place of Saint Nicander’s ascetic deeds, sanctified by almost half a century of prayer, a monastery was built, which they began to call the Nikandrov wilderness-monastery. The builder of this monastery was Saint Isaiah, who had been healed through prayer to the saint.

The glorification of Saint Nicander occurred under Patriarch Joachim in 1696, and the feastdays in his memory were established for September 24, the day of his repose, and on the temple feast of the monastery, the Annunciation to the Most Holy Theotokos. During a reconstruction of the monastery cathedral church the relics of Saint Nicander were discovered, concealed in a wall. June 29 is celebrated as the day of the uncovering of his holy relics. At present, strong bonds of prayer connect believers with Saint Nicander, who is deeply venerated in the Pskov area. [From oca.org]

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SYNAXIS OF ALL SAINTS OF ALASKA

On the anniversary of the arrival of the Russian missionaries in Alaska (1794), we remember the New Martyrs Saint Peter the Aleut, Protomartyr of America, and Saint Juvenal.

Saint Peter the Aleut is mentioned in the Life of Saint Herman of Alaska (December 13). Simeon Yanovsky (who ended his life as the schemamonk Sergius in the Saint Tikhon of Kaluga Monastery), has left the following account:

“On another occasion I was relating to him how the Spanish in California had imprisoned fourteen Aleuts, and how the Jesuits (actually Franciscans) were forcing all of them to accept the Catholic Faith. But the Aleuts would not agree under any circumstances, saying, ‘We are Christians.’ The Jesuits argued, ‘That’s not true, you are heretics and schismatics. If you do not agree

to accept our faith then we will torture all of you to death.’ Then the Aleuts were placed in prisons two to a cell. That evening, the Jesuits came to the prison with lanterns and lighted candles. Again they tried to persuade two Aleuts in the cell to accept the Catholic Faith. ‘We are Christians,’ the Aleuts replied, ‘and we will not change our Faith.’ Then the Jesuits began to torture them, at first the one while his companion was a witness. They cut off one of the joints of his feet, and then the other joint. Then they cut the first joint on the fingers of his hands, and then the other joint. Then they cut off his feet, and his hands. The blood flowed, but the martyr endured all and firmly repeated one thing: “I am a Christian.’ He died in such suffering, due to a loss of blood. The Jesuit also promised to torture his comrade to death the next day.

But that night an order was received from Monterey stating that the imprisoned Aleuts were to be released immediately, and sent there under escort. Therefore, in the morning all were sent to Monterey with the exception of the dead Aleut. This was related to me by a witness, the same Aleut who had escaped torture, and who was the friend of the martyred Aleut. I reported this incident to the authorities in Saint Petersburg. When I finished my story, Father Herman asked, ‘What was the name of the martyred Aleut?’ I answered, ‘Peter. I do not remember his family name.’ The Elder stood reverently before an icon, made the Sign of the Cross and said, “Holy New Martyr Peter, pray to God for us!”

We know very little about Saint Peter, except that he was from Kodiak, and was arrested and put to death by the Spaniards in California because he refused to convert to Catholicism. The circumstances of his martyrdom recall the torture of Saint James the Persian (November 27).

Both in his sufferings and in his steadfast confession of the Faith, Saint Peter is the equal of the martyrs of old, and also of the New Martyrs who have shone forth in more recent times. Now he rejoices with them in the heavenly Kingdom, glorifying God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, throughout all ages.

Saint Juvenal, the Protomartyr of America, was born in 1761 in Nerchinsk, Siberia. His secular name was John Feodorovich Hovorukhin, and he was trained as a mining engineer. In a letter to Abbot Nazarius of Valaam (December 13, 1819), Saint Herman says that Saint Juvenal “had been an assistant at our monastery and was a former officer.”

After his wife died in 1791, John entered a monastery at Saint Petersburg (Saint Herman’s Letter of December 13, 1819) and was tonsured with the name Juvenal. Three years later, he went to Alaska as a missionary.

During 1794, the hieromonks Juvenal and Macarius spent two months in the area around Kodiak teaching the inhabitants about Christ and baptizing them. They traveled in small boats of hide in all sorts of weather, dividing up the territory among themselves. Saint Herman tells of a conversation he heard one day as he walked with the hieromonks to a small hill on the south side of the harbor. They sat down facing the sea, and spoke of various things. Soon they began to discuss where each of them should go to preach. Aflame with zeal and eager to set out on their journey, a friendly argument ensued between Father Macarius and Father Juvenal. Father Macarius said he intended to go north to the Aleutian Islands, and then make his way to the Alaskan mainland, where the inhabitants had invited him to visit. The monks had a map of Captain Cook’s which indicated that some Russians were living near a certain river in that particular area, and Father Macarius hoped to find them.

Father Juvenal interrupted, saying that he believed that the Alaskan mainland was his territory. “I beg you to yield to me and not offend me in this,” he told Father Macarius, “since the ship is

leaving for Yakutan. I shall begin preaching in the south, proceeding north along the ocean, cross the Kenai peninsula, then from the port there I shall cross to Alaska.”

Father Macarius became sorrowful and said, “No, Father. Do not restrict me in this way. You know the Aleutian chain of islands is joined to Alaska, therefore it belongs to me, and also the whole northern shore. As for you, the southern part of America is sufficient for your whole lifetime, if you please.”

As he listened to their apostolic fervor, Saint Herman says he “went from joy to rapture” (Letter to Abbot Nazarius, May 19, 1795).

In 1795, Father Juvenal baptized over 700 Chugatchi at Nushek, then he crossed Kenai Bay and baptized the local people there. In 1796, according to native oral tradition, Saint Juvenal came to the mouth of the Kuskokwim near the present village of Quinahgak, where he was killed by a hunting party (There is a forged diary attributed to Ivan Petroff which gives a slanderous version of Father Juvenal’s death, and alleges that he was martyred at Lake Iliamna).

The precise reason for Saint Juvenal’s murder by the natives is not known. However, they later told Saint Innocent something about his death. They said that Saint Juvenal did not try to defend himself when attacked, nor did he make any attempt to escape. After being struck from behind, he turned to face his attackers and begged them to spare the natives he had baptized.

The natives told Saint Innocent that after they had killed Saint Juvenal, he got up and followed them, urging them to repent. They fell upon him again and gave him a savage beating. Once more, he got to his feet and called them to repentance. This happened several times, then finally the natives hacked him to pieces. Thus, the zealous Hieromonk Juvenal became the first Orthodox Christian in America to receive the crown of martyrdom. His unnamed guide, possibly a Tanaina Indian convert, was also martyred at the same time.

It is said that a local shaman removed Saint Juvenal’s brass pectoral cross from his body and attempted to cast a spell. Unexpectedly, the shaman was lifted up off the ground. He made three more tries with the same result, then concluded that there was a greater power than his own at work here. Years later, a man showed up at the Nushagak Trading Post wearing a brass pectoral cross exactly like the one worn by Saint Juvenal.

A column of light arose from his holy relics and reached up to Heaven. It is not known how long this phenomenon continued.

Saint Juvenal, in his tireless evangelization of the native peoples of Alaska, served the Church more than all the other missionaries combined. [From oca.org]

THE DISMISSAL

The Leader bows toward the icon of Christ on the iconostasis, saying:

Leader: Glory to thee, O Christ our God and our Hope, glory to thee.

All: Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, both now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. O Lord, bless.

Leader: O Thou Who rose again from the dead, Christ our true God, through the intercessions of His all-immaculate and all-blameless holy Mother—whose wonderworking icon of the Myrtle Tree we commemorate today; of our venerable and God-bearing fathers; of the Holy Myrrh-Bearer and Equal to the Apostles Mary Magdalene, protector of this community; of the holy, glorious and right-victorious Proto-martyr Thekla, equal-to-the-Apostles; Venerable Silouan of Athos; New-martyr Ahmed; Venerable Nicander of Pskov; and all saints of Alaska, whose

memory we celebrate today, and of all the saints: have mercy on us, and save us, for Thou art good and lovest mankind.

Then, facing the icon of Christ, on the iconostasis, the Leader says:

Leader: Through the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us, and save us.

All: Amen.