


**SUNDAY, JANUARY 2, 2022**

## TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; SUNDAY BEFORE NATIVITY: THE HOLY GOD-BEARING FATHERS; THE HOLY HIEROMARTYR IGNATIUS THE GOD-BEARER; SAINT DANIEL II, ARCHBISHOP OF SERBIA

**RESURRECTIONAL TROPARION - TONE THREE:**
Let the heavens rejoice! Let the earth be glad! For the Lord has shown strength with His arm! He has trampled down death by death! He has become the firstborn of the dead! He has delivered us from the depths of hell, and has granted to the world great mercy!

**TROPARION TO THE HOLY GOD-BEARING FATHERS - TONE TWO:**
Great are the accomplishments of faith, for the three holy youths rejoiced in the fountain of flames as though in the waters of rest; and the Prophet Daniel appeared a shepherd to the lions as though they were sheep. Through their prayers, O Christ God, save our souls.

**PREFEAST OF THE NATIVITY TROPARION - TONE FOUR:**
Bethlehem be ready; Eden stay opened for all; Ephrata adorn yourself, for the Tree of Life has blossomed forth from the Virgin in the cave. Her womb has become a spiritual paradise wherein the divine Fruit was planted; and if we eat of it, we shall live and not die like Adam. Christ is coming forth to restore the likeness that had been lost of old.

**TROPARION TO SAINT IGNATIUS – TONE FOUR:**
By sharing in the ways of the Apostles, you became a successor to their throne. Through the practice of virtue, you found the way to divine contemplation, O inspired one of God; by teaching the word of truth without error, you defended the Faith, even to the shedding of your blood. Hieromartyr Ignatius, entreat Christ God to save our souls.

**TROPARION TO SAINT DANIEL II - TONE FOUR:**
You yourself were the wonder of the great news and you radiated with the deeds of divine mercy; you tended the monastic flock and strengthened the hierarchical thrones; you were not disheartened by attacks of the heretics while governing the Church, O most wise, venerable Danilo; you passed away as one who fell asleep. Your body was preserved intact and undecaying, and it offers a cure to those suffering of various ailments, and it chases demons. We therefore beseech you, pray that our souls may be saved.

**RESURRECTIONAL KONTAKION - TONE THREE:**
On this day You rose from the tomb, O Merciful One, leading us from the gates of death. On this day Adam exults as Eve rejoices; with the prophets and the patriarchs they unceasingly praise the divine majesty of Your power!

**KONTAKION TO THE HOLY GOD-BEARING FATHERS - TONE ONE:**
Rejoice, O Bethlehem! Prepare yourself, O Ephratha! The Lamb is on her way to give birth to the Chief Shepherd she carries in her womb. The God-bearing forefathers will rejoice, beholding Him, and together with the shepherds, they will glorify the Virgin nursing Him.

**KONTAKION TO SAINT IGNATIUS – TONE THREE:**
The stirring celebration of your victorious fight is an announcement of the One who is to be born of the Virgin. In your eagerness to possess Him forever, you hastened to be devoured by the wild beasts. Therefore, O glorious Ignatius, you were called the bearer of God!

**PREFEAST OF THE NATIVITY KONTAKION - TONE THREE:**
Today, the Virgin is on her way to the cave where she will give birth, in a manner beyond comprehension, to the Word who is without beginning. Rejoice therefore, universe, when you hear it announced; with the angels and the shepherds, glorify the eternal God who chose to appear as a newborn infant!

## EPISTLE READING

**THE PROKEIMENON IN TONE FOUR:**
Blessed are You, O Lord, God of our fathers; and praised and glorified is Your name forever.

**HEBREWS 11: 9-10, 17-23, 32-40**
Brethren, by faith Abraham dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones. By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command.
And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: 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.

**THE ALLELUIA VERSES:**
O God, with our ears we have heard, for our fathers have told us. For You have saved us from those who afflict us, and those who hate us You have put to shame.

## GOSPEL READING

**MATTHEW 1: 1-25**

A book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham. Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers. Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram. Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon and Nahshon begot Salmon. Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David the king. David the king begot Solomon by her who had been the wife of Uriah. Solomon begot Rehoboam, Rehoboam begot Abijah and Abijah begot Asa. Asa begot Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat begot Joram, and Joram begot Uzziah. Uzziah begot Jotham, Jotham begot Ahaz, and Ahaz begot Hezekiah. Hezekiah begot Manasseh, Manasseh begot Amon, and Amon begot Josiah. Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brothers about the time they were carried away to Babylon. And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, and Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel begot Abiud, Abiud begot Eliakim, and Eliakim begot Azor. Azor begot Zadok, Zadok begot Achim, and Achim begot Eliud. Eliud begot Eleazar, Eleazar begot Matthan, and Matthan begot Jacob. And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations. Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph, her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying: "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet saying: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated: "God with us." Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus.

## FROM THE PROLOGUE:

**DECEMBER 20/JANUARY 2, BY SAINT NIKOLAI VELIMIROVIC:**

**The Hieromartyr Ignatius the God-bearer, bishop of Antioch (106)**

This holy man is called "the God-bearer" because he constantly bore the name of the Living God in his heart and on his lips. According to tradition, he was thus named because he was held in the arms of God Incarnate, Jesus Christ. On a day when the Lord was teaching His disciples humility, He took a child and placed him among them, saying: Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 18:4). This child was Ignatius. Later, Ignatius was a disciple of St. John the Theologian, together with Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna. As Bishop of Antioch, Ignatius governed the Church of God as a good shepherd and was the first to introduce antiphonal chanting in the Church, in which two choirs alternate the chanting. This manner of chanting was revealed to St. Ignatius by the angels in heaven. When Emperor Trajan was passing through Antioch on his way to do battle with the Persians, he heard of Ignatius, summoned him and counseled him to offer sacrifice to the idols. If Ignatius would do so, Trajan would bestow upon him the rank of senator. As the counsels and threats of the emperor were in vain, St. Ignatius was shackled in irons and sent to Rome in the company of ten merciless soldiers, to be thrown to the wild beasts. Ignatius rejoiced in suffering for his Lord, only praying to God that the wild beasts would become the tomb for his body and that no one would prevent him from this death. After a long and difficult journey from Asia through Thrace, Macedonia and Epirus,

Ignatius arrived in Rome, where he was thrown to the lions in the circus. The lions tore him to pieces and devoured him, leaving only several of the larger bones and his heart. This glorious lover of the Lord Christ suffered in the year 106 in Rome at the time of the Christ-hating Emperor Trajan. Ignatius has appeared many times from the other world and worked miracles, even to this day helping all who call upon him for help.

### Saint Daniel, Archbishop of Serbia (1338)

Daniel was the son of wealthy and God-loving parents. In his youth he was given a good upbringing. King Milutin took him to his court, but out of great love for God he fled and was tonsured a monk in the Monastery of Končul near the Ibar. Later, he was the abbot of the Monastery of Hilandar [Mount Athos] and suffered much from the plundering Latin Crusaders. He was the Bishop of Banja, then of Hum, and finally the Archbishop of Serbia. From beginning to end, he was a strict ascetic and had the special gift of tears. He made peace between Kings Dragutin and Milutin, and later between Milutin and Stefan of Dečani. He fought fervently against the Latins as well as the Bogomils. Under his supervision, the Monasteries of Banja and Dečani were built, and he restored and built many other churches. He wrote the genealogy of the Serbian kings and saints. Untiring in his service to God to the end of his life, he entered peacefully into rest on the night between the nineteenth and twentieth of December, 1338, during the reign of Tsar Dušan. Daniel was a great hierarch, a great ascetic, a great laborer and a great patriot.

St. Philogonius, bishop of Antioch (323).
St. Ignatius, archimandrite, of the Kiev Caves (1435).
New Martyr John of the island of Thasos, at Constantinople (1652).
St. Anthony, archbishop of Voronezh (1846).
St. John of Kronstadt (1908).

### HYMN OF PRAISE: The Hieromartyr Ignatius the God-bearer

O Hierarch of Christ, wonderful and exemplary,
O gracious Hierarch, not an adversary of God,
Not from among the opponents of God, who killed Christ,
But from among the God-bearers, who loved Christ—
Holy Ignatius, God-bearing man,
You do we glorify; of you we are proud.
Emperor Trajan offered you titles and honors,
If only you would bow down before the idols.
You amazed the emperor, for you did not consent
To betray the Lord, not for the entire kingdom.
Instead, you went joyfully to death, O God-bearing Father;
For that we glorify you; of you we are proud.
Thrown before wild beasts, quietly you wait.
Rome seeks amusement; they toy with you!
“I am God’s wheat!” you exclaimed there.
“The beasts shall grind me, to become good bread!”
And now, where is Trajan? But you are an inhabitant of heaven.
You are a hymn to the angels, and to us a teacher.
Holy Ignatius, you who bore God,
Entreat God to grant us the Bread of Life!

## REFLECTION

The holy martyrs, seized with the love of Christ, were like unquenchable flames. This love eased their sufferings and made their deaths sweet. St. Chrysostom says of St. Ignatius: "He put off his body with as much ease as one takes off his clothes." Traveling to Rome to his death, Ignatius feared only one thing: that Christians would somehow prevent his martyrdom for Christ, by their prayers to God or in some outward manner. Therefore he continually implored them, in writing and in speech, not to do this. "Forgive me," he said. "I know what is for my benefit. I but begin to be a disciple of Christ when I desire nothing, either visible or invisible, save to attain Christ. May every diabolical torture come upon me: fire, crucifixion, wild beasts, the sword, tearing asunder, the crushing of my bones, and the dismemberment of my whole body—only that I may receive Jesus Christ. It is better for me to die for Christ than to reign to the ends of the earth…. My love is nailed to the Cross, and there is no fire of love in me for any earthly thing." When he was brought to the circus, he turned to the people with these words: "Citizens of Rome, know that I am not being punished for any crime, neither have I been condemned to death for any transgression, but rather for the sake of my God, by Whose love I am overcome and Whom I insatiably desire. I am His wheat, and the teeth of the wild beasts will grind me to be His pure bread." When he had been devoured by the wild beasts, by God's providence his heart remained among the bones. When the unbelievers cut open the saint's heart, they saw inside, inscribed in golden letters, the name Jesus Christ.

## HOMILY

### on David

"And David said to Nathan: I have sinned against the Lord" (II Samuel 12:13)
"My tears have been my food day and night" (Psalm 42:3)

King David sinned against God and repented, and God forgave him. The king's sin was great, but greater still was his repentance. He was guilty before God of two grave sins: adultery and murder. But when Nathan the prophet of God denounced him, he cried out in anguish: I have sinned against the Lord! Thus he confessed his sin and repented bitterly, most bitterly. Grief-stricken, he prayed to God, weeping, fasting, lying on the ground, and enduring meekly the terrible blows that God sent upon him, his house and his people because of his sins. In his penitential Psalms he says: I am a worm and not a man (Psalm 22:6); Because of the sound of my groaning, my bones cling to my flesh (Psalm 102:5); I lie awake … for I have eaten ashes like bread and mingled my drink with weeping (Psalm 102:7, 9); My knees are grown weak through fasting (Psalm 109:24). Here is true repentance; here is a true penitent! He did not become hardened in sin nor did he fall into despair, but, hoping in the mercy of God, he repented unceasingly. And God, Who loves the penitent, showed mercy upon this model of penitence. God forgave him and glorified him above all the kings of Israel; He gave him the great grace to compose the most beautiful penitential prayers and to prophesy the coming into the world of the Holy Savior, Who would be of his seed. Brethren, do you see how wonderful is God's mercy toward penitents? So much mercy did God have on this repentant David that He was not ashamed to take upon Himself flesh from David's seed. Blessed are they who do not become hardened in sin and who do not fall into despair because of sin. Repentance saves both the one and the other from evil.
O Merciful Lord, soften our hearts with tears of repentance. To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.