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Justin Popović

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Fresco of Elder Justin Popovic, in the church of Pantanassa (of Vatopedi monastery) in Porto Lagos

Justin Popović (Serbian Cyrillic Јустин Поповић) (1894-1979) was a theologian, Dostoyevski scholar, a champion of anti-Communism, a writer, a critic of the pragmatic church (celestial) life, a philosopher of the Eastern Orthodox theology and archimandrite of the Ćelije Monastery, near Valjevo.

The early years

Archimandrite Justin was born to pious and God-fearing parents, Prota (Priest) Spiridon and Protinica (Presbytera) Anastasija Popović, in Vranje, South Serbia, on

the Feast of Annunciation, March 25, 1894. At baptism, he was given the name Blagoje, after the Feast of the Annunciation (Blagovest means Annunciation or Good News). He was born into a priestly family, as seven previous generations of the Popovićs (Popović in Serbian actually means “family or a son of a priest”) were headed by priests.

Blagoje Popović completed the nine-years’ studies at the Theological Faculty of St. Sava in Belgrade in 1914. In the early twentieth century the School of St. Sava in Belgrade was renowned throughout the Orthodox world as a holy place of extreme asceticism as well as of a high quality of scholarship. Some of the well-known professors were the rector, Fr. Domentian; Professor Fr. Dositheus, later a bishop; Athanas Popović; and the great ecclesiastical composer, Stevan Mokranjac. Still, one professor stood head and shoulders above the rest: the then hieromonk Nikolaj Velimirović, Ph.D., the single most influential person in his life.

World War I

During the early part of World War I, in autumn of 1914, Blagoje served as a student nurse primarily in South Serbia-Skadar, Niš, Kosovo, etc. Unfortunately, while in this capacity, he contracted typhus during the winter of 1914 and had to spend over a month in a hospital in Niš. On January 8, 1915, he resumed his duties sharing the destiny of the Serbian army, passing a path of Golgotha from Peć to Skadar (along which one hundred thousand Serbian soldiers died) where on January 1, 1916 he entered the monastic order in the Orthodox cathedral of Skadar and took the name of St. Justin, after the great Christian philosopher and martyr for Christ, St. Justin the Philosopher.

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