

SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

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TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

23 August 2015

TONE 3—Hieromartyr Irenæus of Lyon (202); Martyr Lupus (4th c.); St. Eutychius (ca. 540) and Florentius (547), of Nursia. St. Callinicus, Patriarch of Constantinople (705).

FIRST ANTIPHON

Shout with joy to God, all the earth; give thanks to the Lord, call upon His Name, declare His works among the nations. Refrain: Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us!

In the city of our God, in His holy mountain, His place has been made in peace, and His dwelling in Zion. (R.)

Glory... Now and ever... (R.)

SECOND ANTIPHON

The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwelling of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God! Refrain: Save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead, who sing to Thee: Alleluia!

God has laid her foundation unto eternity. We have thought, O God, of Thy mercy in the midst of Thy people. (R.)

The most-high hath hallowed His tabernacle. (R.)

Glory... Now and ever... (Only begotten Son and Word of God ...)

THIRD ANTIPHON

TROPARION OF THE DORMITION with the following verses:

- *Ready is my heart, O God, ready is my heart; I will sing and chant*
- *What shall I render to the Lord for all that He has given me?*
- *I will receive the cup of salvation, and call upon the Name of the Lord.*

LITTLE ENTRANCE

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ! O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead, save us who sing to Thee: "Alleluia"!

TROPARION OF THE RESURRECTION (Tone 3): Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad, for the Lord has done a mighty act with His own arm. He has trampled down death by death, and become the first-born from the dead. He hath delivered us from the depths of Hades, granting the world great mercy.

TROPARION OF THE DORMITION (Tone 1): In giving birth thou didst preserve thy virginity, in thy dormition thou didst not forsake the world, O Theotokos! Thou wast translated unto life, since thou art the Mother of Life, and by thine intercessions dost thou redeem our souls from death.

TROPARION OF SAINT ANTHONY THE GREAT (Tone 4, Russian): Like the zealous Elijah thou didst become, and followed John the Baptist in his upright ways. A dweller in the wilderness, thou didst steady the world by prayer. O Father Anthony, intercede with Christ our God for our souls' salvation.

KONTAKION OF THE DORMITION (Tone 2): The grace and death could hold the Theotokos, who is unsleeping in her intercessions and an unfailing hope in her mediations. For as the Mother of Life she was translated to life by Him Who dwelt in her ever-virgin womb.

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon: *Sing praises to our God, sing praises. Clap your hands, all ye nations!*

From Saint Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians

(1 Cor 15:1-11) Brethren, I would remind you of the Gospel that I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, by which you are saved if you hold it fast—otherwise you believe in vain! For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

In today's Epistle reading, Saint Paul speaks to the Corinthians about "the Gospel he preached to them." It is always good to remind ourselves that the Gospel, or "Good News",

does not refer primarily to the four biographies of the Lord Jesus Christ, written by Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John. These written documents appeared *later* than the oral apostolic preaching—the “Gospel”—about Jesus Christ. Here is how Saint Paul summarizes the Gospel: **“Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, he was buried and was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.”**

The first thing to note is that the Good News is, essentially, Christ Himself: having tasted the life of fallen humanity even unto death, He has vanquished sin and death; therefore, *in Him* is the new life that God has in store for us, the resurrected life, life free from the consequences of the Fall. This is why we refer to Christ as “our hope” (1 Tim 1:1)—more specifically: Christ in us, the hope of glory (Col 1:27).

This Good News, the Apostle says *twice* in a sentence, is “according to the Scriptures”—by which he means the Old Testament, for the New did not yet exist. In other words, the Gospel is the fruit of God’s promises to Israel, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to Moses and the prophets. We understand this if we search the Scriptures, which point to Christ (John 5:39), and if we understand the Scriptures in light of His Resurrection (Luke 24:25-27).

Indeed, “salvation comes from the Jews,” as the Gospel of John (4:22) forcefully proclaims; it has been graciously extended to the Gentiles, and has now reached even us. We are the latest generation whom the Good News has been delivered, the Gospel by which we are saved *if we hold it fast!* That is why Saint Paul’s message applies fully to us, as well: **Brethren, I would remind you of the Gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, by which you are saved if you hold it fast—otherwise you believe in vain!**

In the end, the reading challenges us: will you grab hold of this faith in Jesus Christ which comes from the Apostles, and now, after centuries and centuries, has been handed down to *you*? Will you embrace it, taste of it, live by it in good times and in bad times?

TODAY’S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Gospel according to Saint Matthew

(Mat 19:16-26) At that time, a man came up to Jesus, saying, “Teacher, what good deed must I do, to have eternal life?” And he said to him, “Why do you ask me about what is good? One there is who is good! If you want to enter life, keep the commandments.” He said to him, “Which?” And Jesus said, “You shall not kill, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” The young man said to him, “All these I have observed; what do I still lack?” Jesus said to him, “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions. And Jesus said to his disciples. “Truly, I say to you, it will be hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” When the disciples heard this they were greatly astonished, saying, “Who then can be saved?” But Jesus looked at them and said to them, “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

Here is a man who, by any standards of human morality, is a pretty decent person: he does not cheat on his wife, he behaves well with his parents, he does not steal, he does not slander or bring false accusations against others, and he did and most likely never will kill anyone. We can assume that there many other good things to be reported about him—for one, he is a deeply religious person (his concern here is for “eternal life”); he also shows appropriate respect for teachers of the Law (note how politely he addresses Jesus); and there probably are many vices that he has managed to avoid. It Moreover, in the parallel text, in the Gospel of Mark, he’s acted like that **“since his youth”** (Mk 10:20), so that the Lord himself, **“looked at him and loved him”** (Mk 10:21). A decent person, whom we would do well to emulate!

And yet, even while we recite the litany of this man’s qualities, the Gospel seems to sets him forth as an example of *what to avoid*. The word this man receives from Christ comes as a hard blow to his self-esteem: what he has been doing is far from enough, and what he needs to do is impossibly hard for him. A very depressing answer, indeed, because Jesus puts his finger on a raw nerve: this man was very rich (and liked it), and he would have to give everything up. **“When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions.”**

Had the man not been terribly attached to money, but instead sexually promiscuous, or addicted to drugs, or alcohol, or anger, or any other “passion,” the answer would probably have been something like “One thing you still lack: cut out your [fill in: promiscuity, anger, drugs, alcohol, etc], start living in chastity as of right now, and you will have treasure in heaven.” We understand this kind of sadness, when we imagine ourselves unable to live without our addiction of choice: unable to remain faithful to a single woman (chastity in marriage), unable to steer clear of drunkenness, or drugs, or explosions of anger, or gossip, or lies, or ... whatever else may be. Had the man been under the control of vanity, Jesus would have proposed the practice of humility; had he been plagued by anger or violence, the answer would have pointed to *that* problem, and proposed the appropriate spiritual medicine.

In short, this Gospel is not singling out riches as the major impediment to salvation, but speaks about *any sin* that may hold one back from salvation; and, of course, it is not about a particular rich man unwilling to part with his riches, but applies to each and every one of us. In truth, there is no “objective” scale of sins, and no “objective” greatest sin: the greatest sin is always *my* sin. And the word of Christ is not easy to swallow: “it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for *you* to enter the kingdom of God.” When Jesus spoke these words to the rich man, the disciples were positively shocked: **“Who then can be saved?”** Obviously, nobody can! It is, as the Lord states, **“impossible for human beings.”**

Note that, before speaking to the rich man about his salvation, the Lord points to the goodness of God: **“One there is who is good!”**—God, that is. We should therefore not react like the rich man, who became sad and preferred to leave as soon as he realized that God was not offering him a confirmation of his decent life, but a call to radical change. Note the encouragement: the very impossibility of our salvation and life in God *is made possible* for us by God himself.

The call of today’s Gospel is echoed by our Liturgy, again and again: “let us commit ourselves and all our life to Christ our God ... for You are a good God and You love humankind”! In other words, deny yourself and your sins, entrust yourself to Christ, allow Him to clothe you with His grace, allow Him to make possible that which is impossible. “Salvation belongs to the Lord,” says the Psalmist; and God extends his salvation to all who let go of themselves and receive life from the Giver of true life.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **TODAY: parish picnic!** After Liturgy, Dollie's place (119 Maple Grove Drive).
- Next Saturday (9/29): no Vespers!
- **August 28-29 (Fri-Sat):** Ladies' retreat at Kooser State Park.
- **Sunday, 9/20: Pan-Orthodox Liturgy and picnic at Butler Memorial Park (Rotary Shelter).** St. Anthony's will prepare the meat (pulled pork), Sts Peter and Paul will bring sides, salads, and sweets. There will be no tickets, just a freewill offering for anyone to donate *if and as much as* they can. We want everyone to feel welcome and enjoy fellowship. **We need to schedule a planning meeting soon, to discuss the logistics and assign responsibilities for games for the kids, hiring a magician, live music (our own?), raffles, etc.**

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: Bill and Ann; pr. Paisius; Stelian (Cezar's father); Seba, Lisa, and Sam (Michaels), Norma, George (Georgiades), Christine (Abraham), Jim, Tony, Samantha, Luke (relatives of Dollie's), Norma, Richard (Johns), Bill, Ed, Peter, Georgia and Scot, Sam, Karen (Joanna's mother), Diane, Sula, Dollie, Dolores (Bingham), Karyn, Ignatius and Amy, John, Jonathan and Joanna, Andrei and Nyoka, Benjamin, John, Janet, Christy (relatives of Jean); Yvonne (Ben's mother); John and Julie (Smolen); Dennis, Vincent, Roy and Laura, Danny, Danny, Cathy (relatives of John and Julie); Diane; Tim and Caroline (Becker). Ron, catechumen; Garrett & Autumn – seeking for the true faith.

DEPARTED: William (Fr. Paisius's father); Sue (Stacey's mother); Vicki (Frank's mother); Craig (Jean's son-in-law); Abie Abraham; Patrick (Rose's brother); Josephine (Julie's sister); Hieromonk Roman (Braga); priest Thomas (Hopko); Emil (Cristina's uncle), Cristian (Andronic); Timothy (John and Julie Smolen's nephew); Rick, Phyllis (Seba's husband and sister), Angeliki, Joe and David Sipos; Bill (Georgia's father-in-law), Glenn (Jean's grandson); Stella, Edmund (Ed's uncle), Richard, Dolores Patricia (Thompson), Leatrice (Totin), Ed (Joanna's grandfather), Joseph (Rose's father), Fred (Dollie's uncle), Bob (Diane's father), Michael, Gabriel, Hilda (Chris Abraham's mother), Alfred.