

SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

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27th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

6 December 2015

TONE 2. Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Myra

FIRST ANTIPHON

It is good to give praise unto the Lord, and to chant unto Thy Name, O Most High!

Refrain: Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us! *To proclaim in the morning Thy mercy, and Thy truth by night! (R:) Upright is the Lord our God and there is no unrighteousness in Him (R:) Glory... Now and ever... (R:)*

SECOND ANTIPHON

The Lord is King, He is clothed with majesty; the Lord is clothed with strength and hath girt Himself! (R:) Save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead, as we chant to Thee, "Alleluia"! For He established the world which shall not be shaken! (R:) Holiness befits Thy house, O Lord, unto length of days! (R:) Glory... Now and ever... (Only begotten ...)

AT THE 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 2): When Thou didst submit Thyself unto death, O Thou deathless and immortal One, then Thou didst destroy hell with Thy Godly power. And when Thou didst raise the dead from beneath the earth, all the powers of Heaven did cry aloud unto Thee: O Christ, Thou giver of life, glory to Thee.

TROPARION OF SAINT NICHOLAS (Tone 4): The truth of things has revealed thee to thy flock as a rule of faith, an icon of meekness, a teacher of temperance; for this cause thou hast achieved the heights by humility, riches by poverty. O, Father and Hierarch Nicholas, intercede with Christ our God that our souls be saved.

Glory ...

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.

Now and ever ...

KONTAKION OF THE PREPARATION OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY (Tone 3): Today the Virgin cometh to the cave where she will give birth in an ineffable manner to the Word Who is before all the ages. Rejoice, therefore, O universe, when thou hearest it heralded: Glorify Him, with the angels and the shepherds, Who chose to be seen as a new-born babe, the God Who is before all the ages.

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon: *The Lord is my strength and my song; The Lord has chastened me sorely.*

From the Epistle to the Ephesians

(Eph 6:10-17) **Brethren: draw your strength from the Lord and from his mighty power. Put on the armor of God so that you may be able to stand firm against the tactics of the devil. For our struggle is not with flesh and blood but with the principalities, with the powers, with the world rulers of this present darkness, with the evil spirits in the heavens. Therefore, put on the armor of God, that you may be able to resist on the evil day and, having done everything, to hold your ground. So stand fast with your loins girded in truth, clothed with righteousness as a breastplate, and your feet shod in readiness for the gospel of peace. In all circumstances, hold faith as a shield, to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.**

The Christians in Ephesus, who received this letter, must have understood this passage very well because they crossed paths daily with Roman soldiers wearing their armors and weapons. We can also see that Saint Paul is drawing an analogy between the weapons and armor of a soldier and the spiritual equipment of a Christian. It is good, however, to point out two elements that we might overlook.

First, the metaphor of warriors and weapons suggests that Christianity is not for wimps. It is not easy, it is not comfortable, it requires discipline and constant vigilance. Indeed, there is a war—not against enemies “out there,” not a war with the body, but a war raging within the recesses of our minds and hearts: Christians are at war with the evil of their own sins and shortcomings, which are constantly attracting the activity of evil spirits. Anthony the Great, seeing these spirits roam all over the earth and interfere with us, asked in despair: “what can possibly avoid them?” The answer he received—“humility!”—connects well with another important point in today's Apostle reading.

Soldiers receive their uniforms, weapons, and supplies from the army; they execute certain tactical maneuvers, as received through the army's chain of command; their activities are part of a military strategy devised by their army superiors. Finally, the individual effort of a soldier is effective only inasmuch as it is part of a larger endeavor, involving various army units.

Christian life is also never about the individual detached from the community. This is why we Orthodox don't speak of “my faith,” “my Bible,” “my prayer,” “my confession,” “my weekly Eucharist”; it is always about confessing and participating in the faith of the Church, hearing the Scriptures of the Church, joining in the prayer of the Church, tearing down (in the Sacrament of Confession) the invisible walls that separate me from the Church, entering (through Communion) into the great

banquet of the Church. We fast together and feast together, and gradually learn to enter the communion of love between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

As for the “armor of God,” the breastplate of righteousness, and the shield of faith that Saint Paul urges us to put on as equipment for our Christian life—all of these are *gifts*: we *receive* them when we enter the Church. To the extent that we nurture it, this grace (another word for gift) is activated in us, and cooperates with our effort of leading a life in Christ. “Put on!”; “Take!” “Be clothed in!” The Gospel states clearly that it is impossible for humans to be saved, *unless* and until we allow God to clothe us with the garment of grace, and allow Him to work in us and make the impossible possible. As we hear today: **“Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.”**

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

From the Gospel according to Saint Luke

(Luke 17:12-19) At that time, as Jesus entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices and said, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.” When Jesus saw them He said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went they were cleansed. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, giving glory to God with a loud voice; and fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving Him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. Then said Jesus, “Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give glory to God except this foreigner?” And Jesus said to him, “Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.”

The Gospel of Luke delights in showing how the occasional “outsider” is, unexpectedly, closer to God than those who deceive themselves with the false comfort of being “insiders” in name only. Thus, the prodigal son comes to his senses, while the “good” son’s envy and anger is put on a frightening display; the Samaritan shows pity and generosity with the wounded traveler, while the “professionals of the Law” (the priest and the Levite) pass by without intervening; the tax-collector—a real scumbag, no doubt—begs for God’s mercy and receives it, while the rigorously religious but arrogant Pharisee misses the encounter with God. And today we see that a Samaritan, “a foreigner” to Israel’s covenant with God, is nevertheless closer to God than the nine sons of the covenant who received the same healing.

The first point to ponder is that they were all *lepers*. The point is not that they were all sick people but that they were terrible *sinner*s. How so? In the general perception, leprosy was a sign of being punished, cursed by God, for some unknown misdeed. Hence, ten terrible sinner, and the Lord healed—that is, *forgave* and healed—all of them!

Secondly, although the Lord healed all of them, only one returns to give thanks—and that one is a *Samaritan*! Why is it important that he was Samaritan? Because Samaritans were considered heretics, people who distorted the revelation to Moses, enemies of the true faith upheld by the Jerusalem temple. “Samaritan” was used as an insult. Therefore, just as with the good Samaritan (compared to the religious but callous Israelite priests), and just as with Canaanite woman (whose faith is greater than that found in all of Israel), it is significant that the only one who returns to give thanks to God is a Samaritan!

What do we get out of this story? Sometimes people imagine that God would punish the nine with a return of that awful disease; but this thought is not worthy of the good and gracious God we worship. Besides, not returning to give thanks is itself a terrible form of self-punishment. Indeed, the nine are missing something that only the Samaritan receives. Clearly, then, we stand to learn a lot from

the Samaritan today.

For one, the Samaritan is the only one of the ten who hears: **“your faith has made you well!”** This means that even while they had received physical healing, the nine missed the much greater opportunity of meeting God, and being made well in their whole being. Returning to Jesus to give thanks to God, the Samaritan also teaches us about the mystery of meeting God face to face. How did he give thanks to God? **“He fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving Him thanks.”** In short, even without full understanding, the Samaritan shares with us the knowledge that **“whoever has seen the Son has seen the Father”** (John 14:9).

We imitate “this foreigner” in his turning back to give thanks to God every time we celebrate the Divine Liturgy and speak, through the priest:

“You brought us from non-existence into being, and when we had fallen away You raised us up again; You left nothing undone until You brought us up to heaven and had granted us Your Kingdom that is to come. For all these things we give thanks to You, and to Your only-begotten Son, and to Your Holy Spirit—for all the benefits we have received, known and unknown, manifest or hidden. And we also give thanks for this Liturgy which You have been well pleased to accept from our hands ...”

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **November 15-December 25:** the Nativity Fast, our preparation for Christmas.
- **orthodoxcranberry.org: Thursday 12/10, 7-8 PM, Cranberry Municipal Center.** After Compline we will discuss the parable of the the sulking children (Luke 7: 31-35).
- **This Sunday:** memorial for departed family members of Roxana Cisloiu
- **Next Sunday:** 40-day memorial for Diane, Georgia's sister

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: Bill and Ann; Dottie; Bernard (Dottie's brother); 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, John, Janet, Christy (relatives of Jean); John and Julie (Smolen); Dennis, Vincent, Roy and Laura, Danny, Danny, Cathy (relatives of John and Julie); Diane; Shea and Katie; Tim and Caroline (Becker).

Ron, catechumen; Garrett & Autumn, Benjamin, Christine – seeking for the true faith.

DEPARTED: Diane (Georgia's sister); Gladys (Smolen); David (Steve's father-in-law); Donald (Norma's brother); 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, Stormy (friend of Ron's).