

SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

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FIRST SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT

(“Sunday of Orthodoxy”)

20 March 2016

TONE 1—Martyr Photina (Svetlana, Fatíma), the Samaritan woman, and her sons: Martyrs Victor and Joses, and two others (ca. 66). Virgin Martyrs Alexandra, Claudia, Euphrasia, Matrona, Juliana, Euphemia and Theodosia, of Amisus (310). The Holy Fathers who were slain at the Monastery of St. Sabbas: Ven. John, Sergius, Patrick, and others (796). St. Nicetas the Confessor, Archbishop of Apollonias in Bithynia (ca. 813-820).

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, 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! **Refrain:** 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 Son and Word of God ...**)*

THIRD ANTIPHON

TROPARION FOR THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY (see below)

preceded by the following Psalm verses:

- Let the heavens and the earth praise Him!
- This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it!
- Lord my God, I will give thanks unto Thee forever!

AT THE LITTLE ENTRANCE

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

TROPARION OF THE RESURRECTION (Tone 1): While the stone was sealed by the Jews, and the soldiers were guarding Thy most pure body, Thou didst arise on the third day, O Savior, granting life to the world. For which cause the heavenly powers cried aloud unto Thee, O giver of life: "Glory to Thy Resurrection O Christ; glory to Thy kingdom; glory to Thy providence, O Thou Who alone art the lover of mankind!"

TROPARION FOR THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY (Tone 2): Thy pure image do we venerate, O good One, asking forgiveness of our sins, O Christ our God; for by thine own will thou didst ascend the Cross in thy body, to save thy creatures from the bondage of the enemy. Thou hast verily filled all with joy, since thou didst come, O our Savior, to save the world.

KONTAKION OF THE FOREFEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION (Tone 8): To thee, the Champion Leader, do I offer thanks of victory, O Theotokos, thou who hast delivered me from terror; but as thou that hast that power invincible, O Theotokos, thou alone can set me free: from all forms of danger free me and deliver me, that I may cry unto thee: "Rejoice, O Bride without Bridegroom."

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Blessed art thou, O Lord, the God of our Fathers! Thou art just in all that thou hast done to us.

From the Epistle to the Hebrews

(Heb 11:24-26; 32-40) **Brethren:** by faith Abraham sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. By faith Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was ready to offer his only son, of whom it was said, "Through Isaac descendants shall bear your name." He reasoned that God was able to raise even from the dead, and he received Isaac back as a symbol. By faith Moses was hidden by his parents for three months after his birth, because they saw that he was a beautiful child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict. By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter; he chose to be ill-treated along with the people of God rather than enjoy the fleeting pleasure of sin. And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, and put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated—of whom the world was not worthy!—wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, though well

attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

On this Sunday of Orthodoxy, at the customary procession with icons, we proclaim: “as the prophets beheld, as the Apostles have taught, as the Church has received this is the faith of the Orthodox!” The faith of the Church, that God has come in the flesh in order to restore fallen humanity—the faith expressed in holy icons—is none other than the faith delivered to the Apostles, and it is rooted in *that which the prophets beheld*. That is why, beginning with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, continuing with Joseph, then Moses, the judges and kings and prophets of Israel, today we also evoke the ancestors *of our Christian faith*.

We do not praise the individual qualities of these ancestors (bravery, piety, perseverance, etc) but a certain ever-expecting intimacy with God, which we call *faith*. What is faith? It is, says the same Epistle, “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”; in other words, faith is the foundation under everything, it is what makes this life, which in itself is so often incoherent and meaningless, worth living; faith is our handle on what we can't see. The ancestors were living in faith—looking forward towards Christ, even though He had not yet come in the flesh: “Abraham looked forward” says the text, “Isaac was regarding things still to come.” They were looking forward to the mystery of the God-made-man whom we worship: they beheld in manifold visions the image (the *icon*) of Jesus Christ.

We have begun the journey leading to the Cross and Resurrection of Christ: the one who showed himself and spoke to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who met Moses at the burning bush, who gave the Law to Israel, and spoke to his people through the prophets, is the same One whom we proclaim crucified and risen for us and our salvation.

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

From the Holy Gospel according to Saint John

(Jn 1:43-51) At that time, Jesus decided to go to Galilee, and he found Philip and said to him, “Follow me.” Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael, and said to him, “We have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.” Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!” Nathanael said to him, “How do you know me?” Jesus answered him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” Nathanael answered him, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” Jesus answered him, “Because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these.” And he said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you: you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.”

“Truly, truly, I say to you: you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.” This solemn statement can only be understood in light of a very important Old Testament text: in Genesis 28, the patriarch Jacob has a grand vision of a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, with angels ascending and descending on it, and the Lord at the top of the ladder. Returning to the Gospel text, we can understand that the ladder reaching from earth to heaven is none other than Jesus Christ. For those who have come to believe in Him and follow Him, “the heavens are opened,” since the mediator between God and humankind has bridged the gap between the two.

And how is He able to serve as our ladder to heaven? Let's follow the Apostle who tells us to “come and see.” Come and see one who is flesh of our flesh—“Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph the

carpenter. Come and see that He is also the One who knows us since Adam: “**when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.**” Come and see our Savior who promises that even **greater things** are in store for us—namely, that we should be healed and restored, that the heavens be opened to us even on earth, and that, under the assistance of our angelic brothers, our “traffic” between earth and heaven be unimpeded and joyful.

But why is this Gospel assigned for today, the Sunday of Orthodoxy? Because the icons are the confession of our faith that the invisible God, dimly revealed only in patriarch Jacob’s vision, on top of the ladder, has accepted to take on human flesh, and become one of us. As Saint John of Damascus explains in his Apology for the Holy Icons:

In former times, God, Who is without form or body, could never be depicted, but now when God is seen in the flesh conversing with men, I make an image of the God Whom I see. I do not worship matter! I worship the Creator of matter, Who became matter for my sake, Who willed to take His abode in matter; Who worked out my salvation through matter. Never will I cease to honor the matter which brought my salvation! I honor it, but not as God. Because of this, I salute all remaining matter with reverence, because God has filled it with His grace and power. Is not the ink in the most holy Gospels matter? Is not the life-giving altar made of matter? From it, we receive the Bread of Life! Are not gold and silver matter? From them, we make crosses, patens, and chalices! And, over and above all these things, is not the body and blood of our Lord matter? Either do away with the honor and veneration these things deserve, or accept the tradition of the Church and the veneration of images. Reverence God and His friends. Follow the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Do not despise matter, for it is not despicable! God has made nothing despicable.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today: General parish meeting. We need to vote in two new members of the council, discuss the budget, talk about possible changes in the way we support our parish financially, and discuss the future of our parish (stay, merge, move?). Remember the word of the Lord: “If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones” (translation: don’t skip the meeting, these matters are also part of our responsibility as Christians).

- **Wednesday, 3/23, 6 PM:** Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts (St. Anthony)
- **Friday, 3/25, 6 PM:** Vesperal Liturgy for the Feast of the Annunciation (Sts Peter & Paul)

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: Fr. Paisius; Ann; Mary Ann (Jean’s daughter); 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), Ed, Peter, Georgia and Scot, Sam, Karen (Joanna’s mother), Diane, Sula, Dollie, Karyn, Fr. Ignatius and Amy, John, Jonathan and Joanna, Andrei, 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: Bill; Iosif (Cristina’s father); Dolores (Bingham), 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); Cristian (Andronic); Rick, Phyllis (Seba’s husband and sister), Angeliki, Joe and David Sipos; Glenn (Jean’s grandson); Stella, Edmund (Ed’s uncle), Richard, 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).

PROCESSION OF THE HOLY ICONS (at the end of Liturgy)

- (a.) The people sing "Holy God..." repeatedly, while the priest, the subdeacon, the altar boys, and all other children in the parish carry the cross and the holy icons in procession, as for the Great Entrance;
- (b.) When the priest reaches the solea (in front the holy doors), the chanters sing the Troparion of Feast: "Thy pure image we venerate..."
- (c.) Then the priest leads the faithful in reciting in a loud voice the excerpt from the Synodikon (Confession of Faith) of the Day of Orthodoxy as follows:

As the prophets beheld, as the Apostles have taught, as the Church has received, as the teachers have dogmatized, as the whole world has agreed, as grace has shown forth, as Truth has revealed, as falsehood has been dissolved, as Wisdom has presented, as Christ awarded: thus we declare, thus we assert, thus we preach Christ our true God, and honor as saints in words, in writings, in thoughts, in sacrifices, in churches, in holy icons; on the one hand worshipping and reverencing Christ as God and Lord; and on the other hand honoring as true servants of the same Lord of all and accordingly offering them veneration. [LOUDER] This is the faith of the Apostles, this is the faith of the Fathers, this is the Faith of the Orthodox, this is the faith which has established the world!

- (d.) The chanters sing the prokeimenon (three times): "Who is so great a God as our God? Thou alone art our God, who doest wonders!"
- (e.) Troparion of the First Sunday in Lent: "Thy pure image do we venerate.."
- (f.) Dismissal as usual