

SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

www.orthodoxbutler.org

ADDRESS: 400 S. Sixth Avenue, Butler, PA 16001

RECTOR: Rev. Bogdan Gabriel Bucur

CONTACT: 724.287.6893 (church); 412.390.8208 (priest);

frbogdan@orthodoxbutler.org

AFTERFEAST OF THE LORD'S ASCENSION

12 June 2016

TONE 6—*Ven. Onuphrius the Great (4th c.) and Ven. Peter of Mt. Athos (734). Ven. John, Andrew, Heraclemon, and Theophilus, Hermits, of Egypt (4th c.). Ven. Onuphry, Abbot of Mal'sk (Pskov—1492). Ven. Arsenius, Abbot of Konevits (1447).*

FIRST ANTIPHON

Clap your hands, all you peoples; shout to God with songs of rejoicing!

(R.: *Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us!*

For the Lord, the Most High, is awesome, a great king over all the earth! (R.:

Glory... Now and ever... (R.:

SECOND ANTIPHON

Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, His holy mountain!

(R.: *Save us, O Son of God, Who didst ascend in glory from us to heaven, as we chant unto Thee: Alleluia!*

God is known in her palaces, when He undertakes to help her. (R.: *For behold, the kings of the earth assembled, they came together. (R.:* *Glory... Now and ever... (Only begotten ...)*

THIRD ANTIPHON

TROPARION OF ASCENSION (see below) with the following verses:

- *Hear these words, all you nations; give ear, all you that dwell upon the earth.*
- *My mouth shall speak of wisdom; the meditation of my heart shall bring forth understanding.*
- *I will incline my ear to a parable, I will open my riddle on the harp.*

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 RESURRECTION (Tone 6): When Mary stood at Thy grave, looking for Thy sacred body, angelic powers shone above Thy revered tomb. And the soldiers who were to keep guard became as dead men. Thou led Hades captive and wast not tempted thereby. Thou didst meet the Virgin and didst give life to the world, O Thou, Who art risen from the dead, O Lord, glory to Thee.

TROPARION OF THE ASCENSION (Tone 4): Thou hast ascended in glory, O Christ our God, and gladdened Thy disciples with the promise of the Holy Spirit; and they were assured by the blessing that Thou art the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world!

TROPARION OF THE HOLY FATHERS (Tone 8): Thou, O Christ, art our God of exceeding praise, who didst establish our holy Fathers as luminous stars upon earth, and through them didst guide us unto the true faith: O most merciful One, glory to Thee!

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 ASCENSION (Tone 6): When Thou hadst fulfilled the dispensation for us, uniting things on earth with the heavens, Thou didst ascend in glory, O Christ our God, departing not hence, but in no way wast Thou parted from those who love Thee, but remaining inseparable from us and crying unto them that love Thee: "I am with you and no one can be against you!"

FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT: PSALM 68 (67)

Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered; and let them that hate him flee from before his face. As smoke is driven away; as wax melts before the fire. ... A father of the fatherless and a judge for the widows, is God in His holy habitation ... You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive; You have received gifts you received gifts from people, even from the rebellious ...

We recognize the opening verses of Psalm 68 (or, in the Orthodox Bible, Psalm 67): "Let God arise!" We sing these verses during the entire Easter period, from Pascha until Ascension. And then, at Ascension, we focus on another verse: "You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive." Christ has, indeed, ascended on high; but what does it mean that "He led captivity captive"? We sing something similar at Pascha: "Christ is risen from the dead *trampling down death by [his] death*"—Christ has "killed death," He has freed us from the grip of the evil one. So also here: "He has led captivity captive" means that He has annulled our captivity, He has set us free.

But this verse presents a problem. The psalm reads: "You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive; You have received gifts from people, even from the rebellious," while Saint Paul quotes it at Ephesians 4:8 in a significantly different version: "When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people." Well, why the difference? And what is this verse about, anyway?

Early Christian tradition understood Psalm 68 as foreshadowing the Ascension of Christ. He defeated our enemies—the evil one, who had held us captive; it is His Resurrection that shines like fire, and makes these enemies melt like wax; and He has ascended, taking spoils (as it were) from the captors of humankind. What spoils? Humanity itself! Christ has plundered hell and emptied that prison of its inmates.

But this conqueror distributes the spoils he takes: Christ ascends to God in order to send us the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We will understand more about this when we celebrate the Giving of the Spirit, Pentecost.

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon: *Blessed art Thou, O Lord, the God of our Fathers. Thou art just in all Thou hast done.*

From the Acts of the Apostles

(Acts 20:16-18, 28-36) In those days, Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he might not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hastening to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost. And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church. And when they came to him, he said to them: "Take heed

to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God which he obtained with the blood of his own Son. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities, and to those who were with me. In all things I have shown you that by so toiling one must help the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" And when he had spoken thus, he knelt down and prayed with them all.

We hear today the words Saint Paul addressed to "the elders of the church": words of advice from one who knew the crucial importance of the ministry of a priest or bishop. **"Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God which he obtained with the blood of his own Son.**

Obviously, the job of the "overseer" is not simply one of administration! Saint Paul speaks of the *Holy Spirit* assigning certain individuals to that ministry. Nor is the community ("the flock") simply an association of pious individuals. The very existence of the Church is the work of God, who has established it "with the blood of His own Son." Consequently, this flock is a community of people who have responded to God's call and become collaborators with Christ, allowing Him to complete His work of salvation in them.

Finally, the Christian life is nothing but the continuation of Christ's life in us and among us. This is not only a matter of fidelity to some lofty ideal, but the way to make life truly beautiful and meaningful; in short, one who practices generosity, forgiveness, and love is the first to benefit from it: **It is more blessed to give than to receive!**

The words of Jesus Christ about the joy of giving are not recorded in the Gospels; Saint Paul must have learned them from the first eye-witnesses of the Lord. He quotes them not as something new and unknown, but as a saying that was quite familiar to the Christians in Ephesus. Let it then become a saying familiar to us as well: if we are living as brothers and sisters, taking care of each other, in turn forgiving and asking forgiveness, comforting and being comforted, it is because, as our Master said, **"You're far happier giving than getting!"**

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

From the Gospel according to Saint John

(John 17:1-13) At that time, Jesus lifted up His eyes to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Thy Son that the Son may glorify Thee, since Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom Thou hast given Him. And this is eternal life, that they know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent. I glorified Thee on earth, having accomplished the work which Thou gavest Me to do; and now, Father, glorify Thou Me in Thy own presence with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was made. I have manifested Thy Name to those whom Thou gavest Me out of the world; Thine they were, and Thou gavest them to Me, and they have kept Thy word. Now they know that everything that Thou hast given Me is from Thee; for I have given them the words which Thou gavest Me, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from Thee; and they have believed that Thou didst send Me. I am praying for them; I am not praying for the world

but for those whom Thou hast given Me, for they are Thine; all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine, and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to Thee. Holy Father, keep them in Thy Name, which Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, even as We are one. While I was with them, I kept them in Thy Name, which Thou have given Me; I have guarded them, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves.”

We meditate today on Christ’s ascension to heaven—that is, on Christ’s “entry into glory.” On the one hand, we may say that there is nothing new or extraordinary to the fact that the Son should share the glory of the Father! Indeed, we confess that He became human without thereby forsaking or diminishing His divinity; and we confess that He is now returning, as the Gospel says, “**to the glory which I had with Thee before the world was made.**”

On the other hand, however, there is something entirely new! This new and extraordinary reality is that the One who ascends *is fully human*, not only divine. He takes into the presence of God—into God’s very glory—the humanity He shares with us. As such, He truly is our representative, our forerunner, going to prepare a room for us in the Kingdom of our Father: “**If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to Myself, so that where I am you also may be**” (John 14:2-3). But to us, in the meantime, it feels as though we are orphaned, or widowed, or left behind by our closest friend: we are on earth, He is in heaven. The Lord knew this well, and His prayer to the Father is precisely for us: **And now I am no more in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to Thee. Holy Father, keep them in Thy Name.** And to His disciples and to us, He spoke these words of reassurance: “**I will not leave you orphans**” (John 14:18). One of the hymns of Ascension, the kontakion, also proclaims: “In no way wast Thou parted from those who love Thee, but remaining inseparable from us and crying unto them that love Thee: “I am with you and no one can be against you!”

How it is that we are not orphaned of the presence of God, and “left behind” we will understand better at Pentecost. For now, note that “being kept in God’s Name” (abiding in the presence of God) is measured by a very visible and concrete indicator: **Father, keep them in Thy Name *that they may be one, even as We are one.*** In other words, we abide in God to the extent to which we, the Church, mirror the unity of love that constitutes the very glory shared by the Father and Son and Holy Spirit.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today: an informal discussion about the Mystery of Confession. Following a brief presentation, we will divide into two groups for Q&A and a more intimate discussion. Men will gather with Fr. Bogdan, women with Presbyteria Eleni Kallaur. Presbyteria Eleni, from Holy Cross in Mt. Lebanon, is visiting with us specifically to help us grow in our understanding of what Confession is (and is not), how to prepare for it, how to deal with shame and embarrassment, etc.

Sunday, June 19, 10 AM: PENTECOST, THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. Divine Liturgy, followed by Father’s Day BBQ, will be at 8641 Peters Road, in Cranberry, PA 16066. On this feast, which celebrates “the birthday of the Church,” St. Anthony’s will be “giving birth” to a mission parish of Cranberry. Think of a candle lit from another candle. Beginning June 19 there will be a rotation of priests to serve there each Sunday, while we continue our life as usual in Butler. However, for the first Liturgy in Cranberry it is best for all of us to gather there for this exceptional occasion of planting a seed that, we hope, will bear fruit in years to come.

Many thanks to Georgia & Scot, Dollie, Diane, Ann, and Chrissi for clearing out, cleaning, and painting the storage room near the kitchen. *God blesses those who care for the beauty of His church.*

SPRING CLEANING: SATURDAY, JUNE 18, 8-NOON. PLEASE VOLUNTEER FOR ONE HOUR!

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: Job, Fr. Paisius; Ann; Mary Ann (Jean's daughter); Dottie; 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, Cathy (relatives of John and Julie); Diane; Shea and Katie; Tim and Caroline (Becker); Tina. Garrett & Autumn, Benjamin – seeking the true faith.

DEPARTED: Lance; 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); 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)

VESPERS

At "Lord I Have Cried" sing the following with the last three Psalm verses:

The Lord ascended to the heavens to send the Comforter into the world. Wherefore, the heavens made ready His throne, and the clouds His mount. The angels wonder as they see a man more exalted than they. The Father receiveth into His bosom Him Who is eternally with Him. The Holy Spirit commandeth all the angels, Lift your heads, O princes, and all ye nations, clap your hands; for Christ hath ascended whither He was before.

The cherubim were surprised, O Lord, at Thine Ascension, when they beheld Him Who sitteth on them ascending upon the clouds. Wherefore, we praise Thee; for Thy mercy is true, glory to Thee.

Having beheld Thine Ascension on the holy mountains, O Christ, the Splendor of the Father's glory, we praise the likeness of Thy radiant appearance. We worship Thy Passion and honor Thy Resurrection, glorifying Thy glorious ascension. Have mercy upon us.

At the Aposticha: *Glory ... Now and ever ...* When Thou didst fulfill the mystery hidden from the generations since the ages, since Thou art good, O Lord, Thou didst come with Thy Disciples to the Mount of Olives, and with Thee was Thy Mother, O Maker and Creator of all; for she, who more than all suffered maternally at Thy Passion, should likewise enjoy more than all the joy of Thy humanity's honoring, O Master, which having also attained by Thine Ascension to the heavens, we glorify exceedingly Thy mercies upon us.

MATINS

After "The Lord is God": Troparion of the Resurrection, **then** Troparion of the Ascension

Canon of the Ascension

At the Praises, sing the following before "Glory ... Now and ever" :

The Cross, O Lord, is life and Resurrection to Thy people, and in it we do trust. Wherefore, Thee do we praise, O our risen Lord; have mercy upon us.

Thy burial, O Master, has opened paradise for mankind. Wherefore, as we escape corruption, we praise Thee, O our risen God; have mercy on us.

With the Father and the Spirit, let us praise Christ risen from the dead. Let us cry to Him, Thou art our life and Resurrection; have mercy on us.

Thou hast risen from the tomb in three days, as it was written, O Christ, and hast raised with Thee our ancestors. Wherefore, mankind doth glorify Thee and praise Thy Resurrection.