

SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

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AFTERFEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS. 11 September 2016

TONE 3—Sunday before the Elevation of the Cross. Martyrs Demetrius, his wife Evanthia, and their son Demetrian, at Skepsis (1st c.). Martyrs Diodorus, Didymus, and Diomedes, of Laodicea. Martyr Ia and 9,000 Martyrs with her, of Persia (362-364). Ven. Theodora of Alexandria (474-491). St. Euphrosynus the Cook, of Alexandria (9th c.).

FIRST ANTIPHON

*Lord, remember David and all his meekness. Lo, we heard of it at Ephrata; we found it in the fields of the wood. **Refrain:** Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, Savior, save us! Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early. (R:) Glory... Now ... (R:)*

SECOND ANTIPHON

The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David; and He will not turn from it. Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne. (R:) Save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead, as we chant to Thee, "Alleluia"! (R:) There will I make the horn of David to bud; I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed. (R:) Glory... Now and ever... (Only begotten ...)

THIRD ANTIPHON

- *Here will I dwell, for I have desired it: the Most High has sanctified His tabernacle.*

TROPARION OF THE NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS (see below)

- *Holy is Thy temple, and wonderful in righteousness.*

TROPARION OF THE NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS

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 hath done a mighty act with His own arm: He hath trampled down death by death, and become the first-born from the dead; He has delivered us from the depths of Hades, granting the world great mercy.

TROPARION OF THE NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS (Tone 4): Thy Nativity, O Theotokos, has proclaimed joy to the whole world; for from thee has dawned the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God, annulling the curse and bestowing the blessing, abolishing death and granting us life everlasting.

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 BIRTH OF THE THEOTOKOS (Tone 4): By thy holy nativity, O pure one, Joachim and Anna were delivered from the reproach of barrenness; and Adam and Eve were delivered from the corruption of death; thy people do celebrate it, having been saved from the stain of iniquity, crying unto thee: The barren doth give birth to the Theotokos, who nourisheth our life.

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon: *O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance.
To Thee, O Lord, I have cried, O my God.*

The Reading is from the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Galatians

(Galatians 6:11-18) **Brethren, see with what large letters I am writing to you, with my own hand. It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that would compel you to be circumcised, and only so that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For even those who receive circumcision do not themselves keep the law; but they desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh. But far be it from me to glory, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision: what counts is to be a new creation! Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule, upon the Israel of God. Henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.**

It is clear that Saint Paul is writing here about a matter he views as extremely important. The first line about the “large letters” means something like “I want to emphasize in the bold scrawls of my personal handwriting the immense importance of what I have written.” What was the problem? Saint Paul was writing to warn the Galatians against certain Christian leaders who compelled all new converts to the faith to practice circumcision. He warned that such “missionaries” were in fact interested in cultivating their own public image in the Christian community, while at the same time “keeping a low profile” in the larger society, so as to avoid prosecution by the Roman Empire (as long as Christians would be perceived as a type of Judaism, they would not be persecuted, but tolerated, like the Jews). The false missionaries were not “crazy” to insist on circumcision; it was, to them and to many, a definite mark of religious piety. Today, it would be things like not eating certain foods on certain days, dressing in a certain way, abstaining from this or that, etc.

Saint Paul's point is that, ultimately, all these things must be placed in a different perspective: what truly matters is not that we do this or that, or that we keep this or that rule of piety; what matters is that we become a “new creation”—and this is God's work in us. Indeed, as the Apostle writes elsewhere (2 Cor 4:6), the same God who spoke at creation, *let there be light*—and, indeed, *it was light*, now shines in our hearts, drawing us out of darkness and re-creating us into children of the light. “A new creation” means that our Christian life is God's liturgy in us, where we are co-workers with God.

We should also pay close attention to the following verse: **Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule, upon the Israel of God.** What is “the Israel of God” here? Since the Apostle is writing to Christians, it is quite obvious that the Israel of God refers to the community of believers in Christ—the Church! Saint Paul sees the Good News as the work of God by which the Gentiles were received into the fold of God’s people, and “Israel” was extended into encompassing, potentially, the entire world.

TODAY’S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Gospel according to Saint John

(John 3:13-17) **The Lord said, "No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him."**

The Church has selected this text to be read on the Sunday prior to the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross (September 14). To put it briefly, the Gospel of John makes the following two points.

First: there is only one *access* to God, namely the cross of Jesus Christ, uniting earth and heaven; *Second:* those who place their hope in the Crucified One shall inherit the eternal life of his Resurrection. (This is why, as Saint Paul writes, a Christian is not ashamed or embarrassed that God the Son has accepted death by crucifixion; on the contrary, “I glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world”). The Gospel section ends with a crucial statement that should accompany us in our Christian life: **God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.**

The message preached by our Lord and entrusted for us to live by and to bring to the world is called “the Good News”: the good news about a good, gracious, forgiving, and healing God, who draws near to us, brings His Kingdom into this world, opens up the gates of Paradise, and bids us enter; a God who makes repentance—turning around to Him—worthwhile and appealing, because He promises not to bear a grudge; a God who helps us to live and die with courage by showing through His own example that death is the first step into the Resurrection. A good God, who has come to save us, not to condemn us.

Somehow, we must always be reminded that the Good News is truly *good*; otherwise we tend to remake God in the image of our own fears, and disfigure the Gospel into some kind of “grim news” about condemnation, destruction, and punishment. What kind of God would want to bully us into repenting? And what fruits would such a “repentance” bear? God is waiting that we may be convinced of His love and grace: He sent the Son into the world to save us, not to condemn us; whoever believes in him does not perish but has eternal life!

A NOTE ON THE THEOTOKOS

The Church's calendar, inherited from the ancient Jerusalem Temple, counts September as the first month of its New Year. It appears, then, that Church begins its year with the birth of Mary, the Theotokos (September 8) and ends it with her death and translation to everlasting life (August 15). This is neither an accident, nor an arbitrary decision of the Church. Rather, it reflects the Christian view that the Mother of God reflects, in her person, the very nature of the Church: Virgin and Birthgiver of God. A learned monk of the Orthodox Church in America, Fr. Calinic Berger, summarizes our faith very aptly:

"The Orthodox of the Mother of God remains what it ought to be: warm, filled with love and devotion, yet sober. She is a human being like all of us, and yet she lives such a life. She dies our death

because she shares our birth. She was not conceived 'immaculately' in a manner unique and different from all of us; she was not given a special nature, incapable of sin. Neither did she avoid death. Therefore, it was within fallen nature that the Virgin Mary achieved her spiritual perfection. What she did in her life, she did not do in a mechanical, impersonal manner, but with *struggle*, thereby developing her own personal holiness through her role as the Mother of God. Not only did she live well, but she *finished* well: she crowned her struggle of spiritual perfection and her unique role as Mother of God with a *godly death* in the presence of Christ and supremely 'painless, blameless, and peaceful'. The Mother of God is thus a model for all Christians, both in the way she lived and in the way she died."

ANNOUNCEMENTS

TODAY: memorial service for the victims of the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001
- meeting of the parish council

Next Sunday, September 18: Pan-Orthodox Liturgy and picnic at the OCA Pavilion (8641 Peters Road, Cranberry Township, PA). Our three Orthodox churches in Butler/ Lyndora will celebrate Liturgy together in Cranberry and continue with fun, food, and fellowship. We will also gather with the people in our Cranberry outreach, who will now end the series of Sunday Liturgies at the pavilion.

Liturgies in Cranberry will resume on Sunday, October 2 at Cardinal Wuerl North Catholic High School. Please pray that God would bless this missionary effort of our parish.

Cranberry offering: A basket for offerings to our Cranberry outreach is placed at the entrance to the church. We are trying to offset the 10% loss that the Cranberry group incurs by sending their Sunday collection to St. Anthony's (we give 10% of all incoming money to the Archdiocese).

Sunday, October 9, 3:30 pm, Butler Country Club: Retirement Celebration Banquet for Fr. Joseph Wargo, who ends his 40-year ministry as pastor of St. Andrew Orthodox Church. 35 dollars/ adult (11 for children). RSVP by September 25 to Nicole Rogos (700 Saxony Dr., Seven Fields, PA 16046); checks should be made out to St Andrew Orthodox Church.

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: newly ordained priest Paul Abernathy (FOCUS Pittsburgh); Job; Tina (John & Julie's daughter); Ann; Mary Ann (Jean's daughter); Stelian (Cezar's father); Seba, Lisa, and Sam (Michaels), Norma; George (Georgiades), Christine (Abraham), Marion and Jim Raimondi (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); Phoebe, Tina. Garrett & Autumn, Benjamin – seeking the true faith.

DEPARTED: Iosif (Cristina's father); Victoria and Susan (mothers of Frank and Stacy); Richard (Minto) from Sts Peter and Paul; Bill; Dolores (Bingham), Diane (Georgia's sister); Gladys (Smolen); David (Steve's father-in-law); Donald (Norma's brother); William (Fr. Paisius's father); 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); Lance; Bob (Diane's father), Michael, Gabriel, Hilda (Chris Abraham's mother), Alfred, Stormy (friend of Ron's).

AT "LORD I HAVE CRIED" (Tone 3)

Verse 10. Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Thy Name. O Christ Savior, the might of death hath verily broken down under Thy Cross; and the deceit of Diabolus hath ceased; and the race of man hath by faith escaped and been saved. Wherefore, praise is offered Thee perpetually.

Verse 9. The righteous shall wait for me until Thou recompense me. The whole creation, O Lord God, hath been lighted by Thy glorified Resurrection; and paradise hath been opened withal. Wherefore, all creatures laud Thee and offer Thee praise perpetually.

Verse 8. Out of the depths have I cried to Thee, O Lord, Lord hear my voice. I glorify the power of the Father, magnify the power of the Son, and praise the might of the Holy Spirit, one Godhead, indivisible, uncreated, consubstantial Trinity, reigning through all eternity.

Verse 7. Let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication. Thy glorified Cross, O Christ, do we worship, and Thy Resurrection do we praise and glorify; for by Thy wounds we are all healed.

Verse 6. If Thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? For with Thee there is forgiveness. Let us praise the Savior Who was incarnate of the Virgin; for He was crucified for our sake, and arose on the third day, granting us great mercy.

Verse 5. Because of Thy name have I waited for Thee, O Lord; my soul has waited upon Thy word, my soul has hoped in the Lord. Verily, Christ did descend to Hades to bring good tidings to those therein, saying, Have faith now; for I have conquered; for I am the Resurrection, Who, unlocking the gates of death, shall set ye free.

For the Nativity of the Theotokos (Tone 1)

Verses 4-3. From the morning watch until night, from the morning watch let Israel trust in the Lord. For with the Lord there is mercy and with Him is abundant redemption, and He will deliver Israel from all his iniquities. Joachim joineth with Anna in keeping festival, having brought forth the first-fruit of our common salvation, the only Theotokos; and as we today keep the feast with them faithfully, we bless the undefiled Virgin, who hath sprung forth from that root of Jesse as foretold.

Verse 2. Praise the Lord, all ye nations; praise Him, all ye people. The Theotokos, the pure Maiden in whom God was contained, * the Prophets' boast and glory, and the daughter of David, * from Joachim and Anna the prudent and chaste * now is born on this holy day * and by her birth overturneth the ancient curse * which through Adam came upon our race.

Verse 1. For His mercy is great toward us, and the truth of the Lord endureth forever. The land that once had been barren bringeth forth fruitful earth; * a holy fruit is now born from a womb that was fruitless. * O marvel great and fearful! With milk is she fed, * she the nourisher of our life; * she that received in her womb the celestial Bread * now is suckled at her mother's breast.

Glory ... (Tone 8): On this our illustrious feast day, let us strike our spiritual harps; for today the Mother of Life, who is the renewal of creation of Adam and the recall of Eve, the fountain of incorruption, the liberation from corruption, through whom we have been deified and delivered from death, is born of the seed of David, dispersing darkness. Wherefore, let us believers cry unto her joyfully with Gabriel, Rejoice, O full of grace! The Lord is with thee, bestowing on us through thee the Great Mercy.

Now and ever ... Theotokion for the Resurrection (Tone 3)

APOSTICHA: Resurrectional Aposticha (tone 3), then:

Glory ... Now and ever... (tone 6))Although by the will of God barren women have brought forth illustrious children, yet Mary, with divine magnificence, hath outshone all that have been born; for she, who was marvelously born of a childless mother, herself past nature bare in the flesh the God of all from a seedless womb. She is the only gateway of the Only-begotten Son of God, Who, passing through this gate, kept it shut; and having ordered all things wisely, as He Himself saw fit, He hath wrought salvation for all mankind.

TROPARIA: Resurrection (tone 3); *Glory ... Now and ever ...* Nativity of the Theotokos (tone 4)

After "God is the Lord": Troparion of the Resurrection (tone 3);

Glory ... Now and ever ... Troparion of the Nativity of the Theotokos

Canon: Katavasia of the Canon of the Cross