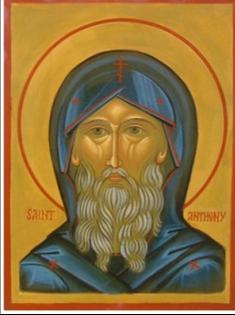


SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
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THIRTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

24 January 2016

TONE 1— Ven. Xenia of Rome (5th c.); Martyrs Babylas (Vavila) of Sicily, and his two disciples: Timothy and Agapius (3rd c.). St. Macedonius, Hermit, of Syria (ca. 420). Ven. Philotheus, founder of Philotheou Monastery (Mt. Athos—10th c.). Bl. Xenia of St. Petersburg (19th c.).

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! 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 ...)*

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 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 OF SAINT XENIA OF PETERSBURG (Tone 8): In thee, O wandering stranger, Christ the Lord has given us an ardent intercessor for our kind. For having received in thy life sufferings and grief and served God and men with love, thou didst acquire great boldness. Wherefore, we fervently hasten to thee in temptations and grief, crying out from the depths of our hearts: Put not our hope to shame, O Blessed Xenia!

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 PRESENTATION OF CHRIST (Tone 1): Thou Who didst sanctify the Virgin's womb by Thy Birth, and didst bless Symeon's hands as was meet, by anticipation hast even now saved us, O Christ God. But grant peace in the midst of wars unto Thy commonwealth and strengthen the hierarchs whom Thou hast loves, O only Friend of man!

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

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

From Saint Paul's First Epistle to Timothy

(1 Tim 4:9-15) **My child Timonthy, this saying is trustworthy and deserves full acceptance: To this end we toil and struggle, because we have set our hope on the living God, who is the savior of all, especially of those who believe. Command and teach these things. Let no one have contempt for your youth, but set an example for those who believe, in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity. Until I arrive, attend to the reading, exhortation, and teaching. Do not neglect the gift you have received through the prophetic word with the laying on of hands of the priests. Meditate on these things, give yourself wholly to them, so that your progress may be evident to everyone.**

If today we read from a private letter sent by Saint Paul to his disciple Timothy, it is because somehow these lines are also applicable to us. But how? Unlike St. Timothy, who is counted among the Seventy apostles, none of us is an apostle, or the direct disciple of Saint Paul, and we have not received ordination ("laying on of hands") to serve as priests or bishops. How, then, does this concern us?

The Church yesterday, today, and tomorrow confesses that **we have set our hope on the living God** and that we should not **neglect the gift we have received** from God. These sayings, as Saint Paul writes, **are trustworthy and deserve full acceptance**. Let us then meditate on them as they are words for us, today.

To this end we toil and struggle, because we have set our hope on the living God. Our Christian life is (or should be) a constant striving to co-operate with God, to blend the movement of our being—our energies—with God's divine presence, or grace, or energies. We "toil and struggle" to make room for God's liturgy in us, so that the Holy Spirit who always heals that which is infirm and completes that which is lacking, gradually reshape us in the image and likeness

of Christ. The saying is trustworthy: our hope is not some imaginary friend, or some lofty *concept of God*—rather, **we have set our hope on *the living God***.

Second, **do not neglect the gift you have received**. Perhaps we should capitalize it: the Gift. What we have received from the living God in Baptism is the seed of Christ's resurrection, a sort of leavening agent designed to grow in us and transform us. Just as dry yeast is activated by warm water, so also does the gift received at Baptism become active and effective when we expose ourselves, in prayer, in Scripture reading, in Liturgy, in works of charity, in service to one another, to the quickening work of the Holy Spirit.

This word is trustworthy and deserves full acceptance: we have set our hope on the living God. Let us not neglect the gift we have received.

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

From the Gospel according to Saint Luke

(Luke 18:35-43) At that time, as Jesus drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging; and hearing a multitude going by, he inquired what this meant. They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." And he cried, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" And Jesus stopped, and commanded him to be brought to Him; and when he came near, Jesus asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, let me receive my sight." And Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight and followed Him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

Today's Gospel tells of a spectacular conversion to Christ: a man becomes a follower of Jesus after the Lord cures him of his blindness miraculously, in an instant. If the Church has chosen this text for public reading, there is probably much to be learned from the healing of the blind man.

First, his physical blindness is a reminder that of all of us, fallen humans, are "blind" and "deaf" to God. To be healed and made well (this is what the word "salvation" actually means: healing) is possible only by divine intervention. We cannot cure ourselves of the separation from God. The blind man knew where to go to find healing—Jesus Christ. Since, as Scripture says, "The Lord is the same, yesterday and today" (Heb 13:8), then we also know who can heal us.

One impressive feature of this man is his stubborn faith. He cries out to the Lord "**Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!**" Even when some people try to silence him, he does not give up. He knows what he wants, and he has confidence that the Lord is the right one to ask for it: armed with this faith, he bulldozes his way through the hostilities of those around him, and *asks, and does indeed receive*.

Essentially, what is the blind man's faith? He believes it is the Lord—the God of Israel—who can do anything; but he also believes that this Lord is "the Son of David"—a true human being, one who feels what we feel, one who sympathizes with our weakness. *This* is the faith of the Church.

It is remarkable that the man uses his very "profession" (he is "professional beggar," one might say, because this is all he does) to gain salvation. The beggar becomes a beggar for Christ, just like the fishermen become fishers of men, and just like the thief on the cross steals Paradise with his confession of faith. Whatever we have and whoever we are can be placed in the service of Christ, so that we, too, can be saved.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dear Fr Bogdan and all the faithful of St Anthony Church:

May God bless you all. Many thanks to all for your kind hospitality and great love during my time with you. As always, I was made to feel very welcome and it was a joy to visit with you.

I especially appreciate your work with the other Orthodox churches in the area. You did a magnificent job planning the weekend and gathering all the Orthodox churches together for Vespers and Liturgy.

I also congratulate you on the fruitful work of all the ministries of St Anthony's; it was a great blessing to me to see your faithfulness to Christ and His Church. I am very pleased with your labors and encourage you to keep spreading Orthodoxy in the area and to continue to work in harmony with one another.

I thank you also for your generous gift to me. May God be with you and bless you as you continue in these efforts to further the Kingdom of God. Please share this message with all the parishioners at St Anthony Church.

Yours in Christ,

*Rt. Rev. Bishop THOMAS (Joseph), Auxiliary Bishop,
Diocese of Charleston, Oakland, and the Mid-Atlantic*

- **Today:** memorial for departed members of Ileana's family.
- **Many thanks** to all for a wonderful feast of Saint Anthony last Sunday—especially to those who have worked very, very hard to plan and “execute” everything, setting up, cleaning up, cooking, practicing and singing, etc. The pan-Orthodox Liturgy presided over by two hierarchs and lots of other clergy was a blessing, the church was full, and our common prayer was sustained by beautiful and powerful singing. The food was abundant and delicious, as befits a true feast; and we received solid nourishment from Archbishop Melchisedek's talk about monasticism.
- **House blessings.** If you wish to receive the blessing of Theophany in your homes, Fr. Bogdan is available Saturdays and Sundays afternoons/ evenings. Please email or call to schedule a visit!

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, 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).

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

DEPARTED: 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).