

SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



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TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST **20 November 2016**

TONE 5—Forefeast of the Entry Into the Temple of the Most-holy Theotokos. Ven. Gregory Decapolites (816). St. Proclus, Archbishop of Constantinople (446-447). Ven. Diodorus, Abbot of Yuregórsk (1633). Martyr Dasius of Dorostorum (3rd c.). Martyrs Eustace, Thespesius, and Anatolius of Nicæa (312). Hieromartyrs Nerses and Joseph; John, Saverius, Isaac, and Hypatius, Bishops of Persia; Martyrs Azades the Eunuch, Savonius, Thecla, Anna, and many other men and women who suffered in Persia (343).

FIRST ANTIPHON

Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised: in the city of our God and in His holy mountain. Refrain: Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us.

God is known in her palaces for a refuge. As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God. (R.:)

Glory... Now and ever... Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us.

SECOND ANTIPHON

The Most High hath sanctified His tabernacle. Holiness and majesty are in His sanctuary. Refrain: Save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead, as we chant to Thee, "Alleluia"!

This is the gate of the Lord, by which the righteous shall enter. (R.:)

Holy is Thy temple, and wonderful in righteousness. (R.:)

Glory... Now and ever... (Only begotten Son and Word of God ...)

THIRD ANTIPHON

Even the rich among the people shall entreat thy favor. The King's daughter is all glorious within: her raiment threaded with gold. TROPARION OF THE ENTRANCE OF THE THEOTOKOS (See below)

Virgins shall be brought to the King after her: her companions shall be brought unto Thee. TROPARION

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 5): Let us believers praise and worship the Word coeternal with the Father and the Spirit, born of the Virgin for our salvation. For, He took pleasure in ascending the Cross in the flesh to suffer death; and to raise the dead by His glorious Resurrection.

TROPARION OF THE ENTRANCE OF THE THEOTOKOS (Tone 4): Today is the prelude of God's good will and the herald of the salvation of mankind. In the temple of God, the Virgin is presented openly, and she proclaimeth Christ unto to all. To her, then, with a great voice let us cry aloud: Rejoice, O thou fulfilment of the Creator's dispensation.

KONTAKION OF THE ENTRANCE OF THE THEOTOKOS (Tone 4): The sacred treasury of God's holy glory, the greatly precious bridal chamber and Virgin, the Saviour's most pure temple, free of stain and undefiled, into the House of the Lord on this day is brought forward and bringeth with herself the grace of the Most Divine Spirit; her do God's angels hymn with songs of praise, for she is truly the heavenly tabernacle.

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon: *My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!
For He has regarded the humility of his handmaiden.*

The Reading is from the Epistle to the Hebrews

(Hebrews 9:1-7) **Brethren:** the first covenant has regulations for worship and an earthly sanctuary. For a tent was prepared, the out one, in which were the lamp stand and the table and the bread of the Presence; it is called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain stood a tent call the Holy of Holies, having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, which contained a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail. These preparations having thus been made, the priests go continually into the outer tent, performing their ritual duties; but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood which he offers for himself and for the errors of the people.

This text from the Epistle to the Hebrews has been chosen because we celebrate a feast of the Theotokos, namely her being brought to the Temple by her parents, to be consecrated to a life of complete devotion to God. It is, if you pay attention, nothing more than a brief description of the sanctuary in Jerusalem and its furnishings. Special attention is given to the structure of this building: the larger area, called "holy place", followed by an second one, smaller and completely inaccessible: "the holy of holies" (or "most holy place"). As the Apostle writes, while priests were constantly ministering in the holy place, the holy of holies was strictly forbidden. Only the high priest entered there, and only once a year.

But why is this description appointed for today? It is *not* because the Virgin is brought to the Jerusalem temple—a building long since destroyed, and which has no relevance for Christians anyway. Rather, we read about the "earthly sanctuary" because we are celebrating the Theotokos *who is herself*

an ideal temple of God. Just as the temple was designed to be a receptacle of the presence of God, the Glory, so also is the Theotokos the place where Christ, the very Glory of God, came to take on our human nature. As such, she is rightly praised in our hymns as “temple” and “ark” and “abode of God.”

Today’s feast that addresses us very directly. The Theotokos is not alien to our humanity; she is not “different” from us, but rather the pattern that each and every Christian is called to reproduce. What we see in her is precisely what we are called to become: temples in which the Glory of God abides (remember our invocation of the Holy Spirit: *come and abide in us!*), so that we can extend the presence of God to our neighbor. Today’s Gospel ends with the same kind of insistence on the Theotokos as our model: “Blessed rather are those who—like Mary the Theotokos—hear the word of God and keep it!”

She enters the Temple, so that she may one day receive and carry Christ in her womb. As for us, we have just entered the Nativity fast, and are preparing ourselves to receive and glorify the birth of our Lord. Through the prayers of the Theotokos, Savior, have mercy on us and save us!

TODAY’S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Gospel according to Saint Luke

(Luke 10:38-42; 11:27-28) **At that time, Jesus entered a village; and a woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at Jesus' feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving; and she went to Jesus and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." But Jesus answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her." As Jesus said this, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked!" But Jesus said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"**

If there is a “point” to our commemoration of the Virgin Mary, it is precisely the point that the Lord makes, emphatically, at the end of today’s Gospel: **Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!** The Gospel reading assigned for today speaks of another Mary, whose attitude is precisely that of the Theotokos: **Mary sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to His teaching. ... Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her.** Indeed, the icons of the Theotokos almost always portray her together with her Son, often pointing at Him, urging us to direct our gaze to Him. The Theotokos, in other words, is our supreme model in being conformed to the model set by Christ. She humbled herself and was obedient in response to Christ’s humbling Himself unto taking on our mortal flesh. She is the first reply, on behalf of all humanity, to God’s quest for us, fallen and lost creatures.

The two women in this Gospel are not to be taken as strict representatives of the “good” contemplative life (Mary) versus the “bad” active life (Martha)! We know, from the lives of the saints, that there are plenty of fishermen, carpenters, cooks, shepherds, etc who attained to the summits of holiness; and there are plenty of hermits, monastics, and other contemplative souls who were deluded and led astray.

If “Mary has chosen the good portion,” it is because she kept the Lord always in front of her; if Martha did not, it is because instead of remaining focused on the Lord while going about her business of hospitality, she seems to have buried herself in “many things”—to the point of giving more attention

to those anxieties than to Christ. Soon she becomes restless and irritated with her sister, and even takes the Lord to task: “Lord, do you not care...?”

It is easy to become distracted even while pretending to serve the Lord—and I can personally vouch for that. While participating in the Liturgy, reading the Scriptures, confessing our sins, interacting with fellow Christians, we are sometimes so engrossed in *what* and *how* we are doing those things that we forget *why* we do them. This happens every time we forget that all of these are, ultimately, means to an end, with the ultimate goal being Christ. Whenever we fall into this type of self-centeredness, we are admonished, like Martha, “you are anxious and troubled about many things; remember: *Christ* is the one thing is needful!” By the same token, “choosing the good portion” like Mary can take many forms: it all depends on our calling, our gifts, and the mission we receive from Him. It is possible—we see it in some of the saints—to remain with the Lord even in the whirlwind of every new day’s activities.

As we enter the period of the Nativity Fast, we are called to remember and to focus on the one thing truly needful. Confession is a wonderful opportunity to *re-orient* ourselves, that is to snap out of the distraction caused by self-centeredness, and to turn our gaze to “the Orient from on high”—our Lord and Savior whose Nativity is now approaching.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Nativity Fast: November 15—December 25.** The rule of fasting is to use these 40 days to re-orient ourselves on “the one thing needful”—the presence of God—by a richer prayer life in church and in private, by seeking peace and reconciliation with God and neighbor, by practicing charity, and by simplifying our diet (abstaining from animal products). Clergy and people alike are reminded of the great help we receive in the Mystery of Confession.
- **December 4, after Liturgy:** meeting of the Parish Council, to discuss the state and needs of our Cranberry outreach, and prospects for the months ahead. Meetings of the parish council are open to all parishioners.

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: Mark (Maura’s cousin), who is in a coma; following a car accident; Job; Maura; Christi, Janet, Ann; John and Mary Ann (Jean’s relatives); 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 (expecting); Christine, Phoebe, Tina. Garrett & Autumn, Benjamin – seeking the true faith.

DEPARTED: Diane (Georgia’s sister); Iosif (Cristina’s father); Victoria and Susan (mothers of Frank and Stacy); Richard (Minto) from Sts Peter and Paul; Bill; Dolores (Bingham); 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).