

SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
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TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

7 December 2014

TONE 1. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (397); Martyr Athenodorus of Mesopotamia (ca. 304); Martyr Philothea of Arges, Protectress of Romania (12th c.); Ven. John the Faster, of the Kiev Caves (12th c.); Ven. Gregory, Founder of Grigoriou Monastery (Mt. Athos—14th 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! (R.) O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead: save us who sing 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!"

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 PREPARATION OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY (Tone 3): Today the Virgin cometh to the cave where she will give birth in an ineffable manner to the Word Who is before all the ages. Rejoice, therefore, O universe, when thou hearest it heralded: Glorify Him, with the angels and the shepherds, Who chose to be seen as a new-born babe, the God Who is before all the ages.

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon: *The saints will rejoice in glory.
Sing to the Lord a new song!*

The Reading is from the Epistle to the Ephesians

(Ephesians 5:8-19) Brethren: walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in

the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is a shame even to speak of the things that they do in secret; but when anything is exposed by the light it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it is said, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart.

One of the principles of Orthodox theology is that whatever we see in Christ, our Lord, is destined for us, his followers. If He is truly God, we are also called to increasing likeness to God—a process called "deification." If we hear Christ proclaim, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12), we are also to become and act as "children of the light."

Today's Epistle reading has a rather lengthy list of *dos* and *don'ts*: not a random list, however, but one that reflects the process of entering and growing in the Christian life. First we hear *Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light!* This is very likely a fragment from a hymn that our Christian ancestors in the first century were using in their services. It speaks of fallen humanity as "dead" and "asleep," and then summoned back to life by God. He Who said "let there be light" at Creation now he re-creates us individually, by calling us to turn from darkness to the light of Christ. After this first step follows a "walking" in the light, a separation from the works of darkness, a careful journey fraught with danger.

To complete this difficult journey of living in Christ is possible only by being filled with the Holy Spirit. This is why the Apostle urges us to "**be filled with the Spirit!**"; this is why we begin all our prayers, individual and communal, with an invocation of the Holy Spirit: "O heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of truth come and abide in us!" Note that the presence of the Spirit, Whom we have received at Baptism, is "activated" in us in the Church's liturgical gathering, with its "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," when we are "singing and making melody to the Lord." It is in Liturgy

that we are receive the food and exercise our behavior for an everyday living as children of the light.

Overall, we are reminded that **the days are evil**—nothing new here—and called to “redeem time.” This is not simply “to make most of the time”. It means that, as Christians, as Spirit-bearers and children of the light, we ought to infuse this age with the presence of the Kingdom of God. We are called to *embody* the good tidings of this Advent season.

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

From the Gospel according to Saint Luke

(Luke 13:10-17) At that time Jesus was teaching in a synagogue on the sabbath. And a woman was there who for eighteen years had been crippled by a spirit; she was bent over, completely incapable of standing erect. When Jesus saw her, he called to her and said, "Woman, you are set free of your infirmity." He laid his hands on her, and she at once stood up straight and glorified God. But the leader of the synagogue, indignant that Jesus had cured on the sabbath, said to the crowd in reply, "There are six days when work should be done. Come on those days to be cured, not on the sabbath day." The Lord said to him in reply, "Hypocrites! Does not each one of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his ass from the manger and lead it out for watering? This daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound for eighteen years now, ought she not to have been set free on the sabbath day from this bondage?" When he said this, all his adversaries were humiliated; and the whole crowd rejoiced at all the splendid deeds done by him.

It is always good to be reminded that Jesus Christ was not a Christian: not only theologically, in the sense that we does not “belong” to us, but we belong to Him, but also in a basic, historical, sense. He was a first-century Jew, who was addressed as "rabbi" by both his disciples and his opponents, who was circumcised (we still celebrate his Circumcision on January 1), who kept the sabbath, went to the Jerusalem Temple and synagogues regularly. Today's Gospel says that he was **teaching in the synagogue**.

Nevertheless, this rabbi from Nazareth is a most unusual one! He not only teaches the Law, he also heals miraculously, and through both teaching and healing he claims extraordinary authority in challenging the synagogue authorities and in interpreting the Law.

The teaching we receive from today's Gospel is captured best by the famous phrase in Mark 2:27, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath!" Evidently, this applies just as much to us, Orthodox Christians. It is quite easy to idolize the externals of our faith—rules of worship, rules of piety, rules of Church discipline—and to treat them as independent realities, venerable in themselves. The Lord reminds the Pharisees (*and us*) that all religious laws and practices are only means to an end: they are meant to shape our awareness of God and to reorder our lives in relation to God. Ultimately, one's closeness to God is measured in the sensitivity towards all those created in the image of God. All "religion" that renders one callous and inattentive to the fellow human beings is delusion.

As for the miraculous healing—a chronic illness goes away "at once"—the Gospel speaks about more than just this extraordinary incident. We hear that the woman was "crippled *by a spirit*," so that "she was bent over, completely unable of standing erect," and then that "*Satan* had her bound for eighteen years." The crippled state of the woman is an image of fallen humanity: crippled, infirm, hopelessly under the power of the evil one. Like the woman, we receive, with the advent of the Lord, the truly Good News, "you are set free of your infirmity!"

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Wednesday, December 17, 6:15-8 pm: Fellowship and Study Group in Cranberry. We will be reading and discussion Saint Ignatius of Antioch's Epistle to the Ephesians. The text will be available on the parish website (under "News and Current Events").

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 24:

- **9am:** service of Royal Hours of Nativity
- **6pm:** Vespers Divine Liturgy, followed by parish potluck

Sunday, 11 January, 1:30 pm: Outdoor Blessing of the Waters. After Divine Liturgy, we will gather at Lake Arthur in Moraine State Park, joining the parishes of Sts Peter and Paul and St Andrew, as well as the nuns at Transfiguration Monastery. The blessing of waters will "expand" our celebration of the Lord's Baptism by bringing the blessing of the Jordan to all of creation.

Sunday, 18 January: Feast of Anthony the Great, our patron saint. As we did in previous years, we will be hosting our brothers and sisters from the other two Orthodox parishes, donate the collection to the nuns of Transfiguration Monastery (since they are the followers of Saint Anthony, "the father of monasticism"), and learn something about how the life and teachings of Saint Anthony can help us today. Our speaker will be **Dr. Timothy Becker**, a student of the Fathers and an ardent seeker for the fullness of Truth, who received his doctoral degree after working with one of the very important Orthodox scholars today, Fr. John McGuckin.

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: Rick and Seba (Michaels), Bill and Ann, Ron, George (Georgiades), Christine (Abraham), Jim, Tony, Samantha, Luke (relatives of Dollie's), Norma, Richard (Michaels), Victoria (Frank's mother), Richard (Johns), Bill, Ed, Peter, Georgia and Scot, Sam, Karen (Joanna's mother), Diane, Sula, Dollie, Dolores (Bingham), Karyn, Ignatius and Amy, John, Jonathan and Joanna, Andrei and Nyoka, Benjamin, John, Janet, Craig, Christy (relatives of Jean). Shea and Katie (and newborn Judson), Timothy and Carolyn – seeking for the true faith.

DEPARTED: Phyllis (Seba's sister), Angeliki, Metropolitan Philip; Joe and David Sipos; Bill (Georgia's father-in-law), Glenn (Jean's grandson); Stella, Edmund (Ed's uncle), Richard, Dolores Patricia (Thompson), 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).