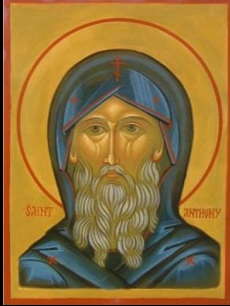


SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



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SUNDAY OF THE BLIND MAN (6th after Pascha)

25 May 2014

TONE 5— Hieromartyr Urban, Pope of Rome (230); Hieromartyr Therapon of Cyprus (14th c.).

FIRST ANTIPHON

Shout with joy to God, all the earth; sing to His Name, make his praise glorious! (R.:) Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us! Say to God: How awesome are thy works; let all the earth worship Thee, and sing to Thee! (R.:) Glory ... Now and ever... (R.:)

SECOND ANTIPHON

May God have mercy upon us, and bless us, and may He cause His Face to shine upon us, and have mercy on us! (R.:) O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead: save us who sing to Thee: Alleluia! That Thy way may be known upon earth, thy salvation among all nations! Let the nations give thanks to Thee, O God, let all give thanks to Thee! (R.:) May God bless us, and may all the ends of the earth fear Him! (R.:) Glory... Now and ever... (Only begotten Son ...)

AT THE LITTLE ENTRANCE

TROPARION OF 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 ST ANTHONY THE GREAT (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 PASCHA (Tone 8): O Christ God, though Thou didst descend into the grave, yet didst Thou overthrow the power of Hades, and rise as an Immortal Conqueror. Thou didst greet the myrrh-bearing women with joy, and to Thine Apostles Thou didst send Thy peace, and to the fallen O Lord, Thou didst bring resurrection.

KONTAKION FOR THE SUNDAY OF THE BLIND MAN (tone 4): To thee I come, O Christ, blinded in my soul's eyes like the man blind from his birth, and crying unto Thee in repentance: "Thou art the Light of transcendent radiance to those who are in darkness!"

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Thou, O Lord, shalt keep and preserve us. Save me, Lord, for the godly man has failed.

The Reading is from the Acts of the Apostles

(Acts 16:16-34) In those days, as we Apostles were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by soothsaying. She followed Paul and us, crying, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." And this she did for many days. But Paul was annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, "I charge you in the Name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out that very hour. But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the rulers; and when they had brought them to the magistrates they said, "These men are Jews and they are disturbing our city. They advocate customs which it is not lawful for us Romans to accept or practice." The crowd joined in attacking them; and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely. Having received this charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened and every one's fetters were unfastened. When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out and said, "Men, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their wounds, and he was baptized at once, with all his family. Then he brought them up into his house, and set food before them; and he rejoiced with all his household that he had believed in God.

Starting with Pascha night, much of what we read in the biblical book entitled "The Acts of the Apostles" deals with the resistance posed to the Good News of Christ's death and resurrection for us. Today's reading shows that this fierce opposition is both spiritual and physical, both seen and unseen, both the work of demonic powers and that of human administrators of power. More specifically, we read about the spiritual battle between the apostles and a woman possessed by a "spirit of divination"—that is, a spirit that gave this woman the ability to foretell the future—and about the sufferings of the apostles at the hand of the city's economic and political establishment.

The apostles are mocked, beaten, and thrown in jail. The pretext given is, more or less, "disturbance of public order" and spreading ideas considered to be dangerous to the public good. In reality, however, it all boils down to money: the owners of the woman (she was slave), seeing that the apostle had exorcized her, and that she had lost her magical powers, understood **that their hope of gain was gone**. *This* is why they stirred up the crowd; *this* is why the entire city turned against the apostles.

On the first point, however (the spiritual combat), there is some unclarity. The woman who had magical powers was actually not doing anything wrong. **She followed Paul and us, crying, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation."** Nevertheless, Saint Paul found it necessary to exorcize the spirit that was working through her, so that she completely lost her magical abilities. Why?

Briefly put, because the demon was attempting to subordinate the Good News and the evangelistic work of the apostles to its own influence. By accompanying Paul and Silas and, as it

were, “advertising” them as spiritual authorities, the woman was also placing herself with them in the same general category of “spiritual stuff.” As a matter of fact, pagans never objected to including the God of Israel in the large family of divinities worshipped throughout the Roman Empire; the problem was the stubborn affirmation, by Jews and Christians, that the Lord is the only true God. As such, the demonic strategy we see at work in today’s reading becomes clear: reject the radical message of the Gospel by relativizing it, by making it appear as one among many roads to self-fulfillment and salvation.

The message for us is clear, and it is formulated in the dialogue between the jailor and the apostles: “What must I do to be saved?” And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”

TODAY’S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Gospel according to Saint John

(John 9:1-38) At that time, when Jesus was passing, He saw a man blind from his birth. And His disciples asked Him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him. I must work the works of Him Who sent me, while it is day; night comes, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” As He said this, he spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle and anointed the man’s eyes with the clay, saying to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam.” So he went and washed and came back seeing. The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar, said, “Is not this the man who used to sit and beg?” Some said, “It is he”; others said, “No, but he is like him.” He said, “I am the man.” They said to him, “Then how were your eyes opened?” He answered, “The man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash’; so I went and washed and received my sight.” They said to him, “Where is He?” He said, “I do not know.” They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. The Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, “He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.” Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for He does not keep the Sabbath.” But others said, “How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?” There was a division among them. So they again said to the blind man, “What do you say about Him, since He has opened your eyes?” He said, “He is a prophet.” The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight, and asked them, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?” His parents answered, “We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age, he will speak for himself.” His parents said this because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if any one should confess Him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, “He is of age, ask him.” So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, “Give God the praise; we know that this man is a sinner.” He answered, “Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see.” They said to him, “What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?” He answered them, “I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you too want to become His disciples?” And they reviled him, saying, “You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where He comes from.” The man answered, “Why, this is a marvel! You do not know where He comes from, and yet He opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, God listens to him. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, He could do

nothing.” They answered him, “You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?” And they cast him out. Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him He said, “Do you believe in the Son of God?” He answered, “And who is He, Sir, that I may believe in Him?” Jesus said to him, “You have seen Him, and it is He who speaks to you.” He said, “Lord, I believe”; and he worshiped Him.

It is not by an arbitrary decision that the Church assigns readings from the Gospel of John for the period starting with Pascha. Saint John the Evangelist (or “the Seer”, or “the Divine”) has left us with the most spiritual of the four Gospels; his symbol, befitting his lofty theology, is the eagle. Much of the stories in this Gospel are pointing to a higher truth, one that lies beyond the mere facts that are being narrated.

So it is with the story of the paralytic, read a couple of weeks ago. The words of the Kontakion for that Sunday are to the point: *As Thou didst raise up the paralytic of old, so also raise up my soul paralyzed by sins and thoughtless acts; so that being saved I may sing to Thee: Glory to Thy majesty, O gracious Christ!*

So also it is with today’s story of the blind man. Let us first note a significant about the manner in which Christ heals him: **he spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle and anointed the man’s eyes with the clay.** These words send us to the Book of Genesis, where the Creator makes Adam out of the dust of the earth, as a potter would mold a statue out of the clay. We understand that *the same One* who once made Adam from the earth now mercifully “repairs” the broken vessel of His Image.

This Sunday’s Kontakion reads: *To thee I come, O Christ, blinded in my soul’s eyes like the man blind from his birth, and crying unto Thee in repentance: Thou art the Light of transcendent radiance to those who are in darkness!* Thus, the physical healing, spectacular as it was, is only a shadow of the man’s coming to see and recognize *Who it is* that heals him. The story ends with a dialogue between Christ and the man, and the latter’s response invites us to join in a confession of faith: “Do you believe in the Son of God?” ... He said, “Lord, I believe”; and he worshiped Him.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today: Trisagion for departed members of Dollie’s family: Joseph and David Sipos; Thelma and Thomas (Dollie’s parents); Agnes and George (grandparents); Fred, Doris, Terry; Sadie, Abraham, Mike, Beatrice; Daniel, Clara; Samuel, Lois; Michael, Betty, Martha; Ralph; John.

Wednesday May 28: Vesperal Liturgy for the Feast of the Lord’s Ascension, **6:30pm.**

Saturday, 7 June: Bible Study CANCELED (wedding service in Pittsburgh)

Ladies’ Retreat: July 11-12

Church Picnic: Sunday, August 17, American Legion in Highfield

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: Luke (Dollie’s grandson), 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), Angelica, Karyn, Ignatius and Amy, Jonathan and Joanna, Andrei and Nyoka, Benjamin, John, Janet.

DEPARTED: Metropolitan Philip; 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).