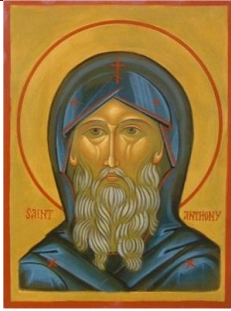


SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

www.orthodoxbutler.org

ADDRESS: 400 S. Sixth Avenue, Butler, PA 16001

RECTOR: Rev. Bogdan Gabriel Bucur

CONTACT: 724-287-6983 (church); 412.390.8208 (priest);

frbogdan@orthodoxbutler.org

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

21 July 2013

TONE 3 — Prophet Ezekiel (6th c. B.C.). Ven. Simeon of Emessa, Fool-for-Christ, and his fellow ascetic, Ven. John (ca. 590).

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 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 hath delivered us from the depths of Hades, granting the world great mercy!

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 FOR ORDINARY SUNDAYS (Tone 2): O Undisputed intercessor of Christians, the mediatrix who is unrejected by the Creator, turn not away from the voice of our petitions, though we be sinners. Come to us in time with aid, as we cry unto thee in faith; for thou art good. Hasten to us with intercessions O Theotokos, who dost ever intercede for those who honor thee.

Please remember in your prayers

LIVING: pr. Joseph, Richard, Sam, Lisa, Richard (Johns), George (Georgiades), Bill, Ed, Peter, Georgia and Scot, Karen, Victoria, Diane, Sula, Dollie, Dolores, Angelica, Karyn, Jonathan and Joanna, Andrei and Nyoka, Ignatius and Amy, Benjamin, John.

DEPARTED: Hilda (Chris Abraham's mother), Helen (Fr. Wargo's mother), Andy (Michaels), Jeannie (Ferver), Edmund, Richard, Dolores Patricia, Leatrice, Ed, Joseph, Fred (Dollie's uncle), Bob, Michael, Gabriel, Eugenia, Trevor, Faynasia.

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon: The Lord is my strength and my song. The Lord has chastened me sorely.

The Reading is from Saint Paul's Letter to the Romans

(Rom 6:18–23)

Brethren: having been set free from sin, we have become slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹ I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once yielded your members to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now yield your members to righteousness for sanctification. ²⁰ When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹ But then what return did you get from the things of which you are now ashamed? The end of those things is death. ²² But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the reward you get is sanctification and its end, eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In the days of Saint Paul, slavery was, quite simply, a fact of reality, part of “how things work.” And it is precisely to “how things work” that the Apostle makes reference in order to make himself understood. As he says, “**I am speaking in human terms, because of your limitations.**” In today’s Epistle reading, Saint Paul uses the social reality of slavery to speak about the ways in which humans negotiate their relationship with sin and righteousness, spiritual death and spiritual life, spiritual slavery and spiritual freedom.

In a few verses, he reminds us that **we have been set free** (6: 18.22)—not simply given the freedom, but freed in view of a wonderful reward: **the fruit you get is sanctification and its end, eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord** (6:23). This is, “translated” by the metaphor of freedom from slavery, the good news we have received at Pascha and Pentecost: first, that Christ has risen, has undone the tragic separation from God, and has thus healed the ancient wound—mortality—of human nature; second,

that this new and resurrected life which is in Christ, is now gradually infused into those who bind themselves to him in faith and love.

Saint Paul finds it necessary to warn that the life in Christ is incompatible with the lifestyle of the Fall. What slave would disregard his new freedom, and continue to live in subjection to his former master? Now that you are free, don't live like a slave: **as you once yielded your members to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now yield your members to righteousness for sanctification.**

Truth be told, we all know that one's conversion to Christ is not easy to sustain in the daily life. Like a slave who for a while still retains some of the habits deeply ingrained during slavery, we maintain sinful practices and sinful attachments of the body, the mind, and the heart. Saint Paul knew this well, since elsewhere he depicts the reward of our freedom as the ability to be engaged in an athletic race (1 Cor 9:24): a *process* of daily yielding "ourselves and our entire life" to Christ.

In short, rather than hearing "since you are have been set free from sin, become slaves of righteousness!" as a call to push an on/off switch, we should hear it as a call to "get going" and "keep going."

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Gospel according to Saint Matthew

(Mat 8:5-13)

When he entered Capernaum, a centurion approached him and appealed to him, ⁶ saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, suffering dreadfully." ⁷ He said to him, "I will come and cure him." ⁸ The centurion said in reply, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof; only say the word and my servant will be healed. ⁹ For I too am a person subject to authority, with soldiers subject to me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come here,' and he comes; and to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does it." ¹⁰ When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, "Truly I say to you: in no one in Israel have I found such faith. ¹¹ I say to you, many will come from the east and the west, and will recline with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the banquet in the kingdom of heaven, ¹² but the children of the kingdom will be driven out into the outer darkness, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth." ¹³ And Jesus said to the centurion, "You may go; as you have believed, let it be done for you." And at that very hour (his) servant was healed.

For those who were around our Lord when he met and spoke to this centurion, as well as for the first hearers and readers of the Gospel, it must have been quite shocking to see a Roman centurion set forth as the model for what it means to lead a life in faith. A centurion? A Roman officer? But this was, first of all a pagan! Not only that, but also a member of the arrogant and brutal Roman occupation. (Imagine what it would be for a Muslim in Afghanistan to hear in the mosque that a certain John Smith, a Christian and U.S. major in the 82nd Airborne Division, should be considered as a model of what it is to be a good Muslim!)

And yet, the centurion is our model. The Lord himself commends him in the strongest possible words: "Truly I say to you: in no one in Israel have I found such faith!" *Such faith*: the faith that is proposed as a model for us to emulate. There are quite a few things that are noteworthy.

First, the centurion understands that Christ holds *authority*. He does not mean authority over the ragtag bunch of Jews who follow him. The centurion is convinced that the Lord has supreme divine authority, so as to command that someone be healed. Whether this Roman soldier imagined the paralysis to be demon-induced, or whether he thought in more strictly medical terms, he was convinced of Jesus' authority to "say with the word" and make those words reality at once. "Such faith," indeed!

Imagine also how embarrassing it must have been for a Roman officer to come searching for some Jewish miracle-worker, and beg him for a healing by professing faith in the supernatural authority of said Jew! In short: faith with humility, humble faith.

What is most impressive is the fact that the centurion is not asking a favor for himself, he is interceding for somebody else—namely for his servant! The centurion is impressive because of how he understands his own authority. He cares for his servant, and does not ignore his pain: **my servant is lying at home paralyzed, suffering dreadfully.** For his suffering slave, the officer is willing to embarrass himself in front of the populace only to obtain the miraculous healing.

The centurion displays love, humility, and unwavering faith; no wonder the Church proposes him as a model.

When it was written, this Gospel text was a statement about how God was calling even pagans to salvation. To quote from a similar text in an earlier chapter of Matthew (Mt 3:9), “do not say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham!”

If we, today, were to think that we are now “safe” because we are precisely those pagans whom God has made sons of Abraham, we would terribly misguidedly. This Gospel is also a call to humility for us. Let us try the following exercise in actualizing its message: “**Truly I say to you, in no one among the Orthodox have I found such faith**”; “**do not say to yourselves, ‘we are sons of the Orthodox Church! I tell you that God can create Orthodox out of these very stones!’**”

May God’s grace help us become true children of Abraham, true imitators of the centurion, and true disciples of Christ.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Today:** memorial service for the departed members of the Joseph and Sipos families, and for Frank Harrison’s father.

Parish picnic at Dollie Sipos’ house!
(119 Maple Grove Drive)

- **Sunday, July 28:** Trisagion for the departed family members of George and Venetia Georgiades (Panayiotis, Martha Andromache, Nikephoros, and Irene)
- **Saturday, August 3, 5:30 – 6:15 pm:** **BIBLE STUDY**, followed by the Paraklesis of the Theotokos. We will focus on the parable of the sower (Matthew 13).
- **Sunday, August 4:** Chris Abraham invites us to picnic at her place (142 Hoffmann Lane, Renfrew, PA 16053). Potluck meal, everyone welcome!
- **Tuesday, August 6:** for the **Feast of the Transfiguration** everyone is invited to drive up to the Monastery of the Transfiguration in Ellwood City. Orthodox parishes from the entire region are going on this day pilgrimage. It is not only very beautiful, but also an occasion to participate in Divine Liturgy and Holy Unction. This year the nuns will host His Grace, Bishop John Abdallah (our former dean), who will preside and deliver the homily.