

SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

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SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

9 October 2011

On this day, we commemorate the righteous patriarch Abraham and his nephew Lot; Apostle James, son of Alpheus; hieromartyr Dionysius Bishop of Paris, Bishop (ca. 258); Deaconess Publia the Confessor, of Antioch (4th c.); Venerable Andronicus and his wife Athanasia, of Egypt (5th c.).

LIVING: Diane, Abie (Abraham), Sula, Bill, Norm, Fran, George (Botsis), Dolores (Sipos), Leatrice (Totin), Dolores (Bingham), Angelica, Karyn, Brian, Maria, Marius, Justin, Sara, Miguel, Christine.

DEPARTED: priest James, Eduard, Lance, Nancy, Petruța, Peter, Michael, William, Mariana, James, Mary Ann, Michael.

FIRST ANTIPHON

*It is good to give praise unto the Lord, and to chant unto Thy Name, O Most High! **R.:** 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.:) Save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead, 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! Save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead, who sing to Thee: “Alleluia”!

TROPARION OF THE RESURRECTION (Tone 8): From the heights Thou didst descend, O compassionate One, and Thou didst submit to the three-day burial, that Thou might deliver us from passion; Thou art our life and our resurrection: O Lord, glory to Thee!

TROPARION OF HOLY APOSTLE JAMES (Tone 3): O Holy Apostle James, intercede with our merciful God to grant our souls forgiveness of sins.

Glory... TROPARION OF SAINT ANTHONY (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 FOR ORDINARY SUNDAYS (Tone 4): O undisputed intercessor of Christians, the mediatrix who is unrejected by the Creator, turn not away from the voice of our petitions, although 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.

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Pray and make your vows to the Lord your God! In Judah is God known.

The Reading is from the Second Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

(2 Cor 6:16-7:1)

Brethren, we are the temples of the living God; as God said, "I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and make holiness perfect in the fear of God.

Last Sunday, the Epistle's message was encapsulated in Saint Paul's appeal to the Corinthians and to all of us: **I urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain!** As we continue reading, we receive today the following word: **We are the temples of the living God; God said, "I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God!"**

Let us note, first of all, that Saint Paul says speaks of "the living God." This is neither some vague "higher being" out there, nor some abstract notion of "God" that provides an explanation for all that we do not understand about ourselves and the world. "The living God" is the God of whom the patriarchs and prophets have testified, the One whom they met and whose power they experienced; the God whose Face the Apostles have seen in the Face of Jesus Christ; the One whom we address as "Father," who adopts us as his beloved children. The religious supermarket of our days offers many types of "gods" and "idols" to bow down to. Yet, the only God worth worshipping, the only God that can touch and heal our lives is the "living God," the God who has come to lived our life and vanquish our death.

Our state is far from ideal: it is a state of servitude, uncleanness, and estrangement. However, God—the living God—cares for his creature, and seeks us out. How does this intimacy with God look like? Scripture provides us with icons that give us a glimpse of this mysterious encounter, which words fail to describe.

One such image is that of a face-to-face encounter, “like a friend speaks to his friend”: this is how Moses experiences God on Mount Sinai (Exod 33:11). Another image is that of God “walking” among his people: God moves about in the garden of Eden (Gen 3:8), later in the tent of worship (2 Sam 7:6), in the camp of Israel (Deut 23:15), and, more generally, He is in the midst of chosen people (Lev 26:12). This is also what Saint Paul says about Christians: **I will move among them, and I will be their God.** Finally, there is the image of a temple filled with the luminous presence of God. Just as the temple was designed to be a receptacle of the glory of God, so also are we called to become temples of Christ, sacred places where the very Glory of God is present and from which the light of glory shines out into the world.

In short, then, to be a Christian means to strive to become a temple of God. This involves, of course, an effort on our part. God’s voice beckons us: **Come out, be separate, touch nothing unclean ... let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement.** To take one’s faith seriously means to engage in an ongoing struggle to separate oneself from whatever is evil, ugly, impure, and contrary to our covenant with God in Christ. This growth in holiness (“**to make holiness perfect,**” as Saint Paul writes) is not a matter of solitary effort, but a cooperation between us and God; essentially, it means making ourselves more and more available to the work of grace in our mind, soul, and body.

Any place that has been consecrated and turned into a worship site must be kept clean and beautiful. It is not different in our case: advancing in holiness calls for repeated consecration of ourselves to God. Let us be encouraged by the words of the Holy Apostle, **We are the temples of the living God!** and **I urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain.**

TODAY’S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Gospel according to Saint Luke
(Luke 7:11-16)

The next day Jesus went to a city called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him. As he drew near to the gate of the city, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a large crowd from the city was with him. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her "Do not weep." And he came and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young

man, I say to you arise." And the dead man sat up and began to speak. And he gave him to his mother. Fear seized them all; and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!"

Some of the miracles that the Lord performed may seem a bit trivial from the point of view of His great mission. So, for instance, is the miracle of changing water into wine at the wedding in Cana; or the multiplication of breads and fishes. Other miracles might strike us as "unfair" because of their partiality: why did he heal some people, and not all sick people? And, in case of today's Gospel, why did he raise *this* boy, and not *all* children who, to this day, die before their parents' eyes? "He had compassion," Saint Luke says; the boy was the only son of her mother, and she was a widow who would have been left alone, powerless to care for herself in the society of that day and age—so Jesus had compassion. Well, why *then* and not *now* and *always*? Why did He have compassion on *that* widow mother and not on *all* those in similar circumstances?

Sometimes the Church does not have easy or soothing answers. And that is because the Church is preaching the Gospel, not fairy tales. Part of the Good News is that the Kingdom has *already* come, but *not yet* "in full power"—*already but not yet!* We are still waiting for the world to be transformed into the image and likeness of the risen Christ; we are still praying, "Thy Kingdom come!"; and our Liturgy is already a foreshadowing, but not yet *that day*.

Remember that the people who ate of the breads that had been miraculously multiplied eventually became hungry again; the guests at the wedding went back to drinking regular water and wine the next day; and the son of the widow, like Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead, eventually died. Christ did what we call "miracles" drawn by compassion and, in the case of Cana, at the intercession of his mother. And yet, these are only a foreshadowing of the true miracle: the Resurrection of Christ, which opens the door for our resurrection.

Lazarus, the friend of the Lord, as well the young boy from Nain, and each and every one of us who believe and confess Christ, are going to be like He is: "risen"—that is, freed from mortality, so that we no longer die; feasting in the age to come with love and joy that never grow sour and are ever renewed. This is what we confess in the Creed: "I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life *of the world to come!*"

All of this, however, begins here and now. It begins, as—again—the Creed states, with “I acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.” Whether baptized as children or coming to the faith later in life, this is our first resurrection, when the grace of God reveals Christ in us: “**Young man, I say to you arise!**” and we start on a journey from this first resurrection—“conversion”, if you wish—to the Resurrection we expect in the age to come. The young man in Nain stands for each one of us.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today:

- 40-day memorial for Father James Deep and 1-year memorial for Mariana, Ileana Șerbănescu’s sister. Please stay on for to share the common koliva and the meal prepared by the Șerbănescu family.
- meeting of the parish council.

Next Saturday: Vespers 6pm, followed by Intro to Byzantine Chant.

Sunday School is for Grown Ups, Too! While teaching our children, we should also be mindful of the fact that grown ups are also in need of learning more about Orthodoxy. Let us find a Saturday in October, November, or December in which we can meet for a half day. We can have two 1-hour “lectures” of sorts, a couple of breaks, and then questions and answers. The point is that we all make some progress in our understanding of the faith.

Fr. Bogdan would be available on the following Saturdays:

Oct 15, Oct 29, Nov 5, Nov 12, Nov 26, Dec 10, Dec 17.

Donations for the Chalice: We need to replate our larger chalice, in preparation for our patronal feast of St. Anthony (Jan 17). This is our common cup, to which we are all called to “draw near in fear of God, with faith and love.” As a symbol of that unity and equality, we are collecting no more than 5 dollars per person.