

SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

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SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PASCHA

5 June 2011

Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council (325); Martyrs Marcian, Nicander, Hyperechius, Apollonius, Leonidas, Arius, Gorgias, Pambo, and the women martyrs Selenia and Irene (Egypt, +310); Hieromartyr Dorotheos of Tyre (+361); Abba Dorotheus of Gaza (6th c.).

FIRST ANTIPHON

Clap your hands, all you peoples; shout to God with songs of rejoicing! (R.)

Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us!

For the Lord, the Most High, is awesome, a great king over all the earth! (R.)

Glory... Now and ever... (R.)

SECOND ANTIPHON

Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in His holy mountain! (R.) Save us, O Son of God, Who didst rise from us into glory to the heavens; who sing to Thee: Alleluia!

God is known in her palaces, when He undertakes to help her. (R.)

For behold, the kings of the earth assembled, they came together. (R.)

Glory... Now and ever... (Only begotten Son ...)

THIRD ANTIPHON

Hear these words, all you nations; give ear, all you that dwell upon the earth. My mouth shall speak of wisdom; and the meditation of my heart shall bring forth understanding. I will incline mine ear to a parable: I will open my riddle on the harp. TROPARION OF ASCENSION (see below)

AT THE LITTLE ENTRANCE

Save us, O Son of God, Who didst rise from us into glory to the heavens; who sing unto Thee: Alleluia!

TROPARION OF RESURRECTION (Tone 6): When Mary stood at Thy grave, looking for Thy sacred body, angelic powers shone above Thy revered tomb. And the soldiers who were to keep guard became as dead men. Thou led Hades captive and wast not tempted thereby. Thou didst meet the Virgin and didst give life to the world, O Thou, Who art risen from the dead, O Lord, glory to Thee.

TROPARION OF THE ASCENSION (Tone 4): Thou hast ascended in glory, O Christ our God, and gladdened Thy Disciples with the promise of the Holy Spirit, having become confident of the blessing. Verily, Thou art the Son of God, and Deliverer of the world.

TROPARION OF THE HOLY FATHERS (Tone 8): Thou, O Christ, art our God of exceeding praise Who didst establish our holy Fathers as luminous stars upon earth, and through them didst guide us unto the true Faith, O most merciful One, glory to Thee.

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 OF THE ASCENSION (Tone 6): When Thou didst fulfill Thy dispensation for our sakes, uniting the terrestrials with the celestials, Thou didst ascend in glory, O Christ our God, inseparable in space, but constant without separation, and crying unto Thy beloved, I am with you, and no one shall be against you.

LIVING: We pray for the health and well being of Diane, Abie (Abraham), Sula, Fran, George (Botsis), Dolores (Sipos), Leatrice (Totin), Dolores (Bingham), Angelica, Karyn, Brian, Maria, Marius, Justin, Sara.

DEPARTED: Lance, Nancy, Petruța, Peter, Michael, William, Mariana, James, Mary Ann, Joseph, Katherine.

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon:

*Blessed art Thou, O Lord, the God of our Fathers.
For Thou art just in all Thou hast done.*

*The Reading is from the Acts of the Apostles
(Acts 20:16-18, 28-36)*

In those days, Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he might not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hastening to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost. And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church. And when they came to him, he said to them: "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God which he obtained with the blood of his own Son. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities, and to those who were with me. In all things I have shown you that by so toiling one must help the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" And when he had spoken thus, he knelt down and prayed with them all.

We are hearing today the words Saint Paul addressed to “the elders of the church”: words of advice from one who knew the crucial importance of the ministry of a priest or bishop. **“Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God which he obtained with the blood of his own Son.**

Obviously, the job of the “overseer” is not simply one of administration! Saint Paul speaks of the *Holy Spirit* assigning certain individuals to that ministry. Nor is the community (“the flock”) simply an association of pious individuals: The very existence of the Church is the work of God, who has established it “with the blood of His own Son.” Consequently, this flock is a community of people who have responded to God’s call, deciding to become collaborators with Christ, allowing Him to complete His work of salvation in them.

Finally, the Christian life is nothing but the continuation of Christ’s life in us and among us. This is not only a matter of fidelity to some lofty ideal, but the way to make life truly beautiful and meaningful; in short, one who practices generosity, forgiveness, and love is the first to benefit from it: **It is more blessed to give than to receive!**

The words of Jesus Christ about the joy of giving are not recorded in the Gospels; Saint Paul must have learned them from the first eye-witnesses of the Lord. He quotes them not as something new and unknown, but as a saying that was quite familiar to the Christians in Ephesus. Let it become a saying familiar to us as well: if we are living as brothers and sisters, taking care of each other, in turn forgiving and asking forgiveness, comforting and being comforted, it is because, as our Master said, **“You’re far happier giving than getting!”**

TODAY’S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Gospel according to Saint John

(John 17:1-13)

At that time, Jesus lifted up His eyes to heaven and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify Thy Son that the Son may glorify Thee, since Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom Thou hast given Him. And this is eternal life, that they know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent. I glorified Thee on earth, having

accomplished the work which Thou gavest Me to do; and now, Father, glorify Thou Me in Thy own presence with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was made. I have manifested Thy Name to those whom Thou gavest Me out of the world; Thine they were, and Thou gavest them to Me, and they have kept Thy word. Now they know that everything that Thou hast given Me is from Thee; for I have given them the words which Thou gavest Me, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from Thee; and they have believed that Thou didst send Me. I am praying for them; I am not praying for the world but for those whom Thou hast given Me, for they are Thine; all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine, and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to Thee. Holy Father, keep them in Thy Name, which Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, even as We are one. While I was with them, I kept them in Thy Name, which Thou have given Me; I have guarded them, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves.”

By ascending to heaven, Christ reenters the glory of God. As the Church proclaims in singing “Save us, O Son of God, Who didst rise from us into glory to the heavens; who sing to Thee: Alleluia!” Yet, there is nothing new or extraordinary in the fact that the Son should share the glory of the Father, because He took on human being without forsaking His divinity, and He is now returning, as the Gospel says, “**to the glory which I had with Thee before the world was made.**”

The new and extraordinary reality is that the One who ascends is both God and man: He takes into the presence of God—into God’s very glory—the humanity He shares with us. As such, He truly is our representative, our forerunner, going to prepare a room for us in the Kingdom of our Father: “**If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to Myself, so that where I am you also may be**” (John 14:2-3).

In the meantime, however, we are on earth while He is in heaven. It feels, as it felt for the Apostles, as though we are orphaned, or widowed, or left behind by our closest friend. The Lord knew this well, and His prayer to the Father is precisely for us: **And now I am no more in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to Thee. Holy Father, keep them in Thy Name.** And to His disciples and to us, He spoke these words of reassurance:

“I will not leave you orphans” (John 14:18).

We see this fulfilled at Pentecost. For now, let us note that “being kept in God’s Name” (that is, abiding in the presence of God) is measured by a very visible and concrete indicator. **Father, keep them in Thy Name *that they may be one, even as We are one.*** In other words, we abide in God to the extent to which we, the Church, mirror the unity of love that constitutes the very glory shared by the Father and Son and Holy Spirit.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Following his Ascension visit, Bishop Thomas was very impressed with the dedication of our parishioners, and thrilled by what he described as a loving and enthusiastic atmosphere. In his view, we are walking in the right direction (always important!); our job is to be faithful and to persevere, trusting in the grace and growth that come from the Holy Spirit.

Many thanks to all those who worked at preparing the visit of Bishop Thomas! The church was clean, the food abundant and delicious, the singing beautiful. In addition, we have new hooks and chains for the icon lamps, to better protect the icons (thanks to Leigh and Ed), and the cross on top of the church—the most visible sign of a Christian community!—has been repaired by Silviu and Andrei.

Saturday, 12 June: Vespers at 6:30, followed by our discussion group. Even if you usually don’t attend Saturday Vespers, try to join us for these monthly “Intro to Orthodoxy” meetings. We are reading from Nicholas Cabasilas’ “Life in Christ” (posted on the parish website, under “About Orthodoxy”).

Saturday, 18 June: “Kibbee Seminar”! As agreed, the younger ones will have an opportunity to learn from the older generation at Saint Anthony how to make excellent kibbee. “Endorsed by the bishop!” (really!)

Parish picnic: decision needed! Some people incline towards joining the other two churches for a pan-Orthodox Liturgy and picnic in the park; others think that we should stay “in the family” this year and organize our own picnic (with fishing!) near the home of Abie Abraham, our oldest parishioner.