

SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

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SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

24 July 2011

Great-Martyr Christina (3rd c.); Passion-bearers Boris and Gleb (+ 1015)

“Passion-bearers” are, especially in Russian piety, persons venerated for having died in a Christ-like manner. Even though—as is the case with Boris and Gleb, commemorated today—their deaths might have occurred because of political, economic, or some other reasons, they reflect the innocence, piety, and non-resistance with which our Lord received His death.

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

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

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.:) 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 4): 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. CHRISTINA (Tone 4): Thy ewe-lamb, Christina, O Jesus, doth cry unto Thee with a loud voice: My Bridegroom, I long for Thee and in struggles seek Thee. I am crucified and buried with Thee in Thy Baptism, and for Thee I do suffer until I reign with Thee. I die for Thee that I may live in Thee. Receive her who for Thy sake was slain, as a blameless sacrifice. Through her intercessions, since Thou art merciful, save our souls.

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, 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.

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon:

*Thou, O Lord, wilt preserve us and keep us from this generation.
Save me, O Lord, for the godly one have vanished.*

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

(Rom 12:6-14)

Brethren, having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; he who teaches, in his teaching; he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who contributes, in liberality; he who gives aid, with zeal; he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Never flag in zeal, be aglow with the Spirit, and serve the Lord. Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints, practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.

Saint Paul often speaks about the community of disciples of Jesus Christ as forming the Body of Christ. You can think of Christ as being the head, or perhaps better, the heart of this organism. If, then, we are all members of the Body of Christ, it means that we are, at the same time, (1) all nourished and kept together by the same life-giving presence of God, and yet (2) each of us uniquely distinct. The same Spirit flows through and enlivens the community of Christ believers—the way all members and organs in our body are nourished by the same blood pumped by the heart; yet each of us receives the work of the Holy Spirit in a manner that constitutes a personal and intimate gift—the way each member of our body is different from other members.

Whatever gifts we have received also become a responsibility. We are all called to put to work the manifold abilities we have received. Yet the Church is not a “pious club” gathering periodically and performing worthy activities; these things already exist and do a better job than we do. By contrast, the heart of the Church is the risen Christ and the new life that is in Him. If we speak of virtues and vices, we actually speak of gradually tasting

and embodying that new life. And the medium where such tasting of the Resurrection is possible is the grace of the Holy Spirit.

So the point, according to Saint Paul, is to be “aglow with the Spirit”: the Spirit who reminds us of the hope we have as disciples of the Lord, so that we can complete our journey joyously; the Spirit who comforts us in our afflictions, so that we can bear our cross with patience; the Spirit who gently nudges us to present our hearts to the Lord in prayer; the Spirit who opens us up to feel the needs of others, and who empowers us to welcome one another, that is, to be hospitable to the presence of each other without judgment.

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Gospel according to Saint Matthew
(Mat 9:1-8)

At that time, Jesus got into a boat, crossed over and came to His own city. And behold, they brought to Him a paralytic, lying on his bed; and when Jesus saw their faith He said to the paralytic, “Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven.” And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, “This man is blaspheming.” But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, “Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—He then said to the paralytic—“Rise, take up your bed and go home.” And he rose and went home. When the crowds saw it, they marveled, and they glorified God, Who had given such authority to men.

A well-known Gospel story is recounted here. A paralytic brought to Jesus receives his healing instantaneously, in a spectacular manner. The crowds are right to marvel, for they see a man who seems to have as much authority over creation as God. Indeed, we read that God said, “Let there be light” and it was light; “let the dry land come forth” and dry land came forth; “let it be!” and whatever his command was, it came to be. So also now: He said to the paralytic, “Rise, take up your bed and go home.” And the paralytic rose and went home.

No less impressive is the fact that the Lord also has immediate knowledge of what people are thinking to themselves—“*knowing their thoughts, he said*” ...

The first lesson we draw from today’s Gospel is that Jesus Christ heals and forgives because He is truly God. And it is also God alone who knows our heart, our hidden inner selves, more intimately than we know it ourselves.

But it is also important to pay attention to another very significant detail of the story. Note the beautiful relationship between the paralytic and the four men who bring him in on a pallet. Undoubtedly, these are real friends. They have not left their paralyzed friend behind to run and meet God; and that is why, in the very dedication with which they take their paralytic friend to Jesus, they also find God. The Evangelist writes: “**when Jesus saw their faith He said to the paralytic, “Take heart, my son”**” Note: “**when Jesus saw *their* faith**”! The Lord always emphasizes the importance of faith; only this time it is the faith of the others that saves the paralytic.

Christianity “by oneself” is a fiction, and can be a dangerous delusion (I owe this insight to a blessed monk!). If we are to be saved, we are saved by cooperating with God’s grace and in relation to others; it is only sin that is strictly “individual.” Indeed, the Church strives to embody the model set forth in today’s Gospel. Through fasts and feasts, *we* are journeying, *we* praise God, *we* commit to God ourselves and each other, *we* give thanks, *we* draw near the chalice in faith and love—a love that also binds us together and even vanquishes the horror of death. In short, we are exercising ourselves into becoming “we”: the Body of Christ made up of many members, and are learning to call God not only “my God” but “our Father.”

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today:

Following the Divine Liturgy, we will have the one-year memorial service for Joe Sipos and Kate Thomas.

Pan-Orthodox picnic. Following Divine Liturgy, anyone interested can join the parishioners of the other two churches at the American Legion in Highfield. Food is catered, we have ten free tickets!

Many thanks to all those who have contributed to making our parish picnic such a joyous event. We had a truly wonderful time, and it was great to see many new faces and to discover so many new talents! Chris (Abie's wife) has launched an open invitation for next Sunday, to anyone willing to stop by and wish Abie "Happy 98th birthday"!

Next Saturday, 30 July: Great Vespers 6pm (not 6:30pm!), followed by our discussion group (7-8pm). We will be reading and discussing Nicholas Cabasilas, "The Life in Christ", chapter 6 (pp. 50-52). The PDF of the text can be downloaded from our website (under "About Orthodoxy").

Next Sunday, 31 July: STUMP THE PRIEST! Instead of a sermon, come prepared with questions (if you would like to ask an anonymous question, leave a note at front St Anthony's icon). We will try to repeat this once a month.