

SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

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ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

28 August 2011

Righteous Anna the Prophetess, who met the Lord at the Temple in Jerusalem (1st c.);
Ven. Moses the Black of Ethiopia (4th c.); Martyr Susanna, Princess of Georgia (5th c.).

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

DEPARTED: priest James, 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! 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 2): When thou didst submit thyself unto death, O Thou deathless and immortal one, then Thou didst destroy Hell with Thy godly power, and when Thou didst raise the dead from beneath the earth, all the powers of heaven did cry aloud unto Thee: "O Christ, thou giver of life glory to thee!"

TROPARION OF MOSES THE BLACK (Tone 1): Thou didst prove to be a citizen of the desert, an angel in the flesh, and a wonderworker, O Moses, our God-bearing Father. By fasting, by vigil, and by prayer thou didst obtain heavenly gifts, and thou healest the sick and those that have recourse to thee with faith. Glory to Him who hath given thee strength; glory to Him that hath crowned thee; glory to Him that worketh healings for all through thee.

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 THE NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS (Tone 4): By thy holy birth-giving, O pure one, Joachim and Anne were delivered from the reproach of barrenness; and Adam and Eve were delivered from the corruption of death; thy people do celebrate it, having been saved from the stain of iniquity, crying unto thee: "The barren one gives birth to the Theotokos, who nourisheth our life!"

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 First Epistle to the Corinthians

(1 Cor 9:2-12)

Brethren, You are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. This is my defense to those who would examine me. Do we not have the right to our food and drink? Do we not have the right to be accompanied by a wife, as the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living? Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Who tends a flock without getting some of the milk? Do I say this on human authority? Does not the law say the same? For it is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does he not speak entirely for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of a share in the crop. If we have sown spiritual good among you, is it too much if we reap your material benefits? If others share this rightful claim upon you, do not we still more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ.

In reading the Epistles of Saint Paul to various Christian communities—Corinthians, Thessalonians, Romans, etc—we must remember that these were actually private letters, written in response to a variety of pressing needs. Today's text, for instance, is mostly about the money and, generally, about the material support that Christians ought to give to the apostles and to those who minister to them. Some in Corinth were leveling all kinds of accusations against the Apostle Paul, forcing him to make the following biting reply: "if we have planted spiritual seed among you, is it out of line to expect a meal or two from you?" Indeed, the attitude of those critics in Corinth was quite shameful!

Saint Paul replies in a way that would be appropriate for his accusers: he explains his actions, puts them in context, and finds biblical grounding for

his own views. Ultimately, however, the bottom line is the following: **Brethren, you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. This is my defense to those who would examine me!** In other words, it is the good fruit of his apostolic ministry that is the only criterion by which he accepts to be “evaluated.”

Even if today’s Epistle does not provide much lofty theology, there is good reason for the Church to have assigned to public reading this banal dispute about finances. One reason is that for Christians *everything* matters—food and drink, the management of money, and the host of material and social circumstances within which we lead our lives. Our life in Christ is not elsewhere and at some other; it is none other than our life in the body, here and now: the same life in the same world, but lived in the light of Christ’s resurrection, guided by Christ’s teachings, and sustained by the hope and joy of the Holy Spirit.

TODAY’S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Gospel according to Saint Matthew

(Mat 18:23-35)

The Lord spoke this parable: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the reckoning, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents; and as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him the lord of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. But that same servant, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat he said, 'Pay what you owe!' So his fellow servant fell down and besought him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' He refused and went and put him in prison till he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you besought me; and should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his lord delivered him to

the jailers till he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to everyone of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

Today's Gospel text offers a most vivid representations of the Good News. We should remind ourselves of this parable every time we pray the verse in the Our Father "forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (which is what the Lord's Prayer actually says!).

The first thing to note is that the first servant is quite deluded about his ability to pay off his debt to the king. He asks for a delay, thinking that he might be able, eventually, to repay the debt. In reality, the debt simply cannot be paid off. By contrast, the debt owed by the second servant to the first is not only manageable, but quite small: it is clear that with a bit more time, the second servant would be able to repay what he owed.

This is all about us. The Lord says: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants..." Obviously, the king in the parable is the very king of heaven: God. And God deciding to settle his accounts with his servants is a terrifying idea. We know this from the Psalm: "If you should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?" However, the Psalmist continues, "But with God there is forgiveness." And that is what we also hear in today's parable: the king responds favorably to the servant's plea. In fact—and this is very important—he replies with much greater generosity than expected: since he knows that the debt is too high to ever be repaid, he simply forgives the debt! This, in essence, is the Gospel: the Son of God, the only one who has authority from God to forgive (Mat 9:6), has come to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed (Luke 4:18). To use the imagery of today's parable: "He has canceled the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us ... and He has taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross" (Col 2:14).

The Lord's Prayer ties our receiving forgiveness to our forgiving others. In our parable this point is made very vividly. Apparently, the servant who has just received complete forgiveness of debts does not understand the magnitude of this gift. He refuses to forgive a small debt owed to him by the second servant, and, furious ("seizing him by the throat"!) demands justice. And the fact is that he is actually right! If he was able to have his debtor "put in prison till he should pay the debt," it is because those were the legal provisions of the time.

The king, however, who knows both justice and mercy, cannot be led by the nose by any appeals to “law” and “justice”: **You wicked servant! Should you not have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?** And the punishment is nothing but delivering the wicked servant to his own judgment: **Pay what you owe!**

It is a terrifying truth, but, ultimately, the choice is ours. Do we want justice or mercy? The mind of the Church is clear on this topic: nobody can travel to God on the road of justice (again: “If you should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?”). Therefore we pray: *Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us; for laying aside all excuse, this prayer we bring to You: have mercy on us!*” The implications for the way in which we handle our relationship with the neighbor should be abundantly clear.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Archpriest James Deep, the first pastor of our community (1970-1992), has fallen asleep in the Lord. The viewing will take place today at St. George’s Church in Bridgeville (610 Dewey Ave., Bridgeville, PA 15017) from 6-8pm, followed by the funeral service, led by His Grace, Bishop Thomas. The Divine Liturgy followed by funeral will be held on Monday at 10am, with Bishop-elect John Abdallah presiding. We ask all parishioners to sign the sympathy card that will be sent to Fr. James’ daughter; those who knew Fr. James are welcome to attend the viewing and services at St. George’s in Bridgeville.

Saturday, 3 September (first Saturday of the month):

Vespers, 6pm, followed by Discussion Group.

Sunday, 4 September (first Sunday of the month):

Psalm singing, 9:15AM; Divine Liturgy 10 AM – STUMP THE PRIEST!

SUNDAY SCHOOL! A new year of Sunday School will start with the blessing of the children, parents, and teachers on Sunday, September 11. More details are forthcoming from our three wonderful teachers this year, Stephanie, Jennifer, and Stacey.