

SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

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FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

9 September 2012

—Tone 5. The Holy and Righteous Joachim and Anna, “the Forebears of God”;
Commemoration of the Third Ecumenical Council (431).

FIRST ANTIPHON

Remember, O Lord, David and all his meekness. R.: Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us!

Lo, we have heard of it in Ephratha, we have found it in the plains of the wood. (R.:)

Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be shaken. (R.:)

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

SECOND ANTIPHON

The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David, and He will not annul it: “Of the fruit of thy loins will I set upon thy throne.” R.: O, Son of God, Who art risen from the dead: save us who sing to Thee, Alleluia”!

There will I make to spring forth a horn for David, I have prepared a lamp for My Christ. (R.:)

For the Lord hath elected Zion, He hath chosen her to be a habitation for Himself. (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 5): Let us believers praise and worship the Word co-eternal 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 FOR THE NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS (Tone 4): Thy Nativity, O Theotokos, hath proclaimed joy to the whole world; for from thee hath dawned the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God, annulling the curse and bestowing the blessing, abolishing death and granting us life everlasting.

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.

Glory ... TROPARION OF STS. JOACHIM AND ANNA (Tone 2): As we celebrate the memory of Thy righteous Ancestors, O Lord our God, through them we beseech thee to save our souls.

Now and ever ... KONTAKION FOR THE NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS (Tone 4): By thy holy Nativity, O immaculate one, Joachim and Anna were freed from the reproach of childlessness, and Adam and Eve from the corruption of death. This thy people, redeemed from the guilt of offences, celebrate by crying to thee: "The barren woman giveth birth to the Theotokos, the nourisher of our life!"

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon: *O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance.
Unto Thee, O Lord, will I cry, O my God!*

The Reading is from Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians
(Gal 6:11-18)

Brethren, see with what large letters I am writing to you, with my own hand. It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that would compel you to be circumcised, and only so that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For even those who receive circumcision do not themselves keep the law; but they desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh. But far be it from me to glory, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision: what counts is to be a new creation! Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule, upon the Israel of God. Henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.

“God forbid that I should boast except in the Cross”: Saint Paul does not boast in his religiosity, scrupulous as that may have been. He boasts in the One on the Cross, God in the flesh, the God-man embracing our most bitter enemy: death. Beholding Christ on the Cross, the living Truth immersed in death, that He may defeat our death with His Resurrection, he urges his readers – us – to enter into the “new creation” that is in Christ. And there is no other access to this state of “being in Christ” except the Cross and the Resurrection.

It is clear that Saint Paul is writing here about a matter he views as extremely important. The first line about the “large letters” means something like “I want to emphasize in the bold scrawls of my personal handwriting the immense importance of what I have written.” What was the problem? Saint Paul was writing to warn the Galatians against certain Christian leaders who compelled all new converts to the faith to practice circumcision. He warned that such “missionaries” were in fact interested in cultivating their own public image in the Christian community, while at the same time “keeping a low

profile” in the larger society, so as to avoid prosecution by the Roman Empire (as long as Christians would be perceived as a type of Judaism, they would not be persecuted, but tolerated, like the Jews).

The false missionaries were not “crazy” to insist on circumcision; it was, to them and to many, a definite mark of religious piety. Today, it would be things like not eating certain foods on certain days, dressing in a certain way, abstaining from this or that, etc. Saint Paul’s point is that, ultimately, all these things must be placed in a different perspective: what truly matters is not that *we* do this or that, or that *we* keep this or that rule of piety; **what matters is that we become a “new creation”**—and this is *God’s* work in us. Indeed, As the Apostle writes elsewhere (2 Cor 4:6), the same God who spoke at creation, *let there be light*—and it was light, now shines in our hearts, drawing us out of darkness and re-creating us into children of the light. “A new creation” means that our Christian life is *God’s* liturgy in us, where we are *co-workers* with God.

TODAY’S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Gospel according to Saint John

(John 3:13-17)

The Lord said, "No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him."

The Church has selected this text to be read on the Sunday prior to the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross (September 14). We learn that there is only one *access* to God, namely the cross of Jesus Christ, uniting earth and heaven; and that those who place their hope in the Crucified One shall inherit the eternal life of his Resurrection. This is why, as we hear in today’s reading from the Apostle, a Christian is not ashamed or embarrassed that God the Son has accepted death by crucifixion; on the contrary, we “glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified

to me, and I to the world.” The Gospel section ends with a crucial statement that should accompany us in our Christian life: **God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.**

The message preached by our Lord and entrusted for us to live by and to bring to the world is called “the Good News”: the good news about a good, gracious, forgiving, and healing God, who draws near to us, brings His Kingdom into this world, opens up the gates of Paradise, and bids us enter; a God who makes repentance—turning around to Him—worthwhile and appealing, because He promises not to bear a grudge; a God who helps us to live and die with courage by showing through His own example that death is the first step into the Resurrection. A good God, who has come not to condemn us, but to save us.

Somehow, we must always be reminded that the Good News is truly *good*; otherwise we tend to remake God in the image of our own fears, and disfigure the Gospel into some kind of “grim news” about condemnation, destruction, and punishment. What kind of God would want to bully us into repenting? And what fruits would such a “repentance” bear? God is waiting that we may be convinced of His love and grace: He sent the Son into the world to save us, not to condemn us; whoever believes in Him does not perish, but tastes eternal life!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

A **big *thank you*** to all who have pledged to offer their support for Ignatius and Amy. Remember: “it is better to give than to receive!”

A **new year of Sunday School** will start with the blessing of the children, parents, and teachers on Sunday, September 16.

Saturday 29 September, 6:30 PM: *Introduction to Orthodoxy!* We will learn about the life of Anthony the Great, as told by St Athanasius of Alexandria. After some Q&A, we will conclude by praying together the Akathist of St. Anthony the Great.

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: Ed and family, Peter and family, Georgia and Scot, Richard (Michaels), Karen (Joanna’s mother), Victoria (Frank’s mother), Diane, Sula, Fran, Dolores (Bingham), Angelica, Karyn, Ignatius and Amy, Jonathan and Joanna, Andrei and Nyoka, Jackie (Ed’s friend).

DEPARTED: David (Sipos), Edmund (Ed’s uncle), Richard, Dolores Patricia (Thompson), Leatrice (Totin), Ed (Joanna’s grandfather), Abie, Nicolae (Silviu’s father), Joseph (Rose’s father), Fred (Dollie’s uncle), Bob (Diane’s father), Michael, Gabriel, Lance, Nancy (Dunkle), Eugenia (Cristina’s godmother).