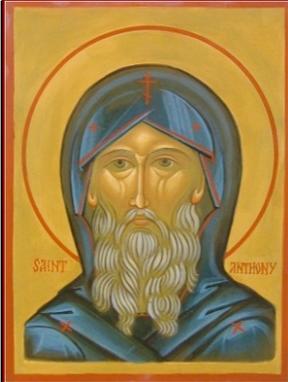


SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



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THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

25 January 2015

tone 8—Gregory the Theologian, Archbishop of Constantinople (389); Martyr Felicitas of Rome, and her seven sons (ca. 164); Ven. Publius, Ascetic, of Syria (ca. 380); St. Mares the Singer, of Syria (ca. 430).

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.) O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead: save us 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! O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead, save us 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 SAINT GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN (Tone 1): The shepherd's pipe of thy discourse in theology conquered the trumpets of the philosophers; for since thou didst search out the depth of the Spirit, beauty of speech was added to thee. But intercede with Christ God, O Father Gregory, that our souls be saved!

Glory ...

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.

Now and ever ...

KONTAKION OF THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST (Tone 1₁): Thou, O Christ God, Who by Thy Birth, didst sanctify the Virgin's womb, and, as is meet, didst bless Simeon's arms, and didst also come to save us; preserve Thy fold in wars, and confirm them whom Thou didst love, for Thou alone art the Lover of mankind.

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon: *My mouth shall speak wisdom,
and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding.*

From the Epistle to the Hebrews

(Heb 7:26-8:2) Brethren, it was most fitting that we should have such a High Priest, holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and more exalted than the heavens, who has no need, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices daily, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people; for this He did once for all, when He offered up Himself. For the Law appoints

men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, perfected for evermore. Now in the things which we are saying the chief point is this: We have such a High Priest, who sat down at the right hand on the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a liturgical minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which was pitched “by the Lord,” and not by a human.

We read this passage from the Epistle to the Hebrews today because we remember Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, “Gregory the Theologian” as he is called in Church—that is, the one who spoke of God in words inspired by God, with godly eloquence, to enlighten the Church of God, to reprove and bring to light even the enemies of God. As bishop of the small town of Nazianzus and, for a short time, archbishop of Constantinople, he was exemplary: a high priest in whom Christians saw the image of the true High Priest—Jesus Christ—ministering with love to those placed in his care.

Indeed, Jesus Christ is, as our advocate before God (see John 14:16), the “High Priest.” In the days of Ancient Israel, the high priest would bring the prayers of the people and their confession of sin before the Lord in the innermost chamber of the Temple (“the holy of holies”), and then emerge bearing God’s blessing and forgiveness to all.

When the earliest Christians, our ancestors, spoke of Jesus as “High Priest” ministering in the true tabernacle, they imagined heaven as “holy of holies” and Christ as the one who entered heaven as humanity’s representative. Humanity is, since Adam, in a state of exile from Paradise, kept away from the Tree of Life so that evil would not be made eternal. The Good News is, precisely, that, in Jesus Christ, humanity is again made “compatible” with God. How so? Because the Son of God came to be one of us, and when returned to His glory, he entered into the heavenly place as one of us. As such, Christ is our *true* high priest: not a bearer of sacrificial animals, but bringing Himself as an immaculate offering. We call Him in the Divine Liturgy “both the Offerer and the Offering.”

In the Christian Church, the bishops are those called and blessed to function as living icons of Christ by leading the people of God in their self-offering of prayer and good works, and in their liturgical offering of bread and wine, to the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit. A true bishop is one who is increasingly becoming Christ-like in his ministry: in Saint Gregory of

the Theologian, whom we commemorated today, the Church recognizes the icon of the preacher of God's revelation, good shepherd and seeker of the lost.

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

From the Gospel according to Saint Luke

(Luke 19:1-10) At that time: He entered Jericho and was passing through. And there was a man named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector, and rich. And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not, on account of the crowd because he was small of stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus make haste and come down; for I must stay at your house today." So he made haste and came down and received him joyfully. And when they saw it they all murmured, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have defrauded any one of anything, I restore it fourfold." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

This Sunday's Gospel reminds us of the confession of faith we make every Liturgy, before receiving Holy Communion: **the Son of Man came to seek and to save those who are lost.** The Evangelist tells of someone who was truly "lost" to God: a certain Zacchaeus, who had become filthy rich by abusing his tax-collector job. Not only was he a collaborator of those who oppressed and abused his compatriots (he was collecting taxes for the Roman occupants of Judaea); like most tax-collectors of his day, he was making himself rich in the process, extorting higher taxes than was actually demanded, taking bribes, and, generally, satisfying his insatiable greed by any means available.

Any decent person would despise tax-collectors. In fact, "tax-collector" had become an insult used to suggest the worst kind of character. As for this

particular tax-collector, after years and years of abuses, Zacchaeus had come to be hated by everyone. This is why the crowd is absolutely stunned and outraged when the Lord chooses to single out *this man*, seek him out, speak to him, and even invite himself under his roof! Saint Luke tells us how the crowd reacted: **they all murmured, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner."**

The people were right: Zacchaeus was a sinner, an evil person, a filthy, despicable kind of sinner. Yet, the Lord who knows the heart of man, must have seen something there. For us, who are ready to judge by appearance, it is surprising to read that this terrible sinner was nevertheless happy to receive Christ under his roof—**"he received him joyfully"**—and to change his life radically. In short, Zacchaeus repents, turns around, cuts himself off from evil, attempts to make up for his past misdeeds, and entrusts his past, present, and future to the mercy of God.

Who is our teacher this Sunday? Is it the crowd, is it the apostles? Neither. *It is Zacchaeus!* Like him, we must start with acknowledging our being "lost"—the first among sinners, as we confess at Liturgy—and accept "joyfully" the visitation of God. (Incidentally, a prayer of the service of house blessing states explicitly that we ask the Lord to enter our home, *just as He accepted to enter under the roof of Zacchaeus!*). If we follow the model of this tax-collector who repents, we will also share with him the joy of hearing from the Lord: **"Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Glory to God who gives skill and wisdom to those who seek Him with their whole heart!** We rejoice over the completion of the large icon of the Mother of God *Platytera* (“wider [than the heavens]”). In addition, Dollie has also finished an icon of the Holy Myrrhbearing Women in memory of all the women who have lovingly offered up their time, efforts, and talents from the founding of the parish until today.
- **Many thanks** to all for a wonderful feast of Saint Anthony last Sunday! The pan-Orthodox Liturgy was a blessing, the church was packed, and our common prayer was sustained by beautiful singing. As for the generous spread of food, we have received many compliments from the parishioners of St Andrew and Sts Peter and Paul. May they get the bug!
- **Next Sunday:**
 - memorial Trisagion for the newly departed Rick Michaels
 - Sunday school resumes. Teens are asked to read the Thanksgiving Prayers after Communion, and then meet (shortly) with Fr. Bogdan.
- **House blessings.** If you wish to receive the blessing of Theophany in your homes, Fr. Bogdan will be available on Saturdays and Sundays afternoons and evenings. Please email or call to schedule a visit!

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: Seba, Lisa, and Sam (Michaels), Bill and Ann, George (Georgiades), Christine (Abraham), Jim, Tony, Samantha, Luke (relatives of Dollie's), Norma, Victoria (Frank's mother), Richard (Johns), Bill, Ed, Peter, Georgia and Scot, Sam, Karen (Joanna's mother), Diane, Sula, Dollie, Dolores (Bingham), Karyn, Ignatius and Amy, John, Jonathan and Joanna, Andrei and Nyoka, Benjamin, John, Janet, Craig, Christy (relatives of Jean); Yvonne (Ben's mother).

Ron, catechumen; Shea and Katie, Timothy and Caroline – seeking for the true faith.

DEPARTED: Rick, Phyllis (Seba's husband and her sister), Angeliki, Metropolitan Philip, Joe and David Sipos; Bill (Georgia's father-in-law), Glenn (Jean's grandson); Stella, Edmund (Ed's uncle), Richard, Dolores Patricia (Thompson), Leatrice (Totin), Ed (Joanna's grandfather), Joseph (Rose's father), Fred (Dollie's uncle), Bob (Diane's father), Michael, Gabriel, Hilda (Chris Abraham's mother).