

SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

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THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

21 June 2015

TONE 2 — Martyr Julian of Tarsus in Cilicia (3rd-4th c.). Hieromartyr Terence (Tertius), Bishop of Iconium (1st c.); St. Julius, Presbyter of Novara, and his brother, St. Julian the Deacon (5th c.); Martyrs Archil II (744) and Luarsab II (1622), Kings of Georgia.

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 has girt Himself! (R.) Save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead, as we chant 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 ...)

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 2): When Thou didst submit Thyself unto death, 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 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 ORDINARY SUNDAYS (Tone 4): 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: The Lord is my strength and my song. The Lord has chastened me sorely.

The Reading is from the Epistle to the Romans

(Rom 5:1–10) Brethren: since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us. While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Why, one will hardly die for a righteous man—though perhaps for a good man one will dare even to die. But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we are now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. Not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received our reconciliation.

In trying to explain what Christ was done for humankind, Saint Paul writes to the Christians at Rome that through Christ we are given **access to God** and the possibility of **sharing the glory of God**. A few lines further, he offers a different explanation: through Christ's blood we are saved from the wrath of God. The lofty idea of "sharing the glory of God"—being transformed, that is, being made holy—seems utterly separate from the frightful notion of "God's wrath" being appeased by the blood of Jesus' sacrifice. How are these two images both true and compatible, and why would the Apostle write in both these ways?

Saint Paul is expressing his Christian faith and theology by drawing on the Holy Scriptures of Israel. That is where we should first look for the meaning of "glory" and "blood," and seek to understand their connection.

Ancient Israel had a sacrificial religion: sacrifices all many kinds (oxen, lambs, birds) were brought to the temple, for a variety of reasons. It is not that God's wrath needed to be "appeased" by blood of animals; rather, by offering a sacrifice, the giver acknowledged his

wrongdoing, and symbolically offered himself to God. The priests who brought the sacrifices and prayers of the people before God did this with a precise understanding: **“This is the thing which the Lord has spoken; do it, so that the glory of the Lord may appear among you”** (Leviticus 9:6). In short, the point of sacrifices and prayers was to be able to receive “the glory of God.” But what is this “glory”?

“Glory” is, in Scripture, much more than some vague “honor” given to God. The “glory” is the concrete way in which God manifests himself as a fiery presence to the patriarchs and prophets. Whenever the glory of God manifests itself, the receiver is changed. So, for instance, after his face-to-face with God, “like a friend speaks to a friend” (Exod 34), the face of Moses becomes intensely luminous. This is what “glorification” is.

And what is the “wrath”? Well, it is none other than the glory of God experienced as a consuming (rather than cleansing and illumining) fire when one is not properly disposed or prepared to meet God. So, for instance, the same glory that Moses sees as the burning bush (Exodus 3) sometimes descends in judgment as a destructive fire against slanderers and persecutors; the same glory of God who guides the fugitive Hebrews as a luminous pillar, holds the incoming Egyptian army at bay. This is the “wrath of God.”

Let us, then, return to today’s Epistle. Saint Paul speaks about the same reality—what living in Christ “does to us”—in two different ways, both of them soundly rooted in the life of ancient Israel. Through Christ’s sacrifice on our behalf we are no longer enemies of God, and, thus, “we are saved from the wrath of God.” Being saved from the wrath of God, **“we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God.”** Our hope is for the glorification that will encompass soul and body in the renewed world of the universal Resurrection. But that hope is rooted in the joy that we start experiencing here and now!

TODAY’S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Gospel according to Saint Matthew

(Mat 5:14-19) **The Lord said to his disciples: “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them, but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”**

Note just how highly the Lord speaks about his disciples: **“You are the light of the world!”** And He does not mean only the twelve apostles, or those three among them who receive special attention (Peter, James, and John). Christ is speaking here to *all* those who would be his disciples throughout all times and places; this is a saying for *all* insiders of the faith.

But are we, who count ourselves Christians, really the light of the world? Isn’t the same Gospel according to Matthew warning us about *the darkness* that is in us? **(If your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then, the light in you is**

darkness, how great is the darkness!) Besides, doesn't the Lord say clearly in the Gospel of John: "**I am the light of the world**" (John 8:12)? How does He now call us "the light of the world"?

Yet, the Church—the community of Christ's disciples—is, in the language of Scripture, "the bride of Christ." And the bride shares in all that the bridegroom has. This, indeed, is a great mystery, as Saint Paul writes! Christ, who is the true Light, shares Himself with us, enlightens our darkness, kindles the fire of divine presence in us, and works in us to make us also into children of the light. This is the covenant we have entered into by Baptism, this is the yoke of faith: to be yoked together with Christ, to learn to live with God and in God, feeding on God's very life and light.

The Holy Fathers who have defended and defined the Orthodox faith at the Ecumenical Councils call all of this "deification": a gradual process of becoming godlike. Nothing new here: the Lord Himself said that a perfect disciple is *like his master* (Luke 6:40), doing the same works as the master or even "greater works" (John 14:12).

Let us also note that Christ explains the point of being called to deification: "**You are the light of the world . . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.**" Whatever we receive from God is not out possession, but should become in turn a gift to others. As on Pascha night, when the priest calls out "Come receive the Light," we approach and light our candle only to pass it on to those next to us.

What all of this boils down to is the following: we are, indeed, *called to be* a light in the world; we can only fulfill this calling to be a light to others by allowing the true Light, Christ our true God, to enlighten *our* darkness first; finally, the light that we are to bring to others is the light of Christ: his mercy and meekness and grace and love.

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: pr. Paisius; Sue (Stacey's mother); Stelian (Cezar's father); Seba, Lisa, and Sam (Michaels), Norma, 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); John and Julie (Smolen); Dennis, Vincent, Roy and Laura, Danny, Danny, Cathy (relatives of John and Julie); Diane; Tim and Caroline (Becker).

Ron, catechumen; Shea & Katie, Garrett & Autumn – seeking for the true faith.

DEPARTED: Dorin, Daria; Patrick (Rose's brother); Josephine (Julie's sister); Hieromonk Roman (Braga); priest Thomas (Hopko); Emil (Cristina's uncle), Cristian (Andronic); Timothy (John and Julie Smolen's nephew); Rick, Phyllis (Seba's husband and sister), Angeliki, 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), Alfred.