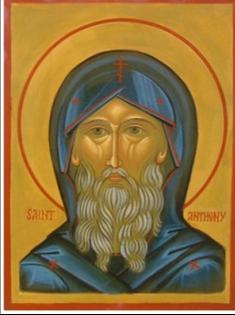


SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



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SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

27 September 2015

TONE 8— Apostles Mark, Aristarchus, and Zenas, of the Seventy (1st c.). Martyr Epicharis of Rome (3rd c.). Martyrs Callistratus and his company (304). Ven. Ignatius, Abbot in Asia Minor (963-975). Ven. Sabbatius, Wonderworker of Solovétsky Monastery (1435).

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 ...)

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 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 FOR ORDINARY SUNDAYS (Tone 4): O protection of Christians that cannot be put to shame, mediation unto the Creator most constant, O despise not the suppliant voices of those who have sinned; but be thou quick, O good one, to come unto our aid, who in faith cry unto thee: Hasten to intercession, and speed thou to make supplication, thou who dost ever protect, O Theotokos, them that honor thee.

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon: *Make your vows to the Lord our God and perform them.
God is known in Judah; His Name is great in Israel!*

From the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians.

(2 Cor 6:16-7:1) Brethren, we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them," says the Lord, "and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and make holiness perfect in the fear of God.

When God made a covenant—a binding agreement—with our ancestor in the faith, the patriarch Abraham, he promised two impossible things: that Abraham and Sara, old and childless, would have biological offspring, and that, although they were aliens in the Holy Land, their descendants would own that land as their own. And "in exchange," as it were, God asks of Abraham: "walk before me and be blameless" (Gen 17:1).

God seems to require *the impossible!* How realistic was it to expect Abraham to be "blameless," without fault, perfectly pure? And how realistic is it to expect, as the Apostle writes today, that we "**cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit**"? How can we "**make holiness perfect**"? If you think this is just a radical expression of the Apostle, remember the similar words of the Divine Liturgy: "the holy things are for *those who are holy!*"

God seems to require *the impossible*. True. But it is also true that if we are thinking of God "over there" making such requirements of us "over here"—well, then we are missing the whole point. Let us start with the Orthodox confession of faith: "God became man, so that man may be deified." He did not simply *order* us to "be like God," or make a heavenly proclamation that we should; rather, He came among us, became one of us, so as to lead the way to God; and He sent the Holy Spirit to "dwell in us" and assist us on the way.

It is true that the Liturgy proclaims "the holy things are for the holy"; but we also hear at Liturgy, "*You* – that is God – are our sanctification." And the Apostle begins by telling us that we are temples of the living God, and that God lives and moves in us. Not some lofty *concept* of God or some pious emotions, but the living God, the fire unconsumed who comes to purify, enlighten, and transform us.

Yes, God demands the impossible. But He is himself at work in us, to make the impossible possible—to cleanse us from every defilement of body and spirit" and to perfect His holiness in us. The point is simply to allow Him to live and move in us.

How do we do this concretely? The Church teaches us the three first steps. **First**, believe firmly that Christ does not despise the sinner, but came into this world to save sinners, and think of yourself as *the only sinner* standing face to face with the Savior; **second**, confess your sins and

shortcomings courageously and trusting in God's goodness (this is where having the priest present, as a witness, is very helpful); **third**, receive the gift of God Himself given to us in the Holy Eucharist: *Receive the Body of Christ, taste the fountain of immortality!*

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

From the Gospel according to Saint Luke

(Luke 5:1-11) At that time, Jesus was standing by the lake of Gennesaret. And he saw two boats by the lake; but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, Jesus asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. And when Jesus had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." And when they had done this, they enclosed a great shoal of fish; and as their nets were breaking, they beckoned to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also were James and John, sons of Zeb'edee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; henceforth you will be catching men." And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

The fishermen kindly allowed Jesus to use one of their boats for his preaching; however, when he asked Simon Peter to go fishing, they must have thought to themselves that this stranger had overstepped the boundaries of his authority and competence. It is apparently easier to fish at night, when the fish move up shallower. "We toiled all night and took nothing!": a very polite way of suggesting that the preacher should perhaps confine himself to his preaching, since he obviously didn't know much about fishing.

Nevertheless, Peter is willing to do what the Lord says. And his humility is recompensed beyond expectation. The catch is so rich that the boats are close to sinking. This is when Peter, in a flash of insight, understands that in his poor fishing boat he has come face to face with the Lord—He who commanded and it came to be; the maker and sustainer of all creation.

We can learn quite a few things from this Gospel. First, that we should allow God to "borrow" this and that and the other part of our life, just as Peter allowed Christ to use his boat. Second, that God is always going to ask for increasingly more control over one's life, just as he went from using Peter's boat to telling him when and where and how to do his job. In the end, one comes to realize, as the saying goes, "if God is your copilot, switch seats!" Faith and humility—that is, ceding increasingly more room for God to work in us—is not about some cultish self-annihilation of personality. In small and in great things, living with God yields rich fruit: in the midst of trials and tribulations, in this our valley of tears, the fruit we are craving: peace, joy, love, and the beauty of knowing that our existence is truly meaningful.

The heart of our Gospel, however, is Saint Peter's word to the Lord: "**Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.**" It is only in this way that our journey can truly begin. The prophet Micah (6:8) wrote in this respect, "He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and *to walk humbly with your*

God?" To *walk humbly with God* means that we always remember just *who* it is that stands before us. When we pray, we learn from the very words of prayer: "**with boldness and without condemnation we dare to call upon You, the heavenly God, as Father.**" The more difficult part is to know that at all time it is no less than God, the Lord, who stands in from of us. As for Peter, the presence of the Lord, is overwhelming, awe-inspiring, fearsome. We are all, without a single exception, broken vessels, sinful people, surely not a "fitting" place for the Lord to visit. Yet, this is precisely why our faith is called the Gospel, that is "the Good News": the Lord has come to be with us, has mingled God's holiness with our very lowliness, has truly come to seek us out.

Simon Peter and the others **left everything and followed Him**, and have also brought this Good News to many others. Today, it has reached us. Will we allow our lives to be touched and changed by the Lord's visitation? Will we at least lend him our hearing?

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The pan-Orthodox picnic gave us a very beautiful time of prayer and fellowship. Heartfelt thanks to all, especially members of the parish council, who worked hard to make it a success!
- **Next Sunday (10/4)**: one-year memorial for Angeliki Steriopulos (Georgia's mom)
- **SUNDAY SCHOOL** starts next Sunday. Please speak to Stacie to let her know if your children will be attending Sunday School this year so we can plan the classes.
- **orthodoxcranberry.org**: Cranberry is home to many Orthodox Christians and to many who seek for the fulness of the Christian faith. There are also many who, for whatever reason, are not attending church. With the blessing of His Grace Bishop Thomas, our parish is starting a missionary and pastoral outreach which aims to extend the presence of Orthodoxy into Cranberry. We are meeting **on Thursdays, 7-8 PM, in the Cranberry Municipal Center (2525 Rochester Rd)**. Join us (and bring a friend) to pray and to learn about the Orthodox faith, to ask questions, and to cultivate friendship with God.

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: Bill and Ann; pr. Paisius; Larry's brother; Bernard (Dottie's brother); Stelian (Cezar's father); Seba, Lisa, and Sam (Michaels), Norma, George (Georgiades), Christine (Abraham), Jim, Tony, Samantha, Luke (relatives of Dollie's), Norma, 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, 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; Garrett & Autumn – seeking for the true faith.

DEPARTED: David (Steve's father-in-law); Donald (Norma's brother); William (Fr. Paisius's father); Sue (Stacey's mother); Vicki (Frank's mother); Craig (Jean's son-in-law); Abie Abraham; 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, Stormy (friend of Ron's).