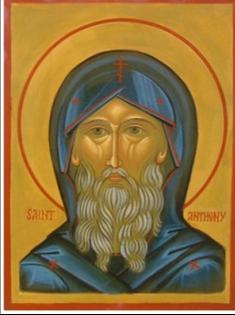


# SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



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## NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

1 October 2015

**TONE 2** — **Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council.** Apostle Philip, one of the seven deacons (1st c.). Martyrs Zenaïs (Zinaída) and Philonilla, of Tarsus in Cilicia (1st c.). St. Theophanes the Confessor and Hymnographer, Bishop of Nicæa (ca. 850). Ven. Leo of Optina (1841).

### 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:) 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, 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 ST. ANTHONY THE GREAT (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: Blessed art thou, O Lord, the God of our Fathers.  
Thou art just in all that Thou hast done for us.*

### *The Reading is from the Epistle of Saint Paul to Titus*

**Titus 3:8-15 Titus, my son, this saying is trustworthy. I want you to insist on these points, that those who have believed in God be careful to devote themselves to good works; these are excellent and beneficial to others. But avoid foolish arguments, genealogies, rivalries, and quarrels about the law, for they are useless and futile. After a first and second warning, break off contact with a factious person, realizing that such a person is perverted and sinful and stands self-condemned. When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, try to join me at Nicopolis, where I have decided to spend the winter. Send Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey soon, and see to it that they have everything they need. But let our people, too, learn to devote themselves to good works to supply urgent needs, so that they may not be unproductive. All who are with me send you greetings. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with all of you!**

Today, since we are commemorating the Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, the regular course of Epistle readings is interrupted with the text usually read for feasts of the Fathers of the Church. It is a passage from a short letter sent by Saint Paul to his disciple Titus. So important was it deemed that the letter was copied and eventually became a universal good of the Church. The passage read today is no less important, as it deals with some practical and yet deeply spiritual realities of the Christian life.

Whether baptized as children or becoming Orthodox later in life, we are all called to “come to believe” and to entrust ourselves and our whole life to Jesus Christ our Lord, God, and Savior. But we do not come to the Faith in order to be “right,” members in the most correct, most orthodox of Christian churches—as opposed to everyone out there who “doesn’t get it.” This arrogant attitude usually leads one pretty soon to question even the Orthodoxy of the Orthodox; and one starts speaking of “true Orthodox” and arguing about all kind of elements by which “correctness” of faith is to be assessed—the calendar, the dress code of clergy, the length of services, the length of the beards, the type of food used during fasting periods, even some intimate details of family life.

These, Saint Paul writes forcefully, are all “foolish arguments, rivalries, and quarrels about the law”; they are *foolish* because “they are useless and futile.” Instead, we should be focusing on things truly useful, excellent and beneficial to others: let those who have believed in God be careful to devote themselves to good works ... Let our people learn to devote themselves to good works to supply urgent needs!” God knows that the urgent needs of the broken world around us are not healed by *more* disagreements and *more* bitterness. There are persons who become addicted to constantly arguing one’s correctness against the errors of others. Such a person, Saint Paul instructs

his disciple, should be confronted and stopped from spreading foolishness; if there is no repentance, “break off contact with the factious person, realizing that he is perverted in himself and sinful and stands self-condemned.”

The Church is a training-ground for the Kingdom of Heaven: it is not about proving ourselves right and others wrong, but a training in humility, love, and service to others.

## TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

### *From the Gospel according to Saint Luke*

(Luke 8:5-15) **The Lord spoke this parable: A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path and was trampled, and the birds of the sky ate it up. Some seed fell on rocky ground, and when it grew, it withered for lack of moisture. Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it. And some seed fell on good soil, and when it grew, it produced fruit a hundredfold." After saying this, he called out, "Whoever has ears to hear ought to hear." Then his disciples asked him what the meaning of this parable might be. He answered, "Knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of God has been granted to you; but to the rest, they are made known through parables so that 'they may look but not see, and hear but not understand.'" This is the meaning of the parable. The seed is the word of God. Those on the path are the ones who have heard, but the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts that they may not believe and be saved. Those on rocky ground are the ones who, when they hear, receive the word with joy, but they have no root; they believe only for a time and fall away in time of trial. As for the seed that fell among thorns, they are the ones who have heard, but as they go along, they are choked by the anxieties and riches and pleasures of life, and they fail to produce mature fruit. But as for the seed that fell on rich soil, they are the ones who, when they have heard the word, embrace it with a generous and good heart, and bear fruit in perseverance.**

The parable of the sower is well known; it is, however, easily misunderstood. The parable seems, at first sight, to speak of different types of persons: some refuse to hear the Gospel; others hear it but are superficial and lazy; others always seem to put God and their salvation last; and others, again, receive the Gospel like a seed that planted in rich soil, where it continues to grow and to bring forth the fruit of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Let us note that apart from telling us that God (the sower) is “foolishly” generous, even prodigal, and sends His Word (the seed) *everywhere and to everyone*: on good soil but also, no less, on the path, on rocky ground, and among thorns. In fact, we see that most of the effort is in vain, since the majority (75% in the parable) reject or misuse the seed. Still, God continues undeterred to sow the Word of God even in this world and in this faithless and adulterous generation.

Let us also note that, the “soil” that receives the seed is nothing else than our heart. It can be a careless, inhospitable heart (where God’s presence goes unnoticed); a hard heart, which refuses to be pierced through by the Word, and remains shallow, without root; a poisoned heart (“choked by thorns”), where the Word of God is soon overwhelmed by a crowd of other concerns; or, as the Lord explains, the good soil refers to “a good and generous heart.”

So, which type are you? Well, this is a silly question! Our heart is like *all* those types of soil—sometimes like barren ground, oblivious to God and our neighbor, sometimes reducing God to some shallow feeling or thought, sometimes too anxious about many things and therefore unable to be still in front of God.

To think that “some are just like this – the ‘churchy’ type – and others just aren’t” is a profoundly un-Christian theology. It only leads to arrogance (remember the Pharisee: “God, I thank you that I’m not like other people!”) or to despair. The point of the parable is rather that we are encountering the very Word of God as a seed that is sown in our hearing, that we are called to receive it, and *to change*, to become good soil. And change begins here and now: the Word of God is sown during Liturgy, read in the Psalm verses, the Epistle, and the Gospel, preached in the sermon, and tasted in the Eucharist.

The Word of God is searching for us and searching out our heart. He calls to us to become ***receptive and hospitable*** (because, “to those that *receive* Him He has given power to be children of God,” John 1:12), but also ***patient and perseverant***. Remember, the good soil (the good heart) “will bring forth fruit ***in patience***”! Or elsewhere, also in the Gospel of Luke: “by your **endurance** you will gain your lives” (Luke 21:19).

Finally, laboring for the cultivation of the heart, learning to receive God with an open, patient, and perseverant heart is well worth it. The harvest—the fruit of the Spirit—is rich beyond belief, worthy of God’s generosity: **when it grew, it produced fruit a hundredfold. A hundredfold!**

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **[orthodoxcranberry.org](http://orthodoxcranberry.org)**: Thursdays, 7-8 PM, Cranberry Municipal Center (2525 Rochester Rd). After Compline we will discuss the parable of the sower (or “of the soil”!).
- **Saturday, November 7: Rummage & Cookie Sale at Saint Anthony’s!** For info and details contact Seba Michaels.
- **Sunday, November 8:** on the last Sunday before the Nativity Fast, we will gather at Sts. Peter & Paul Ukrainian Church for a **pan-Orthodox Liturgy, followed by potluck.**

### *Remember in your prayers*

LIVING: Bill and Ann; pr. Paisius; Dottie; 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 and Christine – 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).