

# SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



## Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

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## SECOND SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT

27 March 2016

**TONE 2—Sunday of Gregory Palamas.** *Martyrs Philetos the senator, his wife Lydia of Rome and those with them (125); Martyr Matrona of Thessalonica (3rd-4th c.). Martyrs Manuel and Theodosius (304). Ven. John the Clairvoyant, Anchorite, of Egypt (394-395). Paul, bishop of Corinth (9th-10th c.)*

### 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, 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! Refrain:* 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 ...)*

### 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 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 SAINT GREGORY PALAMAS (Tone 8): O Star of Orthodoxy, support of the Church and its teacher, O comeliness of ascetics, and incontestable champion of those who speak in theology, Gregory the wonder-worker, the pride of Thessalonica and preacher of grace, implore thou constantly for the salvation of our souls.

KONTAKION OF THE ANNUNCIATION (Tone 8): To thee, the Champion Leader, do I offer thanks of victory, O Theotokos, thou who hast delivered me from terror; but as thou that hast that power invincible, O Theotokos, thou alone can set me free: from all forms of danger free me and deliver me, that I may cry unto thee: "Rejoice, O Bride without Bridegroom."

## TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon: *O Lord, Thou wilt preserve us and keep us from this generation. Save me, O Lord, for the godly man hath disappeared.*

### *From the Epistle to the Hebrews*

(Heb 1:10-2:3) "At the beginning, O Lord, you established the earth, and the heavens are the works of Your hands. They will perish, but You remain; and they will all grow old like a garment. You will roll them up like a cloak, and like a garment they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will have no end." But to what angel has He ever said, "Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies a stool for Your feet"? Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation? Therefore, we must pay closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For if the message, declared by angels, was valid and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard Him.

The Epistle to the Hebrews is a very difficult text. Nevertheless, if we heard this reading today, we are called to take with us as much as we can of its message. One of the memorable passages is the following: **To what angel has God ever said, "Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies a stool for Your feet"?** Indeed, to sit at the right hand of the king, for people of that time, meant to share the king's authority; thus, to sit at the right hand of God means to share His divinity. And even the highest angels remain, still, creatures, radically different from the Creator. With Christ, however, things are different. He shares in God's reality in a way that is not true of even the highest of angels. In him the prophetic verse from Psalm 110:1 ("**Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies a stool for Your feet**") find its fulfillment. Indeed, He is truly divine, just as much divine as the Father is: *true God of true God*.

Confessing Jesus Christ as Lord is a serious matter. "Lord" is an exclusive title for God. If, then, we acknowledge His divinity, we also acknowledge that we find ourselves face-to-face with His message—a message, as we read today, "**declared at first by the Lord, and attested to us by those who heard Him.**" Let us take to heart the Apostle's advice and not neglect or despise the words of our eternal life, coming from the Lord Himself; let us not miss out on "**such a great salvation**" as He has in store for those who give ear to his call.

## TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

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

(Mk 2:1-12) At that time, when Jesus returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that He was at home. And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room for them, not even about the door; and He was preaching the Word to them. And they came, bringing to Jesus a paralytic

carried by four men. And when they could not get near Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him; and when they had made an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Now, some of the scribes were sitting there, reasoning in their hearts, "Why does this man speak thus? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" And immediately Jesus, perceiving in His spirit that they thus reasoned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you reason thus in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your pallet and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" – He said to the paralytic – "I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home." And he rose, and immediately took up the pallet and went out before them all. So that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

A well-known Gospel story is recounted here. A paralytic brought to Jesus receives his healing almost instantaneously, in a spectacular manner ("all amazed and glorified God, saying, 'We never saw anything like this!'"). No less impressive is the fact that he also has immediate knowledge of what people are "reasoning in their hearts"—"immediately Jesus, perceiving in His spirit that they thus reasoned within themselves ..."

The first lesson we draw from today's Gospel is that Jesus Christ heals and forgives because He is truly God; as his adversaries note, "**Who can forgive sins but God alone?**" And what else does God desire but our healing and return to fulness of Life? Moreover, God alone who knows our heart—our hidden inner selves—even more intimately than we know it ourselves.

But it is also important to pay attention to another very significant detail of the story. **Today's Gospel offers us a beautiful image of what the Christian community should be.** Note the relationship between the paralytic and the four men who bring him in on a pallet. Undoubtedly, these are real friends, ready to go to any length for their afflicted friend. After making their way through the massive crowd (surely not an easy task) and realizing that it was simply impossible to advance an inch further towards Jesus, they even "**removed the roof, ... made an opening, and let down the pallet on which the paralytic lay.**"

These four have not left their neighbor behind in hopes of "finding God": that kind of seeking for God would have been spiritual delusion. What enables them to find the true God, is, rather, precisely the dedication with which they take their paralytic friend to Jesus. When they have finally managed to present the paralytic to the Lord, the Evangelist writes the following: "**And when Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven!'**" Note: "**when Jesus saw *their* faith!**" The Lord always emphasizes the importance of faith; only this time it is the faith *of the others* that saves the paralytic.

Christianity "by oneself" is a fiction, and can be a dangerous delusion (I owe this insight to a blessed monk!). If we are to be saved, we are saved by cooperating with God's grace and in relation to others; it is only sin that is strictly "individual." Indeed, the Church strives to embody the model set forth in today's Gospel. Through fasts and feasts, we are journeying, we praise God, we commit to God ourselves and each other, we give thanks, and we draw near the chalice in faith and love. In short, we are exercising ourselves into becoming "we": the Body of Christ made up of many members, and are learning to call God not only "my God" but "our Father."

We exercise this manner of existence—being joined together as members of the Body of Christ—when we gather *as the Church*, when we fast *together*, pray *together*, and are *together* called to receive Communion. When our sins and failings estrange us from the Body, we repent—

individually—in order to return to fuller communion in Christ. These are the words the priest speaks at Confession: “*Show mercy now on Your servant, and grant to him/her an image of repentance, forgiving all his/sins, whether voluntary or involuntary. Reconcile and unite him/ her to Your Holy Church, through Jesus Christ our Lord!*”

## THE FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION

*Today is the beginning of our salvation and the manifestation of the mystery from the ages; for the Son of God becomes the Son of the Virgin, and Gabriel proclaims grace. Therefore we shout with him to the Theotokos: “Rejoice, O full of grace: the Lord is with thee!”*

Every year on March 25 we celebrate the joyful feast of the Annunciation, “the beginning of our salvation” when “the Son of God becomes the Son of the Virgin.” In other words, it is now that God takes on the flesh of our humanity. Conversely, at the Annunciation the sons of Adam are once again called to be sons of God. Indeed, the seed of the restored humanity is planted at the Annunciation, because it is now that our humanity, through the Virgin, becomes a “God-bearer.”

The Archangel Gabriel proclaims the great work of grace that occurs in the Virgin. His words addressed to the Theotokos are also our words to her (“we shout with him”): *Rejoice, Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee!* Like everything in Church, this feast is not only a commemoration of a past event, but about us, individually, here and now. The Virgin’s free choice of submitting to God—“Let it be to me according to your word”—is the pattern that we are, individually, called to reproduce in ourselves. The words of the archangel, “Rejoice! The Lord is with you!” are also spoken to us (remember that angels brought the same Good News to the shepherds in Bethlehem!).

So, when is the beginning of *my* salvation? When I finally accept that God is speaking to *me*; when I finally accept that “God came into this world to save sinners, of whom *I* am first”; when I believe that “nothing is impossible with God,” not even saving me. When? The hymn urges us not to delay, not to postpone, not to procrastinate the beginning of journey home: “*Today is the beginning of our salvation!*”

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Wednesday, 3/30, 6 PM:** Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts (Sts Peter & Paul)

### *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); Josephine, Timothy, Olga, Alfred, Wesley, Christina and Dustin (relatives of John and Julie Smolen); Diane.

Catechumens: Ron, Timothy & Caroline; Shea & Katie – seeking for the true faith.

DEPARTED: Rick, Phyllis (Seba's husband and 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).

## “O LORD, I HAVE CRIED” IN TONE 2

- the usual hymns for the Resurrection, in tone 2; then the following for Saint Gregory Palamas, also in tone 2:

**Verses 4.-3. From the morning watch until night, from the morning watch let Israel trust in the Lord. For with the Lord there is mercy and with Him is abundant redemption, and He will deliver Israel from all his iniquities.** What hymns of praise shall we sing in honor of the holy Bishop Gregory? He is the trumpet of theology, the herald of the fire of grace, the honored vessel of the Spirit, the unshaken pillar of the Church, the great joy of the inhabited earth, the river of wisdom, the candlestick of the light, the shining star that makes glorious the whole creation.

**Verse 2. Praise the Lord, all ye nations; praise Him, all ye people.** What words of song shall we weave as a garland, to crown the holy bishop? He is the champion of true devotion and the adversary of ungodliness, the fervent protector of the Faith, the great guide and teacher, the well-tuned harp of the Spirit, the golden tongue, the fountain that flows with waters of healing for the faithful, Gregory the great and marvelous.

**Verse 1. For His mercy is great toward us, and the truth of the Lord endureth forever.** With what words shall we who dwell on earth praise the holy Bishop Gregory? He is the teacher of the Church, the herald of the light of God, the initiate of the heavenly mysteries of the Trinity, the chief adornment of the monastic life, renowned alike in action and in contemplation, the glory of Thessalonica; and now he dwells in heaven with the great and glorious martyr Demetrius, whose relics flow with holy oil.

**Glory ...** O thrice-blessed, righteous, and most holy Father, the good shepherd and Disciple of Christ, the chief of shepherds, seek now, O thou who didst also give himself for the sheep, O God-mantled Father Gregory, that by thine intercessions we may be granted the Great Mercy.

**Now and ever... the usual hymn to the Theotokos, tone 6:** Who shall not beatify thee, most holy Virgin? Who shall not praise thy birth-giving, free of travailing and pain? For the only Son rising timelessly from the Father, Himself did become incarnate from thee in an inexplicable way. He, Who while God by nature, became for our sakes Man by nature, not divided into two persons, but known by two natures without mixture or confusion. To Him, O noble and most blessed one, plead for the salvation of our souls.

### APOSTICHA

Aposticha of the Resurrection, Tone 6; then:

**Glory .... (Tone 8):** Thy tongue, awakened unto doctrines, hath sounded in the hearing of our hearts, rousing the souls of the tardy; and thy God-speaking words have become a ladder transporting those on earth to God. Wherefore, O Gregory, wonder of Thessalonica, cease not to intercede with Christ God to illuminate with His divine light those who honor thee.

**Now and ever ... (Tone 8):** O Virgin without groom, blameless one, Mother of the high God; thou who didst conceive in the flesh in an inexplicable way, receive the petitions of thy servants, thou who bestowest on all the purification of sins; and in receiving our petitions beseech thou Him for the salvation of us all.

### ENDING TROPARIA

**Troparion of 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.

**Glory ...** Troparion of Saint Gregory Palamas (Tone 8): O Star of Orthodoxy, support of the Church and its teacher, O comeliness of ascetics, and incontestable champion of those who speak in theology, Gregory the wonderworker, the pride of Thessalonica and preacher of grace, implore thou constantly for the salvation of our souls.

**Now and ever ... (Tone 8):** \_Thou Who for our sake wast born of a Virgin, and didst suffer crucifixion, O good One, and didst despoil death through death, and as God didst reveal Resurrection. Despise not those Whom Thou hast created with Thine own hand, show forth Thy love for mankind, O merciful One. Accept the intercessions of Thy mother, the Theotokos for us, and save Thy despairing people, O our Savior.