

SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

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THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

10 July 2016

TONE 2 — Hieromartyr Joseph of Damascus and his companions (martyred during Damascus massacre of 1860); Ven. Anthony of the Kiev Caves, Founder of Monasticism in Russia (1073). Martyr Apollonius of Sardis (3rd c.). Martyrs Bianor and Silvanus of Pisidia (4th c.). Fathers of the deserts and caves of Scete martyred by the impious Patriarch Theophilus of Alexandria (ca. 398). Martyr Nicodemus of Albania (1722). Monk Martyr Nectarius of St. Anne Skete (Mt. Athos—1820).

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, 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. JOSEPH OF DAMASCUS (Tone 5): Come, O faithful, let us honor the martyr of Christ, a priest of the Church of Antioch; who by the word of the Word, and by his blood and the blood of his companions, baptized the land of Syria, its Church and its people. Being immersed in the light of the Gospel from his youth, he worked and taught and defended the Church of Christ and her flock. O Father Joseph of Damascus, be for us an example, defending us and interceding for us fervently before the Savior.

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): O undisputed intercessor of Christians, the mediatrix who is unrejected by the Creator: Turn not away from the voice of our petitions, although 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 didst ever intercede for those who honor thee.

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimemon: *The saints shall boast in glory, and they shall rejoice upon their beds. Sing unto the Lord a new song; His praise is in the church of the saints.*

The Reading is from Saint Paul's Second Epistle to Timothy

(2 Tim 2:1-10) **My child Timothy: be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; and the things which you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. Suffer hardship as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier on service entangles himself in the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enrolled him as a soldier. And if someone also contends in the games, he is not crowned, unless he has contended lawfully. The husbandman who labors must be the first to partake of the fruits. Consider what I say, and may the Lord grant you understanding in all things. Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, of the seed of David, according to my gospel, in which I suffer hardships and even bonds, as a criminal; but the word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.**

Whether we think of the the suffering endured by martyrs such as St. Joseph of Damascus—a priest among the over 11, 000 Christians butchered in the great Damascus massacred of 1860—or of the suffering of asceticism, there is no real Christianity without suffering. Saint Paul, who knew these matters well by personal experience wrote his disciple St. Timothy of hardships, sufferings, imprisonment, etc—the chaotic torrent of “life happens” that we all know, which in his case was leading up to his trial and execution in Rome. But he also uses the metaphor of serving as soldiers, or competing as athletes, or cultivating the land as farmers—all *disciplined* pursuits. **Suffer hardship as a good soldier:** in other words, we are to turn the randomness of “life happens” into a disciplined contest, so that the various hardships and sufferings are “recycled” into fuel for spiritual life.

Christianity is not about a masochistic searching out of suffering for the sake of it. Ultimately, suffering has a deeper meaning, which the Lord discloses in the Gospel of John. Whether asceticism or martyrdom or our “regular” journey through the ups and downs of life, sufferings can become the birthpangs of being reshaped, transformed into citizens fit for the Kingdom which is to come: **When a woman is in labor, she has pain, because her hour has come. But when her child is born, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy of having brought a**

human being into the world. So you have pain now; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you (John 16:21-22).

As we are reading from the correspondence between St Paul and his disciple Timothy, we get a glimpse of the way in which spiritual fatherhood and discipleship was “working” in the early decades of the Church. There is no real Christianity “by oneself,” outside the give-and-take of being part of a real community. And there is no real Christianity without discipleship—that is, without spiritual fatherhood. “Spiritual fatherhood” is the concrete way in which the Church, from its very beginning, has passed on the life in Christ. It is true that today it is not easy to find good spiritual guides, who would effectively help us grow as disciples of Christ. It is also true that arrogance and spiritual immaturity prevent us from receiving the blessing that God has provided for us in the very state, time, and place we are in. Spiritual fatherhood and spiritual discipleship are two sides of the life in Christ.

Christ speaks to each of us directly, by calling us, by rooting us in Himself, by feeding us on the risen life which is in Him; but He also interacts with us through the ministry of the spiritual father, who is charged with helping us grow as Christians. This is not really an “indirect” presence of Christ, because the Lord’s blessing is present in the very relation—and because spiritual fatherhood is, essentially, an icon of Christ’s relation with the Church.

Let us keep in mind some of the words that St. Paul addresses to Timothy: **Your life is like a battle: be a good soldier of Christ Jesus; your life is also like a sporting contest: be a good athlete of Christ. Take to heart the things I tell you; remember Jesus Christ and be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.**

TODAY’S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Gospel according to Saint Matthew

(Mat 6:22-33) **“The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; but 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! ‘No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.’”**
"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Today’s Gospel invites us to adopt the correct perspective on reality, to look at reality with the right “eyes.” This is, indeed, crucial: as the Lord puts it, **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!** We are urged to *see clearly* something that is not evident to those outside the faith.

It all starts with the proclamation at the very beginning of Christ's preaching: *the Kingdom of heaven is at hand!* Even though the full manifestation of the Kingdom of God will occur only with the Second Coming of the Lord, and although we pray "Thy Kingdom come!", this is *already* a reality-in-progress, and we are *already* citizens of that Kingdom. For Christians, this faith with itself a radically new way of looking at reality. Fundamental is the insight that God's presence (this is what "the Kingdom of God" means) pervades all of reality. "God" and "our life" are not separate realms; God is at work in the very midst of our mundane reality, and we are to be His co-workers within the concrete circumstances of our lives—involving Him in our everyday negotiation of time, money, clothes, food, daily practices, family, friends, etc. When we invite God into our lives (and we do that as we pray: "Spirit of truth: *come and dwell in us!*" or "Our Father: *Thy will be done!*"), our reality is rearranged, reoriented. It may not be as radical as it was with the Apostles, who left their homes and jobs, eventually left to preach the Gospel elsewhere, and finally gave their lives in martyrdom. But a change should happen, because, essentially, we are to practice what today's Gospel teaches: **"Strive first for the Kingdom of God, and all these things will be given to you as well!"**

We are not told to become careless about our daily life, our basic needs, our responsibilities: we are still *in this world*, and, in fact, called to make a difference in *this world*, in *this society*, and in *this time*. We are called, however, to live with the lofty perspective that comes from knowing ourselves to be citizen of the Kingdom-to-come: knowing that we are dear to God ("**of more value**" than anything else, says the Gospel) and that God looks at us with a parent's love and care ("**your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things**"); and knowing above all that the sun of the Resurrection has already dawned, and that its full light will soon transfigure and restore this valley of tears to its former glory as the Garden of Eden.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today: presentation about FOCUS. Mr. Michael Sider-Rose, from St George Cathedral in Pittsburgh, will make a short presentation about the work of FOCUS Pittsburgh, their current needs and possible ways in which we can help the wonderful work for the poor that is going on there.

Special collection for the many victims of the recent flooding in WV. A check will be made out to the Antiochian Archdiocese, marked in the memo section "West Virginia."

Next Sunday: a bittersweet goodbye potluck for our valued and beloved Steve Cole, who is moving from St. Anthony's closer to home.

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: Robert; Job; Tina (John & Julie's daughter); Ann; Mary Ann (Jean's daughter); Dottie; 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), Ed, Peter, Georgia and Scot, Sam, Karen (Joanna's mother), Diane, Sula, Dollie, Karyn, Fr. Ignatius and Amy, John, Jonathan and Joanna, Andrei, John, Janet, Christy (relatives of Jean); John and Julie (Smolen); Dennis, Vincent, Roy and Laura, Danny, Danny, Cathy (relatives of John and Julie); Diane; Shea and Katie; Tim and Caroline (Becker); Tina. Garrett & Autumn, Benjamin – seeking the true faith.

DEPARTED: Richard (Minto) from Sts Peter and Paul; Bill; Iosif (Cristina's father); Dolores (Bingham), Diane (Georgia's sister); Gladys (Smolen); 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); Cristian (Andronic); Rick, Phyllis (Seba's husband and sister), Angeliki, Joe and David Sipos; Glenn (Jean's grandson); Stella, Edmund (Ed's uncle), Richard, Leatrice (Totin), Ed (Joanna's grandfather), Joseph (Rose's father), Fred (Dollie's uncle); Lance; Bob (Diane's father), Michael, Gabriel, Hilda (Chris Abraham's mother), Alfred, Stormy (friend of Ron's).