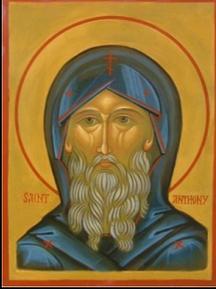


SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

www.orthodoxbutler.org

ADDRESS: 400 S. Sixth Avenue, Butler, PA 16001

RECTOR: Rev. Bogdan Gabriel Bucur

CONTACT: 724.287.6983 (church); 412.390.8208 (priest);

frbogdan@orthodoxbutler.org

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

4 September 2016

TONE 2— *Holy Prophet and Godseer Moses. Martyr Hermione, daughter of St. Philip the Deacon (ca. 117). Hieromartyr Babylas, Bishop of Antioch (251). Martyr Babylas of Nicomedia, and with him 84 children (4th c.). Martyrs Theodore, Ammianus, Julian, Oceanus, and Centurionus, of Nicomedia (305-311). Martyrs Jerusalem, Sekendos, Sekendios and Kegouros in Aleppo. Venerable Anthimos the New (1782). Hieromartyr Gorazd, Bishop of Bohemia and Moravia-Silesia (1942).*

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 ...)

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 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.

TROPARION OF ST BABYLAS OF ANTIOCH (Tone 4): By choosing the Apostles' way of life thou hast succeeded to their throne. Inspired by God, thou didst find the way to divine contemplation through the practice of virtue. After teaching the Word of Truth without error, thou didst defend the Faith to the very shedding of thy blood, O Hieromartyr Babylas. Entreat the Lord our God to save our souls.

KONTAKION OF THE BIRTH OF THE THEOTOKOS (Tone 4): By thy holy nativity, O pure one, Joachim and Anna were delivered from the reproach of barrenness; and Adam and Eve were delivered from the corruption of death; thy people do celebrate it, having been saved from the stain of iniquity, crying unto thee: The barren doth give birth to the Theotokos, who nourisheth our life.

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon: *The Lord is my Strength and my song. The Lord has chastened me sorely*

The Reading is from Saint Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians

(1 Cor 9:2-12) **Brethren, You are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. This is my defense to those who would examine me. Do we not have the right to our food and drink? Do we not have the right to be accompanied by a wife, as the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living? Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Who tends a flock without getting some of the milk? Do I say this on human authority? Does not the law say the same? For it is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does he not speak entirely for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of a share in the crop. If we have sown spiritual good among you, is it too much if we reap your material benefits? If others share this rightful claim upon you, do not we still more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ.**

In reading the New Testament Epistles to the Corinthians, Thessalonians, Galatians etc, we must remember that these were actually private letters, written in response to a variety of pressing needs. Today's text, for instance, is mostly about the money and, generally, about the material support that Christians ought to give to the apostles and to those who minister to them. Some in Corinth were leveling all kinds of accusations against the Apostle Paul, forcing him to make the following biting reply: "if we have planted spiritual seed among you, is it out of line to expect a meal or two from you?" Indeed, the attitude of those critics in Corinth was quite shameful!

Saint Paul replies in a way that would be appropriate for his accusers: he explains his actions, puts them in context, and finds biblical grounding for his own views. Ultimately, however, the bottom line is the following: **Brethren, you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. This is my defense to those who would examine me!** In other words, the only criterion by which he accepts to be "evaluated" is the good fruit of his apostolic ministry.

There is good reason for the Church to have assigned to public reading this banal dispute about finances and administration. One reason is that for Christians *everything* matters—food and drink, the management of money, and the host of material and social circumstances within which we lead our lives. Our life in Christ is not elsewhere and at some other; it is none other than our life in the body, here and now: the same life in the same world, but lived in the light of Christ's resurrection, guided by Christ's teachings, and sustained by the hope and joy of the Holy Spirit.

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Gospel according to Saint Matthew

(Mat 18:23-35) The Lord spoke this parable: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the reckoning, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents; and as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him the lord of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. But that same servant, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat he said, 'Pay what you owe!' So his fellow servant fell down and besought him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' He refused and went and put him in prison till he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you besought me; and should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his lord delivered him to the jailers till he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to everyone of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

Today's Gospel text offers a most vivid representation of the Good News. We should remind ourselves of this parable every time we pray the verse in the Our Father "forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" ("debts" is what the Lord's Prayer actually says!).

The first thing to note is that the first servant is quite deluded about his ability to pay off his debt to the king. He asks for a delay, thinking that he might be able, eventually, to repay the debt. In reality, the debt simply cannot be paid off. By contrast, the debt owed by the second servant to the first is not only manageable, but quite small: it is clear that with a bit more time, the second servant would be able to repay what he owed.

This is all about us. The Lord says: "**The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants...**" Obviously, the king in the parable is the very king of heaven: God. And God deciding to settle his accounts with his servants is a terrifying idea. We know this from the Psalm: "If you should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?" However, the Psalmist continues, "But with God there is forgiveness." And that is what we also hear in today's parable: the king responds favorably to the servant's plea. In fact—and this is very important—he replies with much greater generosity than expected: since he knows that the debt is too high to ever be repaid, he simply forgives the debt! This, in essence, is the Gospel: the Son of God, the only one who has authority from God to forgive (Mat 9:6), has come to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed (Luke 4:18). To use the imagery of today's parable: "He has canceled the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us ... and He has taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross" (Col 2:14).

The Lord's Prayer ties our receiving forgiveness to our forgiving others. In our parable this point is made very vividly. Apparently, the servant who has just received complete forgiveness of debts does not understand the magnitude of this gift. He refuses to forgive a small debt owed to him by the second servant, and, furious ("seizing him by the throat"!) demands justice. And the fact is that he is actually right! If he was able to have his debtor "put in prison till he should pay the debt," it is because those were the legal provisions of the time; he was legally within his rights.

The king, however, who knows both justice and mercy, cannot be led by the nose by any appeals to "law" and "justice": **You wicked servant! Should you not have had mercy on your fellow**

servant, as I had mercy on you? And the punishment is nothing but delivering the wicked servant to his own judgment: **Pay what you owe!**

It is a terrifying truth, but, ultimately, the choice is ours. Do we want *justice* or *mercy*? The mind of the Church is clear on this topic: nobody can travel to God on the road of justice (again: "If you should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?"). Therefore we pray: *Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us; for laying aside all excuse, this prayer we bring to You: have mercy on us!*" The implications for the way in which we handle our relationship with the neighbor should be abundantly clear!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Monday, September 5: Christine Abraham hosts a Labor Day picnic, starting 1 pm, on her property (142 Hoffmann Lane, in Renfrew, PA). Everyone is invited, there will be music and good food.

Next Saturday, September 10:

Morning: Kibbee

2-6 pm: Byzantine Chant Workshop. Amy Hogg from St. George in Pittsburgh offered to introduce anyone interested to Byzantine chant by using her method of teaching music, which apparently allows for faster progress. The plan is to begin with this "crash course" and then continue with lessons as we can.

Sunday, September 18: Sunday: Pan-Orthodox Liturgy and picnic at the OCA Pavilion (8641 Peters Road, Cranberry Township, PA). Our three Orthodox churches in Butler/ Lyndora will celebrate Liturgy together in Cranberry and continue with fun, food, and fellowship. We will also gather with the people in our Cranberry outreach, who will now end the series of Sunday Liturgies at the pavilion and seek for an indoor space to continue.

Cranberry offering: A basket for offerings to our Cranberry outreach is placed at the entrance to the church. We are trying to offset the 10% loss that the Cranberry group incurs by sending their Sunday collection to St. Anthony's (we give 10% of all incoming money to the Archdiocese).

Sunday, October 9, 3:30 pm, Butler Country Club: Retirement Celebration Banquet for Fr. Joseph Wargo, who ends his 40-year ministry as pastor of St. Andrew Orthodox Church. 35 dollars/ adult (11 for children). RSVP by September 25 to Nicole Rogos (700 Saxony Dr., Seven Fields, PA 16046); checks should be made out to St Andrew Orthodox Church.

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: newly ordained priest Paul Abernathy (FOCUS Pittsburgh); Job; Tina (John & Julie's daughter); Ann; Mary Ann (Jean's daughter); Stelian (Cezar's father); Seba, Lisa, and Sam (Michaels), Norma; George (Georgiades), Christine (Abraham), Marion and Jim Raimondi (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: Iosif (Cristina's father); Victoria and Susan (mothers of Frank and Stacy); Richard (Minto) from Sts Peter and Paul; Bill; Dolores (Bingham), Diane (Georgia's sister); Gladys (Smolen); David (Steve's father-in-law); Donald (Norma's brother); William (Fr. Paisius's father); 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).