

SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese www.orthodoxbutler.org

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THIRTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

31 January 2016

TONE 2— Holy Wonderworkers and Unmercenaries Cyrus and John, and with them Martyrs Athanasia and her daughters: Theoctiste, Theodotia, and Eudoxia, at Canopus in Egypt (311). Martyrs Victorinus, Victor, Nicephorus, Claudius, Diodorus, Serapion, and Papias, of Egypt (251). Martyr Tryphænes at Cyzicus. St. Arsenios of Paros (1877).

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! 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! 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 THE UNMERCENARY HEALERS (Tone 5): Since Thou hast given us the miracles of Thy holy Martyrs, Cyrus and John, as an invincible battlement, by their entreaties scatter the counsels of the heathen, O Christ our God, and strengthen the faith of Orthodox Christians, since Thou alone art good and the Lover of mankind.

Glory ...

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.

Now and ever ...

KONTAKION OF THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST (Tone 1): Thou Who didst sanctify the Virgin's womb by Thy Birth, and didst bless Symeon's hands as was meet, by anticipation hast even now saved us, O Christ God. But grant peace in the midst of wars unto Thy commonwealth and strengthen the hierarchs whom Thou hast loves, O only Friend of man!

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon: *O Lord, save Thy people, and bless Thine inheritance.
Unto Thee have I cried, O Lord, my God.*

From Saint Paul's Epistle to the Colossians

(Col 3:12-16) **Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.**

These words of the Apostle may strike us as too lofty and a tad unrealistic. Can we, “normal” human beings, be expected to always exude the aroma of holiness? Can we always, constantly, be kind, humble, patient and forgiving? Can we always be peaceful in the midst of stress? And thankful when engulfed by adversities of all kind?

Lest we assume that Saint Paul and his fellow Christians of the first century were living an idyllic life in some kind of a holy bubble, always serene and smiling, let's pay attention: **“if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive one another.”** Why would the Apostle mention “complains” among Christians, unless it actually happened? The truth is that the apostolic era was not idyllic. To the Corinthians Paul writes very bluntly—“to shame you”, he tells them!—about lawsuits brought in pagan tribunals among Christian brothers (12 Cor 6:1-8); Saint Paul himself must defend himself against attacks and slanders from other Christian missionaries (Phil 1:15-18), and finds that even his handling of money is being used by some (fellow Christians) to stir up scandal (1 Cor 9:1-15; Acts 20:33-35); he must rebuke Saint Peter for hypocritical behaviour (Gal 2:11-14); and Peter is taken to task by the Jerusalem Christians for visiting Cornelius, a Roman (Acts 11:1-2); Paul and Barnabas must part ways because of their sharp disagreements on how to carry out their missionary work (Acts 15:36-41).

In short, then, Saint Paul knows that we all fall short, constantly, of the kind of behavior befitting the disciples of Christ. And as a good pedagogue and spiritual guide he reminds us of the source that can renew us in our Christian commitment: *As the elect of God... Even as Christ forgave you ... Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.*

In other words, what we do, the way we live, should flow out of knowing that we were ourselves treated with unconditional love and forgiveness by the Lord: we are simply to pass on what we receive. We have been chosen, we are precious to God—*therefore let the peace of God rule in your hearts.* Note also that Scripture speaks, here and elsewhere, of the virtues as if they were garments one could put on: *put on tender mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering.* It is because these virtues are not our own product, but gifts of the Holy Spirit in us, to the extent to which we cooperate with divine grace.

Let us then be encouraged rather than intimidated by the words of the Apostle. As the prayer of ordination begins, “the divine grace always heals that which is infirm and completes that which is lacking ...” God knows we are utterly lacking. If we humble ourselves and ask, He Who fills all things will clothe us also so that we may taste of the life in Christ, both in this age and in the age to come.

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

From the Gospel according to Saint Luke

(Luke 19:1-10) At that time: He entered Jericho and was passing through. And there was a man named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector, and rich. And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not, on account of the crowd because he was small of stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus make haste and come down; for I must stay at your house today." So he made haste and came down and received him joyfully. And when they saw it they all murmured, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have defrauded any one of anything, I restore it fourfold." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

This Sunday's Gospel reminds us of the confession of faith we make every Liturgy, before receiving Holy Communion: **the Son of Man came to seek and to save those who are lost.** The Evangelist tells of someone who was truly “lost” to God: a certain Zacchaeus, who had become filthy rich by abusing his tax-collector job. Not only was he a collaborator of those who oppressed and abused his compatriots (he was collecting taxes for the Roman occupants of Judaea); like most tax-collectors of his day, he was making himself rich in the process, extorting higher taxes than was actually demanded, taking bribes, and, generally, satisfying his insatiable greed by any means available.

Any decent person would despise tax-collectors. In fact, “tax-collector” had become an insult used to suggest the worst kind of character. As for this particular tax-collector, after years and years of abuses, Zacchaeus had come to be hated by everyone. This is why the crowd is absolutely stunned and outraged when the Lord chooses to single out *this man*, seek him out, speak to him,

and even invite himself under his roof! Saint Luke tells us how the crowd reacted: **they all murmured, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner."**

The people were right: Zacchaeus was a sinner, an evil person, a filthy, despicable kind of sinner. Yet, the Lord who knows the heart of man, must have seen something there. For us, who are ready to judge by appearance, it is surprising to read that this terrible sinner was nevertheless happy to receive Christ under his roof—**"he received him joyfully"**—and to change his life radically. In short, Zacchaeus repents, turns around, cuts himself off from evil, attempts to make up for his past misdeeds, and entrusts his past, present, and future to the mercy of God.

Who is our teacher this Sunday? Is it the crowd, is it the apostles? Neither. *It is Zacchaeus!* Like him, we must start with acknowledging our being "lost"—the first among sinners, as we confess at Liturgy—and accept "joyfully" the visitation of God. (Incidentally, a prayer of the service of house blessing states explicitly that we ask the Lord to enter our home, *just as He accepted to enter under the roof of Zacchaeus!*). If we follow the model of this tax-collector who repents, we will also share with him the joy of hearing from the Lord: **"Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- We ask God's blessing upon Maria (Serbanescu) who is turning eighteen—18 (!), and Frank and Stacie Harisson, who are celebrating their wedding anniversary.
- **House blessings.** If you wish to receive the blessing of Theophany in your homes, Fr. Bogdan is available Saturdays and Sundays afternoons/ evenings. Please email or call to schedule a visit!
- **Orthodoxcranberry.org** On Thursday we start a study of Genesis 1-3 accompanied by Saint Ephrem's *Hymns on Paradise*. **Cranberry Library (2525 Rochester Rd), Thursday 7-8 PM.**

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: Bill and Ann; 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, 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, Cathy (relatives of John and Julie); Diane; Shea and Katie; Tim and Caroline (Becker).

Ron, catechumen; Garrett & Autumn, Benjamin, Christine – seeking for the true faith.

DEPARTED: 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); Hieromonk Roman (Braga); priest Thomas (Hopko); 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), Bob (Diane's father), Michael, Gabriel, Hilda (Chris Abraham's mother), Alfred, Stormy (friend of Ron's).