

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: 724.287.6893 (church); 412.390.8208 (priest);
frbogdan@orthodoxbutler.org

SUNDAY OF THE LAST JUDGMENT

19 February 2017

TONE 2 — Apostles of the Seventy Archippus and Philemon, and Martyr Apphias (1st c.). Martyrs Maximus, Theodotus, Hesychius and Asclepiodota, of Adrianopolis (305-311). Ss. Eugene and Macarius, Presbyters and Confessors, at Antioch (363). Ven. Dositheus of Palestine, disciple of Ven. Abba Dorotheus (7th c.). St. Rabulas of Samosata (ca. 530). Ven. Theodore of Sanaskáry (1791).

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! 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 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 FOR SUNDAY OF LAST JUDGMENT (Tone 1): When Thou comest, O God, to earth with glory, and all creatures tremble before Thee, and the river of fire floweth before the Altar, and the books are opened and sins revealed, deliver me then from that unquenchable fire, and make me worthy to stand at Thy right hand, O righteous Judge. the prodigal I therefore cry unto Thee now: "I have sinned against Thee, O compassionate Father. But receive me in repentance; make me as one of Thy hired servants, O Lord!"

TODAY'S EPISTLE READING

Prokeimenon: The Lord is my strength and my praise.

The Lord chastising hath chastised me, but He hath not delivered me over to death.

The Reading is from the First Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

(1 Cor 8:8-9:2) **Brothers: food will not bring us closer to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, nor are we better off if we do. But make sure that this liberty of yours in no way becomes a stumbling block to the weak. If someone sees you, with your knowledge, reclining at table in the temple of an idol, may not his conscience too, weak as it is, be "built up" to eat the meat sacrificed to idols? Thus through your knowledge, the weak person is brought to destruction, the brother for whom Christ died. When you sin in this way against your brothers and wound their consciences, weak as they are, you are sinning against Christ. Therefore, if food causes my brother to sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I may not cause my brother to sin. Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? Although I may not be an apostle for others, certainly I am for you, for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.**

Saint Paul writes that abstention from meat shows a certain weakness of the faith. Elsewhere (Rom 14:2) he speaks more explicitly: "One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables." This is quite surprising! Eating only vegetables is a sign of *weakness*? If so, perhaps it is OK—even commendable—to eat meat during Lent?! Who, exactly, is "weak" and who is "strong," spiritually: vegans or carnivores?

The fact is that the Apostle is speaking to a state of affairs that is very different from the one we are in. The Christians in Corinth were concerned with eating or not eating meat that had been used in pagan religious ceremonies. The question was whether such meat was "tainted" and demonic, now that it had been offered to pagan divinities. The Apostle's judgment is that, in truth, food cannot defile us. Food is just food; it **will not bring us closer to God; we are no worse off if we do not eat, nor are we better off if we do.** Pagan rituals and consecration to gods or demons have no power over a man in Christ. And yet ...

The issue, says Saint Paul, is not the food as such, but our relationship to our brothers and sisters. If anyone is troubled, scandalized by my eating meat or anything else, better **never to eat meat again, so that I may not cause my brother to sin.** So, to even ponder the question, "who is "weak" and who is "strong," spiritually: vegans or carnivores?" is silly. The point is *not* what you eat; the point is how you relate to your neighbor.

And how does this concern us, who simply don't have to bother about food offered to the Greek idols? If we read this text, it is probably because it has something to teach us. Today's

Epistles is a reminder that, in our Lenten journey, we should be mindful of the discipline of fasting in letter and spirit: keeping the Church's rules of fasting *must* be accompanied by humility (so that we should not think too highly of our efforts) and by a strict abstention from any judgment about the practices of others. In short: fast to the best of your abilities, but don't take yourself too seriously, and do not—*never, ever!*—think that you are doing better than anyone else.

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Gospel according to Saint Matthew

(Mat 25:31-46) The Lord spoke this parable: When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?' And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.' Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.' Then they will answer and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?' He will answer them, 'Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.' And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.

The teaching of this parable could not be clearer. On this Sunday, called "Sunday of the Last Judgment," we are reminded that there will be a reckoning, an accounting for our life choices and actions. **Some will go off to eternal punishment, others to eternal life.** But let us be mindful of a few important aspects of this matter.

First, the judge of all is "the Son of Man": our Lord Jesus Christ. "God has given *all judgment* to the Son" (John 5:22) so that we are judged justly by One who tasted our life with all its weaknesses and temptations. And the just criterion, the measuring stick, for this judgment is, essentially, *love*. As Father Alexander Schmemmann points out, "not a mere humanitarian concern for abstract justice and the anonymous 'poor,' but concrete and personal love for the human person, any human person, that God makes me encounter in my life."

Second, let us note that there will be great surprise at the Judgment. Those of us who may deem ourselves “OK with God” but fail to translate our presumed love for God into love of our neighbor, will be surprised to find that our religiosity was pure delusion.

Third—and very hopegiving: there will be great surprise for many who never imagined that they had any dealings with God. “**Lord, when did we see You? When did we visit You? When did we care for You?**” Many of those welcomed by the Lord will not be Orthodox, many will not even be Christians, many will be atheists. A great surprise to them, and an important reminder for us today.

God is closer to us than we understand, and his presence is hidden from our arrogant and deluded claims to “know” and “understand” ourselves, much less others. This is why we should not judge anybody else’s relation with God. Our job is only to be faithful to our Lord, and to remember that “faith is working through acts of love” (Galatians 5:6).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Today** (Sunday of the Last Judgment— “Meatfare”): Pan-Orthodox service at Sts. Peter and Paul: 9AM Matins, 10 AM Divine Liturgy, followed by potluck.
- **Next Sunday** (“Cheesefare”): After fully enjoying our dairy potluck we will be change all covers from gold/ white to dark and take the first step into Great Lent: please stay for **Forgiveness Vespers** at 1:30 PM.

• **Sunday, March 12: GENERAL PARISH MEETING!**
One position on the council (Jean Bowen’s) is open for election.

Remember in your prayers

•
LIVING: Venetia (Chrissi’s mom); Newborn Lydia May (Cole); Daniel (Sipos); Kent (Jean’s husband); Maura; Christi, Janet, Ann; John and Mary Ann (Jean’s relatives); Stelian (Cezar’s father); Seba, Lisa, and Sam (Michaels), Norma; 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); Derek; Christine, Phoebe, Tina. Garrett & Autumn, Benjamin – seeking the true faith.

DEPARTED: Iosif; Job; George (Georgiades); Diane (Georgia’s sister); Victoria and Susan (mothers of Frank and Stacy); Bill; Dolores (Bingham); Gladys (Smolen); Donald (Norma’s brother); 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), Joseph (Rose’s father), Fred (Dollie’s uncle); Lance; Bob (Diane’s father), Michael, Gabriel, Hilda (Chris Abraham’s mother).