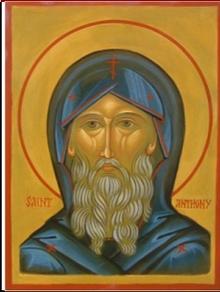


SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



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FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PASCHA (“The Blind Man”)

20 May 2017

TONE 5—*Holy Equals-to-the-Apostles Emperor Constantine and his mother, Helen (327). St. Constantine (1129) and his children, Ss. Michael and Theodore, Wonderworkers of Múrom.*

FIRST ANTIPHON

Shout with joy to God, all the earth; sing to His Name, give glory to His praises.

Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us! Say to God: How awesome are Thy works; let all the earth worship Thee, and sing to Thee. (R.:) Glory... Now and ever...(R.:)

SECOND ANTIPHON

May God have mercy upon us, and bless us, and may He cause His face to shine upon us, and have mercy upon us. *Save us, O Son of God, who art risen from the dead, as we chant to Thee, Alleluia! That Thy way may be known on earth, Thy salvation among all nations.(R.:) May God bless us, and may all the ends of the earth fear Him. (R.:) Glory ... Now and ever... O Only-Begotten Son and Word of God ...*

THIRD ANTIPHON

Christ is risen ... with the following verses:

- Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered, let those who hate Him flee from before His Face.
- As smoke vanishes, so let them vanish; as wax melts before the fire.
- So let sinners perish before the Face of God, but let the righteous be glad.
- This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it!

AT THE LITTLE ENTRANCE

In the gathering places bless ye God the Lord from the springs of Israel. Son of God, who art risen from the dead, save us who sing unto Thee: Alleluia!

TROPARION OF RESURRECTION (Tone 5): Let us believers praise and worship the Word; coeternal with the Father and the Spirit, born of the Virgin for our salvation. For He took pleasure in ascending the Cross in the flesh to suffer death; and to raise the dead by His glorious Resurrection.

TROPARION OF ST ANTHONY THE GREAT (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 STS CONSTANTINE AND HELEN (Tone 8): Having seen the image of Thy Cross in Heaven, and, like Paul, having received the call not from men, Thine apostle among kings, Constantine, entrusted the commonwealth to Thy hand, O Lord. Keep us always in peace, by the intercessions of the Theotokos, O only Lover of mankind.

KONTAKION FOR THE SUNDAY OF THE BLIND MAN (tone 4): To thee I come, O Christ, blinded in my soul's eyes like the man blind from his birth, and crying unto Thee in repentance: "Thou art the Light of transcendent radiance to those who are in darkness!"

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING (for Sts. Constantine and Helen)

Their voice has gone out into all the earth. The heavens declare the glory of God.

The Reading from the Acts of the Holy Apostles

(Acts 26:1, 12-20) In those days, King Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself." Then Paul stretched out his hand and made his defense: "I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining round me and those who journeyed with me. And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It hurts you to kick against the goads.' And I said, 'Who art Thou, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus Whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand upon your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you to serve and bear witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, delivering you from the people and from the Gentiles, to whom I send you to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.' Wherefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those at Damascus, then at Jerusalem and throughout all the country of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God and perform deeds worthy of their repentance."

From the life of Emperor Constantine the Great (oca.org): In 306, Constantine was acclaimed by the army at York as emperor of Gaul and Britain. He was facing one the other co-emperor, Maxentius, near Rome. Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea, a contemporary and close collaborator of the Emperor, writes the following in his *Church History*:

Because of the wicked magical enchantments so diligently practiced by the tyrant [Maxentius, who was in control of Rome], Constantine was convinced that he needed more powerful aid than his military forces could give him, so he sought the help of God. ... Accordingly Constantine called on him with earnest prayer to reveal to him who he was, and stretch forth his right hand to help him in his present difficulties. And while he was thus praying with fervent entreaty, a most extraordinary sign appeared to him from heaven – something which it might have been hard to believe had the story been told by any other person. But since the victorious emperor himself long afterwards declared it to the writer of this history, when he was honored with his acquaintance and society, and confirmed his statement by an oath, who could hesitate to believe it, especially since other testimonies have established its truth? He said that about noon, when the day was already beginning to decline, he saw with his own eyes the

sign of a cross of light in the heavens, above the sun, and bearing the inscription, "By this symbol you will conquer." He was struck with amazement by the sight, and his whole army witnessed the miracle. He said that he was unsure what this apparition could mean, but that while he continued to ponder, night suddenly came on. In his sleep, the Christ of God appeared to him with the same sign which he had seen in the heavens, and commanded him to make a likeness of that sign which he had seen in the heavens, and to use it as a safeguard in all engagements with his enemies. At the break of day he rose and told his friends about the marvel. Then he called together the workers in gold and precious stones, sat in the midst of them, and described to them the sign he had seen ... And this representation I myself have had an opportunity of seeing. It was made in the following manner. A long spear overlaid with gold with a transverse bar laid over it formed the figure of the cross. A wreath of gold and precious stones was fixed to the top with the symbol of the Savior's name with in it – the first two [Greek] letters of Christ's name, the rho being intersected by chi in its centre. [These two letters look like X and P.] The Emperor took to wearing the two letters on his helmet at a later period. ... The emperor constantly made use of this sign of salvation as a safeguard against every adverse and hostile power, and commanded that others similar to it should be carried at the head of all his armies.

The Empress Helen, mother of Constantine, who had been a Christian for some time, went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem and, assisted by the Patriarch Macarius of Jerusalem, was decided to find the place of the Lord's Crucifixion. The place as well as the Cross were miraculously discovered in 326. (The finding is celebrated on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, September 14). While in Palestine, the Empress ordered that all places connected with the earthly life of the Lord should be honored by the building of churches.

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to John

(John 9:1-38) At that time, when Jesus was passing, He saw a man blind from his birth. And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him. I must work the works of Him Who sent me, while it is day; night comes, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." As He said this, he spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle and anointed the man's eyes with the clay, saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam." So he went and washed and came back seeing. The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar, said, "Is not this the man who used to sit and beg?" Some said, "It is he"; others said, "No, but he is like him." He said, "I am the man." They said to him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" He answered, "The man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash'; so I went and washed and received my sight." They said to him, "Where is He?" He said, "I do not know." They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. The Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for He does not keep the Sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" There was a division among them. So they again said to the blind man, "What do you say about Him, since He has opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet." The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight, and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his

eyes. Ask him; he is of age, he will speak for himself.” His parents said this because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if any one should confess Him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, “He is of age, ask him.” So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, “Give God the praise; we know that this man is a sinner.” He answered, “Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see.” They said to him, “What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?” He answered them, “I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you too want to become His disciples?” And they reviled him, saying, “You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where He comes from.” The man answered, “Why, this is a marvel! You do not know where He comes from, and yet He opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, God listens to him. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, He could do nothing.” They answered him, “You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?” And they cast him out. Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him He said, “Do you believe in the Son of God?” He answered, “And who is He, Sir, that I may believe in Him?” Jesus said to him, “You have seen Him, and it is He who speaks to you.” He said, “Lord, I believe”; and he worshiped Him.

Saint John the Evangelist has left us with the most spiritual of the four Gospels; his symbol, befitting his lofty theology, is the eagle. Many of the stories in his Gospel point to a deeper truth, which lies beyond the mere facts that are being narrated.

So it is with the story of the paralytic, read a couple of weeks ago. The words of the Kontakion for that Sunday are to the point: *As Thou didst raise up the paralytic of old, so also raise up my soul paralyzed by sins and thoughtless acts; so that being saved I may sing to Thee: Glory to Thy majesty, O gracious Christ!*

So also it is with today’s story of the blind man. Note the manner in which Christ heals him: **he spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle and anointed the man’s eyes with the clay.** These words send us to the Book of Genesis, where the Creator makes Adam out of the dust of the earth, as a potter would mold a statue out of the clay. We understand that *the same One* who once made Adam from the earth now mercifully “repairs” the broken vessel of His Image.

This Sunday’s Kontakion reads: *To thee I come, O Christ, blinded in my soul’s eyes like the man blind from his birth, and crying unto Thee in repentance: Thou art the Light of transcendent radiance to those who are in darkness!* Thus, the physical healing, spectacular as it was, is only a shadow of the man’s coming to see and recognize *Who it is* that heals him. The story ends with a dialogue between Christ and the man, and the latter’s response invites us to join in a confession of faith: **“Do you believe in the Son of God?” ... He said, “Lord, I believe”; and he worshiped Him.**

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- **SATURDAY. 6/ 17: KIBBEE SALE (St Anthony’s).**
Please pre-order. Call Dollie (724.482.4657) to order or if you can help.
 - **“Becoming a Better Christian Community Despite Ourselves”:** one Saturday this summer (still TBD) we will gather at the Holy Transfiguration Monastery. After Divine Liturgy and brunch, Mother Christophora will be speaking (and answering questions) about the experience of forming a monastic community and how it applies to life as a parish.