

SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

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SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

15 July 2017

TONE 5—Fathers of the First Six Ecumenical Councils. Hieromartyr Athenogenes, Bishop of Heracleopolis (ca. 311). Martyrs Paul and two sisters, Thea and Valentina, at Caesarea in Palestine (308). Martyr Antiochus, Physician, of Sebaste (4th c.). Virgin Martyr Julia of Carthage (ca. 440 or 613).

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 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 THE HOLY FATHERS (Tone 8): Thou, O Christ, art our God of exceeding praise Who didst establish our Holy Fathers as luminous stars upon earth, and through them didst guide us unto the true Faith, O most merciful One, 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 OF ORDINARY SUNDAYS (Tone 4): O protection of Christians who cannot be put to shame, mediation unto the Creator most constant: despise not the suppliant voices of those who have sinned; but be thou quick, O good one, to come unto our aid, who in faith cry unto thee: Hasten to intercession, and speed thou to make supplication, thou who dost ever protect, O Theotokos, them that honor thee.

How to Follow the Theology of the Holy Fathers

Fr. Dumitru Staniloae (1903-1993): "I have followed the way in which the Holy Fathers of old have understood the teaching of the Church; but, in my interpretation of the dogmas, I have also kept in mind the spiritual needs of the soul seeking salvation in this our time. ... I have striven to understand the teaching of the Church in the Spirit of the Fathers, but, at the same time, to understand it as we think that they would have understood it today. I believe that they would not fail to attend to our times, as they did not fail to attend to theirs."

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon: *Blessed are Thou, O Lord, the God of our Fathers.
For Thou art just in all that Thou hast done.*

The Reading is from the Epistle of Saint Paul to Titus

Titus 3:8-15 Titus, my son, this saying is trustworthy. I want you to insist on these points, that those who have believed in God be careful to devote themselves to good works; these are excellent and beneficial to others. But avoid foolish arguments, genealogies, rivalries, and quarrels about the law, for they are useless and futile. After a first and second warning, break off contact with a factious person, realizing that such a person is perverted and sinful and stands self-condemned. When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, try to join me at Nicopolis, where I have decided to spend the winter. Send Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey soon, and see to it that they have everything they need. But let our people, too, learn to devote themselves to good works to supply urgent needs, so that they may not be unproductive. All who are with me send you greetings. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with all of you!

Since today we commemorate the Fathers of the first six Ecumenical Councils, the regular course of Epistle readings is interrupted with a text usually read for feasts of the Fathers of the Church. It is a passage from a short letter sent by Saint Paul to his disciple Titus. This private letter was deemed so important that it was copied and eventually became a universal good of the Church. The passage read today is no less important, as it deals with some practical and yet deeply spiritual realities of the Christian life.

Whether baptized as children or becoming Orthodox later in life, we are all called to “come to believe” and to entrust ourselves and our whole life to Jesus Christ our Lord, God, and Savior. But we do not come to the Faith in order to be “right,” members in the most ancient and most correct of Christian groups—as opposed to everyone out there who “doesn’t get it.” This arrogant attitude usually leads one pretty soon to question even the Orthodoxy of the Orthodox; and one starts speaking of “true Orthodox” and arguing about all kind of elements by which “correctness” of faith is to be assessed—the calendar, the dress code of clergy, the length of services, the length of the beards, the type of food used during fasting periods, even some intimate details of family life.

These, Saint Paul writes forcefully, are all “foolish arguments, rivalries, and quarrels about the law”; they are *foolish* because “they are useless and futile.” Instead, we should be focusing on things truly useful, excellent and beneficial to others: let those who have believed in God be careful to devote themselves to good works ... Let our people learn to devote themselves to good works to supply urgent needs!” God knows that the urgent needs of the broken world around us are not healed by *more* disagreements and *more* bitterness. There are persons who become addicted to constantly arguing one’s correctness against the errors of others. Such a person, Saint Paul instructs his disciple, should be confronted and stopped from spreading foolishness; if there is no repentance, “break off contact with the factious person, realizing that he is perverted in himself and sinful and stands self-condemned.”

The Church is a training-ground for the Kingdom of Heaven: it is not about proving ourselves right and others wrong, but a training in humility, love, and service to others.

TODAY’S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Gospel according to Saint Matthew

(Mat 5:14-19) **The Lord said to his disciples: “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them, but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”**

Note just how highly the Lord speaks about his disciples: “**You are the light of the world!**” And He does not mean only the twelve apostles, or those three among them who receive special attention (Peter, James, and John). Christ is speaking here to *all* those who would be his disciples throughout all times and places; this is a saying for *all* insiders of the faith.

But are we, who count ourselves Christians, really the light of the world? Isn’t the same Gospel according to Matthew warning us about *the darkness* that is in us? (**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!**) Besides, doesn’t the Lord say clearly in the Gospel of John: “**I am the light of the world**” (John 8:12)? How does He now call us “the light of the world”?

Yet, the Church—the community of Christ’s disciples—is, in the language of Scripture, “the bride of Christ.” And the bride shares in all that the bridegroom has. This, indeed, is a great mystery, as Saint Paul writes! Christ, who is the true Light, shares Himself with us, enlightens our darkness, kindles the fire of divine presence in us, and works in us to make us also into children of the light.

This is the covenant we have entered into by Baptism, this is the yoke of faith: to be yoked together with Christ, to learn to live with God and in God, feeding on God's very life and light.

The Holy Fathers who have defended and defined the Orthodox faith at the Ecumenical Councils call all of this "deification": a gradual process of becoming godlike. Nothing new here: the Lord Himself said that a perfect disciple is *like his master* (Luke 6:40), doing the same works as the master or even "greater works" (John 14:12).

Let us also note that Christ explains the point of being called to deification: "**You are the light of the world . . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.**" Whatever we receive from God is not out possession, but should become in turn a gift to others. As on Pascha night, when the priest calls out "Come receive the Light," we approach and light our candle only to pass it on to those next to us.

What all of this boils down to is the following: we are, indeed, *called to be* a light in the world; we can only fulfill this calling to be a light to others by allowing the true Light, Christ our true God, to enlighten *our* darkness first; finally, the light that we are to bring to others is the light of Christ: his mercy and meekness and grace and love.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The parish covered Ron Butler's funeral expenses. Anyone willing to alleviate this effort is invited to contribute to the special offering basket.
- The parish council has been investigating a potential mold problem in the church hall. The tests run on several areas came back inconclusive. We now have two dehumidifiers in the hall. For more info, see Frank Harrison.
- **SATURDAY, August 12, Holy Transfiguration Monastery: "Becoming a Better Christian Community Despite Ourselves."** After Liturgy and brunch, Mother Christophora will be speaking to us (and answering questions) about the experience of forming a monastic community and how it applies to life as a parish.

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: Fr. Anthony Yazge (widowed and seriously ill); Fr. Ignatius and Amy and newborn baby Joseph; Sula; Norma; Richard (Johns); Christine (Abraham); Daniel (Sipos); Venetia (Chrissi's mom); Kent (Jean's husband); Barbara (Dollie's daughter); Maura; Christi, Janet, Ann; John and Mary Ann (Jean's relatives); Stelian (Cezar's father); Ed, Peter, Georgia and Scot; John, Jonathan and Joanna; Andrei; John, Janet, Christy (relatives of Jean); Dennis, Vincent, Roy and Laura, Danny, Danny, Cathy (relatives of John and Julie); Derek; Phoebe, Tina. Garrett & Autumn, Benjamin, Matt and Nancy – seeking the true faith.

DEPARTED: Jim and Marion (Raimondi); Stephanie (Yazge); Job; George (Georgiades).