

SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

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ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

20 August 2017

TONE 2— After-feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos; Prophet Samuel (11th c. B.C.). Hieromartyr Philip, Bishop of Heraclius, and with him Martyrs Severus, Memnon, and 37 soldiers in Thrace (3rd c.). Martyr Heliodorus (380).

FIRST ANTIPHON

Shout with joy to God, all the earth, give thanks unto the Lord and call upon His Name. Declare His works among the nations. Refrain: Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us! In the city of our God, in His holy mountain, His place hath been made in peace, and His dwelling in Zion. (R:) Glory... Now and ever... (R:)

SECOND ANTIPHON

The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwelling of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Refrain: Save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead, as we chant to Thee: Alleluia! God hath laid her foundation unto eternity. We have thought, O God, of Thy mercy in the midst of Thy people. (R:) The most-high hath hallowed His tabernacle. (R:) Glory... Now and ever... (Only begotten Son ...)

THIRD ANTIPHON

TROPARION OF THE DORMITION (see below) with the following verses:

- *Ready is my heart, O God, ready is my heart; I will sing and chant in my glory.*
- *What shall I render to the Lord for all that He hath given me?*
- *I will receive the cup of salvation, and call upon the Name of the Lord.*

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 DORMITION (Tone 1): In thy birth-giving, O Theotokos, thou didst keep and preserve virginity; and in thy falling-asleep thou hast not forsaken the world; for thou wast translated into life, being the Mother of Life. Wherefore, by thine intercessions, deliver our souls from death.

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 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 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

TODAY: parish picnic after Divine Liturgy (at Dollie’s Mansion & Grill)! *Grillmaster extraordinaire: Martie Johnson.*

Saturday-Sunday, August 26-27: services at the Cranberry Outreach

- Sat, 6 PM: Great Vespers followed by “Intro to Orthodoxy” led by Prof. Edith Humphrey.
 - Sun, 9:30 AM: Akathist “Glory to God for all things” and Divine Liturgy
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Saturday-Sunday, September 2-3: services at St. Anthony’s in Butler

- Sat, 6:30 PM: Great Vespers
 - Sun, 9:15 AM: Matins and Divine Liturgy
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Saturday-Sunday, September 9-10: services at the Cranberry Outreach

- Sat, 6 PM: Great Vespers followed by music practice
 - Sun, 9:30 AM: Akathist “Glory to God for all things” and Divine Liturgy
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Saturday-Sunday, September 16-17: services at St. Anthony’s in Butler

- Sat, 6:30 PM: Great Vespers
 - Sun, 9:15 AM: Matins and Divine Liturgy
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Saturday-Sunday, September 23-24: services at the Cranberry Outreach

- Sat, 6 PM: Great Vespers
 - Sun, 9:30 AM: Akathist “Glory to God for all things” and Divine Liturgy
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Saturday-Sunday, September 30-October 1: services at St. Anthony’s in Butler

- Sat, 6:30 PM: Great Vespers
 - Sun, 9:15 AM: Matins and Divine Liturgy
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Fr. Paisius is working to organize a pan-Orthodox picnic for the three Butler/Lyndora parishes. Possible dates: 9/24, 10/1.

WEEKDAY FEASTS IN SEPTEMBER

Friday, September 8: Nativity of the Theotokos. Fr. Bogdan is unable to leave Pittsburgh. Please attend services either at one of the Orthodox churches in Lyndora, or at the “**Nativity of the Theotokos**” monastery in Saxonburg (Liturgy, 9AM).

Thursday, September 14: Elevation of the Holy Cross. Fr. Bogdan is unable to leave Pittsburgh. Please attend services at one of the Orthodox churches in Lyndora,

Friday, August 18, 2017

The Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America

Response to Racist Violence in Charlottesville, VA

The Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America stands with all people of good will in condemning the hateful violence and lamenting the loss of life that resulted from the shameful efforts to promote racial bigotry and white supremacist ideology in Charlottesville, Virginia.

The Orthodox Church emphatically declares that it does not promote, protect or sanction participation in such reprehensible acts of hatred, racism, and discrimination, and proclaims that such beliefs and behaviors have no place in any community based in respect for the law and faith in a loving God.

The essence of the Christian Gospel and the spirit of the Orthodox Tradition are entirely and self-evidently incompatible with ideologies that declare the superiority of any race over another. Our God shows no partiality or favoritism (Deuteronomy 10:17, Romans 2:11). Our Lord Jesus Christ *broke down the dividing wall of hostility that had separated God from humans and humans from each other* (Ephesians 2:14). In Christ Jesus, the Church proclaims, there can be *neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male or female, but all are one* (Galatians 3:28). Furthermore, we call on one another *to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather to expose them* (Ephesians 5:11). And what is darkness if not hatred? *The one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness* (1 John 2:11)!

Furthermore, in 1872, Hierarchs from around the world assembled in Constantinople and denounced all forms of xenophobia and chauvinism (*phyletism*). They agreed that the promotion of racial or national supremacy and ethnic bias or dissension in the Church of Christ is to be censured as contrary to the sacred teachings of the Christian Gospel and the holy canons of the Church. It is formally condemned as heresy, the strongest category of false teaching.

Finally, such actions as we have witnessed in recent days, by self-proclaimed white supremacists, neo-Nazis, and various racists and fascists, betray the core human values of love and solidarity. In this, we pray wholeheartedly for the families of those who lost their lives or suffered in these tragic events. In like manner, we cannot condone any form of revenge or retaliation by any group or individual. Therefore, we fervently appeal to every person of good will, and especially the leaders of our great nation, to consider and adopt ways of reconciling differences in order to rise above any and all discrimination in our history, our present, and our future