

# SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



## Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

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## NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

15 October 2017

*TONE 2— Fathers of the 7th Ecumenical Council. Martyrs Sarbelius and Bebaia of Edessa (2nd c.). Martyr Lucian, Presbyter of Antioch (312). Sabinus, Bishop of Catania (760). Ven. Euthymius the New, of Thessalonica, Monk of Mt. Athos (889). St. John, Bishop of Suzdal' (14th c.).*

### 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 ...)*

### 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 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 FOR ORDINARY SUNDAYS (Tone 4): O protection of Christians that cannot be put to shame, mediation unto the Creator most constant, O 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.

## 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 Seventh Ecumenical Council, the regular course of Epistle readings is interrupted with the 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, which 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 correct, most orthodox of Christian churches—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

### *From the Holy Gospel according to Luke*

(Luke 8:5-15) The Lord spoke this parable: A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path and was trampled, and the birds of the sky ate it up. Some seed fell on rocky ground, and when it grew, it withered for lack of moisture. Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it. And some seed fell on good soil, and when it grew, it produced fruit a hundredfold." After saying this, he called out, "Whoever has ears to hear ought to hear." Then his disciples asked him what the meaning of this parable might be. He answered, "Knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of God has been granted to you; but to the rest, they are made known through parables so that 'they may look but not see, and hear but not understand.'" This is the meaning of the parable. The seed is the word of God. Those on the path are the ones who have heard, but the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts that they may not believe and be saved. Those on rocky ground are the ones who, when they hear, receive the word with joy, but they have no root; they believe only for a time and fall away in time of trial. As for the seed that fell among thorns, they are the ones who have heard, but as they go along, they are choked by the anxieties and riches and pleasures of life, and they fail to produce mature fruit. But as for the seed that fell on rich soil, they are the ones who, when they have heard the word, embrace it with a generous and good heart, and bear fruit in perseverance.

The parable of the sower is well known; it is, however, easily misunderstood. The parable seems, at first sight, to speak of different types of persons: some refuse to hear the Gospel; others hear it but are superficial and lazy; others always seem to put God and their salvation last; and others, again, receive the Gospel like a seed planted in rich soil, which grows and brings forth the fruit of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Let us note, first, that God (the sower) is "foolishly" generous, even prodigal, and sends His Word (the seed) *everywhere and to everyone*: on good soil but also, no less, on the path, on rocky ground, and among thorns. In fact, we see that most of the effort is in vain, since the majority (75% in the parable) reject or misuse the seed. Still, God continues to sow the Word of God even in this world and in this faithless and adulterous generation.

The "soil" that receives the seed is nothing else than our heart. It can be a careless, inhospitable heart (where God's presence goes unnoticed); a hard heart, which refuses to be pierced through by the Word, and remains shallow, without root; a poisoned heart ("choked by thorns"), where the Word of God is soon overwhelmed by a crowd of other concerns; or, as the Lord explains, the good soil refers to "a good and generous heart." So, which type are you? What a silly question! Our heart is like *all* those types of soil—sometimes like barren ground, oblivious to God and our neighbor, sometimes reducing God to some shallow feeling or thought, sometimes too anxious about many things and therefore unable to be still in front of God.

To think that "some are just like this – the 'churchy' type – and others just aren't" is simply not Orthodox. It leads to arrogance (remember the Pharisee: "God, I *thank you* that I'm *not like* other people!") and despair. The point of the parable is rather that we are encountering the very Word of God as a seed being sown in our hearing, that we are called to receive it, and *to change*, to become

good soil. And change begins here and now: the Word of God is sown during Liturgy, read in the Psalm verses, the Epistle, and the Gospel, preached in the sermon, and tasted in the Eucharist.

The Word of God is searching for us and searching out our heart. He calls to us to become **receptive and hospitable** (because, “to those that *receive* Him He has given power to be children of God,” John 1:12), but also **patient and perseverant**. Remember, the good soil (the good heart) “will bring forth fruit **in patience**”! Or elsewhere, also in the Gospel of Luke: “by your **endurance** you will gain your lives” (Luke 21:19).

Finally, laboring for the cultivation of the heart, learning to receive God with an open, patient, and perseverant heart is well worth it. The harvest—the fruit of the Spirit—is rich beyond belief, worthy of God’s generosity: **when it grew, it produced fruit a hundredfold. A hundredfold!**

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **TODAY:** “Stump the priest” (instead of sermon)
- **Next Sunday (10/22):**
  - “Sunday School for Adults” (30 mins with Martie);
  - assembly/ drop-off of Health & Cleaning Kits for hurricane victims.
- **Saturday, 11/4:** Cookie Bake Sale and Rummage Sale to raise money for hurricane victims. More info: Seba (Butchie).

**LADIES RETREAT: Saturday, October 28**  
@ Diane’s (210 Chan Mowr Drive, Valencia, PA)

## UPDATE ON THE CRANBERRY OUTREACH

In order to improve the chances of success for both St. Anthony’s and the Cranberry mission, while awaiting Martie’s ordination as a deacon, we have decided on the following:

- weekly services resume in Butler, at St. Anthony’s;
- the mission will restart itself, building anew from the ground up: Martie will lead Bible studies /Intro to Orthodoxy on weeknights; occasional Sunday liturgies will occur when Dc. Seraphim Moslener or other clergy are available;
- when no Sunday services are held at the mission, anyone willing and able is encouraged to come to St. Anthony’s for worship, fellowship, and catechesis;
- when Martie is ordained we will return to weekly services at both locations

### ***Remember in your prayers***

**LIVING:** Sula; Fr. Anthony Yazge; 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, John, Jonathan and Joanna; Andrei; John, Janet, Christy (relatives of Jean); Dennis, Vincent, Roy and Laura, Danny, Cathy (relatives of John and Julie); Derek; Phoebe, Tina.

Garrett & Autumn – to be received in the Church (St Nicholas [OCA], Mckeesport);  
Matt and Nancy – to be received in the Orthodox Church (Holy Trinity [Greek], Wexford);

**DEPARTED:** Bishop Antoun; Vito (DiPento); Dorothy (Fr Roeber’s mother); Jim and Marion (Raimondi); Stephanie (Yazge); Job; George (Georgiades).