

SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

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TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

19 November 2017

TONE 7—The Holy Prophet Obadiah; Martyr Barlaam of Antioch; Martyr Azi the wonderworker of Isauria in Asia Minor and 150 soldiers with him; Martyr Agapios of Caesarea in Palestine; Martyr Heliodoros of Magidum in Pamphylia; Venerable Abbot Barlaam of the Kiev Caves

TROPARIA

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 7): Thou didst shatter death by Thy Cross, Thou didst open paradise to the thief; Thou didst turn the sadness of the ointment-bearing women into joy. And didst bid Thine Apostles proclaim a warning, that Thou hast risen O Christ, granting to the world great mercy.

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 THE ENTRANCE OF THE THEOTOKOS INTO THE TEMPLE (Tone 4): The sacred treasury of God's holy glory, the greatly precious bridal chamber and Virgin, the Savior's most pure temple, free of stain and undefiled, into the House of the Lord on this day is brought forward and bringeth with herself the grace of the Most Divine Spirit; her do God's Angels hymn with songs of praise, sfor she is truly the heavenly tabernacle.

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon: *The Lord will give strength to His people.
Ascribe to the Lord, O sons of God, ascribe to the Lord honor and glory.*

From the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Ephesians

(Ephesians 2:14-22) **Brethren:** Christ is our peace, He who made both groups one and broke down the dividing wall of enmity, through His flesh, abolishing the Law with its commandments and legal claims, in order to create in Himself one new person in place of the two, thus establishing peace, and to reconcile both with God, in one

body, through the cross, putting that enmity to death by it. He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near, for through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone. Through Him the whole structure is held together and grows into a temple sacred in the Lord; in Him you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

The two groups that are mentioned in this text are the people of Israel and the Gentiles. For the longest time God had been erecting a fence around Israel, to keep them as his “treasured possession” (Exod 19:5), as the people chosen to know God and bear witness to him before all the families of the earth. With the advent of Christ, however, the dividing wall is abolished, and both groups are joined into the One Church: both Jews and Gentiles, all those who confess that God has visited His people, becoming flesh for our sake. Saint Paul does not insist on the newness that this tearing down of the wall brought *to Israel*; since he is writing to a community of Gentile Christians in Asia Minor, his message is tailored primarily *for us*, former pagans.

We were “far off” from God, and are given most intimate “access to the Father”; we were “strangers and sojourners,” and are now counted as “fellow citizens with the holy ones.” In short, we have been taken in, adopted into Israel, and God no longer differentiates between Israel, his first born, and the Gentiles: as long as any Jews or Gentiles are “in Christ,” they are equally part of the people of God.

Of course, the gate of Baptism through which one enters “in one Spirit” into the new reality of the One Church, is merely the beginning. Our calling is to become “a temple sacred in the Lord,” to “grow into a dwelling place of God.” In other words, Jews and Gentiles alike are called to be, individually, what the ancient Temple was: a receptacle and abode of the divine Glory; called to be, individually, what the Theotokos is: a Christ-bearer; or, like the bread and the wine that we bring to the altar, called to be transformed by the Holy Spirit, Who does not shy away from descending upon us and our gifts.

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

From the Holy Gospel according to Luke

(Luke 12:16-21) The Lord spoke this parable: “The land of a rich man brought forth plentifully; and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ And he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns, and build larger ones; and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, be merry.’ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.” As He said this, Jesus called out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

The man in today's Gospel receives a very harsh verdict from God: “you *fool!*” What was so foolish in what he had done? The land had given him good crops—a blessing, something to be happy and thankful about! The man had started to plan an expansion of his storage facilities, so as to be ready for the abundant crop. This, too, is a good thing; it would have been foolish *not* to have acted in this way. So far, the man should be praised, not called a fool.

In fact, the parable does not say that God objected to any of the good and reasonable things the man did. There is something else, however, that is “foolish.” The man seems to have measured his

calling as a human being with only one measure: wealth. He says, **“Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, be merry!”**

This is foolish: to think that one’s “soul”, one’s deepest longing, can be satisfied with grains or gold or eating and drinking. It is foolish, first, because we are “wired” in such a way that the meaning of who we are is found in God. We are made “after the image of God”—that is, in relation to a godly prototype; and God has placed in us the thirst for eternity. No amount of earthly goods can fill our deep longing; and looking for all kinds of substitutes for God only leads to a pathological craving and abuse of wealth, power, and pleasure. It is foolish.

“God” is not confined to “religion”; He is, rather, present in all aspects of our lives. One sure way to experience God is by extending ourselves to our neighbor. Here we see that the man acted foolishly because he completely left out his fellow humans. **“Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years”** suggests that wealth was to him a matter of *him* enjoying *his* little fortune. But don’t we know that the tastiest meal is a *shared* meal? The Gospel hints at another possible use of wealth when it says **“This night your soul is required of you. Now, the things you have prepared, whose will they be?”**

If the man had included his neighbor in his elaborate management plan, wealth would have become an asset. Whatever is shared enriches our soul—and it is our soul, our heart, that stands before the Lord in judgment.

Since we are now struggling to keep the Nativity, today’s Gospel reading is a reminder that fasting cannot be divorced from opening ourselves up for God and for our neighbor. To fast without seeking God is to completely miss the point. Let us not be foolish!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **TODAY:**

Fr. Bogdan is out of town for an academic conference in Boston (and for Confession!).

Assembly / Drop-off Day for Health Kit & Cleaning Kits (to be sent to hurricane victims).
Martie has exact figures on what we have achieved so far. The rummage sale brought in 500+ dollars!

- **NATIVITY FAST:** November 15—December 25. This is a lighter fast, with fish allowed Saturdays and Sundays. Not to mention Thanksgiving, which is the custom of the land—enjoy with gratitude for God’s many gifts and remember so many who, in this land of plenty, are less fortunate than we are!

After Thanksgiving Father Bogdan will be available for confessions on any Saturdays before and after Vespers, and Sundays after Divine Liturgy.

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: *Sula; Ion and Viorica; Fr. Anthony Yazge; 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, 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).*