

SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
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THE SUNDAY OF THE FOREFATHERS 17 December 2017

TONE 3— Eothinon 6. *Holy Prophet Daniel and the Three Holy Youths: Ananias, Azarias and Misael (600 B.C.). Ven. Daniel the Confessor, in schema Stephen, of Spain and Egypt (10th 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! **Refrain:** Save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead, as we chant to Thee, Alleluia! *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 3): Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad, for the Lord hath done a mighty act with His own arm. He hath trampled down death by death, and become the first-born from the dead. He hath delivered us from the depths of Hades, granting the world great mercy.

TROPARION OF THE FOREFATHERS (Tone 2): By faith Thou didst justify the Forefathers, when through them Thou didst betrothe Thyself aforetime to the Church from among the nations. The Saints boast in glory that from their seed there is a glorious fruit, even she that bare Thee seedlessly. By their prayers, O Christ God, save our souls!

KONTAKION FOR THE PREPARATION OF THE NATIVITY (Tone 3): On this day the Virgin comes unto the cave to give birth there to the Word before all time: beyond all words is this wonder! Dance with joy rejoice, all of creation, hearing these tidings! Glorify, along with angels and with the shepherds, him who willingly appears as a newborn baby, yet he is God before time.

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon: *Blessed art Thou, O Lord, the God of our fathers.
Thou art just in all that Thou hast done to us!*

From the Epistle to the Colossians

(Col 3:4-11) Brethren: when Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience. In these you once walked, when you lived in them. But now put them all away; anger, wrath, malice, slander, and foul talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature with its practices and have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian and Scythian, slave and free man, but Christ is all and in all.

Today's Epistle speaks about cutting out anger, malice, lies, slander, foul talk, all manner of sexual impurity, and greed. We all know pretty well that these vices estrange us from God and His Kingdom. If there is something surprising, it is that Saint Paul adds a special note to greed or covetousness: he says that it is a form of idolatry. *Idolatry?* Indeed! Greed is idolatry because it is a twisted emotional attachment—an addiction—to material possessions.

It is natural to seek personal security and a place, a status, in society. But *covetousness* means that we abandon ourselves and our aspirations for trust and security to "having" all kinds of earthly possessions. In short, it means believing that security and "being someone" comes from *having stuff*, and lots of it. With this attitude we make money into a god and sell ourselves into slavery to this god. And Christ warns us at: "**No one can serve two masters. You cannot serve both God and money!**" (Mat 6:24). The same applies to all other vices. Therefore, Saint Paul writes, we must put away all these evil masters: anger, wrath, malice, slander, foul talk, and all the rest.

Let us now turn to what being a Christian means, according to the Apostle. It is not simply doing certain things and abstaining from others. If we avoid cursing, lying, and slandering, it is not merely because they are "not nice" or "bad for society." Christian morality is not about keeping a certain set of rules, but about exercising here and now "the life of the age to come" that we confess in the Creed). The life of the age to come is, in fact, communion with Christ Himself. That is why, being with Christ in the age to come is possible only if we practice living "in Christ" *in this age*.

Note the wording of the Apostle: "**when Christ *who is our life* appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.**" In other words, when Christ appears in glory, either He will be the very content of our lives, or we will find ourselves outside of the life of the Kingdom. It is for this reason that our day-to-day existence matters tremendously: either we struggle to make Christ's life our own, anticipating the full glory of the Kingdom to come, or we are increasingly sabotaging our chances in the age to come.

Our life in Christ is a return to true humanity. With his becoming man (as we celebrate at Christmas), the Word of God has taken on our human nature and healed it. What is more, this renewed humanity is not His personal privilege, but a gift He shares with us: "**Christ *in all!***" Christian morality means, therefore, to give ourselves and all our live to Him, "trading in," as it were, our fallen humanity for the life of the "new Adam." In the words of the Apostle, "**put off the old nature with its practices** (anger, malice, lies, slander, foul talk, sexual impurity, etc) **and put on the new nature renewed after the image of the Creator.**"

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Holy Gospel according to Luke

(Luke 14:16-24) Then Jesus said to him, "Someone gave a great dinner and invited many. At the time for the dinner he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for everything is ready now.' But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of land, and I must go out and see it; please accept my regrets.' Another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please accept my regrets.' Another said, 'I have just been married, and therefore I cannot come.' So the slave returned and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his slave, 'Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.' And the slave said, 'Sir, what you ordered has been done, and there is still room.' Then the master said to the slave, 'Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled. For I tell you, 'none of those who were invited will taste my dinner.'"

To speak of God's call addressed to estranged humanity, the Church uses the image of a rich banquet, with food and drink and much rejoicing. As we hear on Pascha night: *Rejoice today for the table is richly laden! Feast royally on it, the calf is a fatted one. Let no one go away hungry. Partake, all, of the cup of faith!* Let us summarize today's Gospel: a "great dinner" is organized; the dinner is free; "everything is ready"; "many" are invited (and it turns out, in the end, that *everyone* is invited).

The parable also portrays the petty excuses that humanity makes when receiving this call. In contrast to the greatness of the person organizing the banquet (the St Luke says it was "a *great* dinner," while Mat 22 speaks of a *kingly banquet!*), the magnitude of the celebration, and the attention devoted to sending out the invitations, the response is embarrassing. People make their excuses arguing (unconvincingly) that they have to attend to various less pressing and much less important duties.

In its original context, those who first receive the invitation represent the people of Israel; the second group—the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame—to whom the call goes out afterwards, are the nations, the pagans. In the life of the Church, however, the parable also speaks about God's *ongoing* work of calling home his estranged children –*with fear of God, with faith and love, draw near!* – and about our *ongoing* work of receiving God in our lives, and *ongoing* work of drawing near to God in the banquet of the Church – *of Your mystical supper receive me today, O Son of God!*

How do we respond to God's invitation? And if we already have responded and taken the first step (some of us by our baptism as children, others by joining the Orthodox Church later in life), how do we live out this fellowship with Christ?

A Christian life is not easy. Saint Paul describes it as an ongoing work of "putting off the old nature with its practices, and putting on the new nature." The journey is hard, the world is full of snares, and we are flawed creatures. And yet, we draw strength by reminding ourselves that we are at the Lord's Table, called by a good and generous Lord to share in the light of His goodness. *Christ is among us! He is and ever shall be!*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Today:** 1-year memorial for Job
- **Nativity Fast: November 15—December 25.** Repenting of our sins in Confession and receiving forgiveness is part of our preparation for the joyous feast of the Lord's Nativity.

FROM THE TREASURER: November receipts were 2,118; November disbursements: 4,245 Deficit: 2,126.97

Thursday, December 21, 5—8 PM: Advent party at the Adams Ridge Clubhouse (100 Adams Ridge Boulevard, Mars, PA). We will pray the Advent Paraklesis and continue with Christmas carols, hoiy cider, mulled wine and fasting food, games and fellowship. Come and bring a friend!

- **HELP US HELP LOCAL FAMILIES IN NEED:** As we gather on December 21st, please bring two toys and two food cans; the items will be delivered to foundations that help families in need in Butler and Allegheny Counties (If you can't join us or stay for our evening party, simply drop off your two unexpired canned foods and two toys at the Adams Ridge Clubhouse between 5:00pm and 8:00pm).

CHRISTMAS SERVICES: Saturday, DEC 23: Great Vespers, 6 PM

Sunday, DEC 24: 8:30 AM: Matins, 9:30 AM Divine Liturgy
5 PM: Nativity Vigil, Festal Liturgy, potluck!

Saturday, 30 December: NO VESPERS

Sunday, 31 December: Matins, Divine Liturgy

Monday, January 1, 9:30: no service at St. Anthony's.

(there is Divine Liturgy at Holy Transfiguration Monastery, served by Fr. Long)

Saturday, January 6: Matins (9 AM) and Divine Liturgy (10 AM) for the Feast of Theophany
Vespers (6:30 PM)

Sunday, January 7: Matins (9 AM) and Divine Liturgy (10 AM).

Sat/Sun, January 13-14: all services at Sts Peter and Paul (Bishop Daniel presiding);
Following Divine Liturgy, Bishop Daniel will lead the blessing of Lake Arthur.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 21: SAINT ANTHONY'S DAY! We will serve Matins and Divine Liturgy together with the priests and faithful of the other two Orthodox churches in Butler/Lyndora.

ORTHODOXOUTREACHUSA.ORG Check out the new website of our Cranberry Outreach, set up and managed by Martie. It is geared primarily towards inquirers in Butler and Mars/ Cranberry. It contains, among many other things, a calendar of services and activities at St. Anthony's and at the mission.

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: *Dollie; 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).*