



SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH

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SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

8 July 2018

TONE 5—Holy Greatmartyr Procopius of Cæsarea in Palestine (303). New-martyrs Theophanes and Anastasios of Constantinople; Venerable Theophilus the myrrh-streaming of St. Basil Kelli on Athos; Righteous Prokópy, Fool-for-Christ, Wonderworker of Ustyá (Vologdá—1303).

FIRST ANTIPHON

It is good to praise the Lord, to chant unto Thy Name, O Most High! R.: Through the inter-cessions of the Theotokos, 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 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 GREAT MARTYR PROKOPIOS (Tone 4): Thy Martyr, O Lord, in his courageous contest for Thee * received as the prize the crowns of incorruption and life from Thee, our immortal God. * For since he possessed Thy strength, he cast down the tyrants * and wholly destroyed the demons' strengthless presumption. * O Christ God, by his prayers, save our souls, since Thou art merciful.

TROPARION OF SAINT ANTHONY THE GREAT (Tone 4): 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): 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, those who honor thee.

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon: *Thou, O Lord, wilt preserve us and keep us from this generation. Save me, O Lord, for the godly one have vanished.*

The Reading is from Saint Paul's Letter to the Romans

(Rom 12:6-14) **Brethren, having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; he who teaches, in his teaching; he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who contributes, in liberality; he who gives aid, with zeal; he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Never flag in zeal, be aglow with the Spirit, and serve the Lord. Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints, practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.**

Saint Paul often speaks about the community of disciples of Jesus Christ as forming the Body of Christ. We can think of Christ as being the head, or perhaps better, the heart of this organism. If, then, we are all members of the Body of Christ, it means that, at the same time, (1) we are all nourished and kept together by the same life-giving presence of God, and yet (2) each one of us remains uniquely distinct. Just as the same blood pumped by the heart nourishes all members and organs in our body, so also does the same Spirit flow through the "body" of Christ-believers, the Church, and enliven each and every one of its members. And just as each member of our body is different from other members, so also does each one of us receive the work of the Holy Spirit as a personal and intimate gift, so that *all of us, together*, are disciples of Christ, yet each one of us is uniquely precious to Him.

Whatever gifts we have received also become a responsibility. We are all called to put to work the manifold abilities we have received. Yet the Church is not a "pious club" that gathers periodically to perform worthy activities—such associations already exist in society, and they often do a better job than we do. Yes, of course, Christians are involved in works of charity, laboring to improve the realities around them. But this is not "the point" of it all! "The heart" of the Church is the risen Christ and the new life that is in Him. When we speak of the various "virtues" we understand this to mean a gradually tasting and embodying that new life. And the medium where such tasting of the Resurrection is possible is the grace of the Holy Spirit.

The point, according to Saint Paul, is to be "**aglow with the Spirit**": the Spirit who reminds us of the hope we have as disciples of the Lord, so that we can complete our journey joyously; the Spirit who comforts us in our afflictions, so that we can bear our cross with patience; the Spirit who gently nudges us to present our hearts to the Lord in prayer; the Spirit who opens us up to feel the needs of others, and who empowers us to welcome one another, that is, to be hospitable to the presence of each other without judgment.

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew

(Mat 9:1-8) At that time, Jesus got into a boat, crossed over and came to His own city. And behold, they brought to Him a paralytic, lying on his bed; and when Jesus saw their faith He said to the paralytic, "Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven." And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming." But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—He then said to the paralytic—"Rise, take up your bed and go home." And he rose and went home. When the crowds saw it, they marveled, and they glorified God, Who had given such authority to men.

A well-known Gospel story is recounted here: a paralytic is brought to Jesus and receives his healing *instantaneously*, in a spectacular manner. The crowds are right to marvel, for they see a man who seems to have as much authority over creation as God. Indeed, we read that God said, "Let there be light" and it was light; "let the dry land come forth" and dry land came forth; "let it be!" and whatever his command was, it came to be. So also now: **He said to the paralytic, "Rise, take up your bed and go home."** And the paralytic rose and went home. No less impressive is the fact that the Lord also has immediate knowledge of what people are thinking to themselves—"Jesus, *knowing their thoughts, said*" . . .

The first lesson we draw from today's Gospel is that Jesus Christ heals and forgives because He is truly God. And it is also God alone who knows our heart, our hidden inner selves, more intimately than we know it ourselves.

But it is also important to pay attention to another very significant detail of the story: the beautiful relationship between the paralytic and the four men who bring him in on a pallet. Undoubtedly, these are real friends. They have not left their paralyzed friend behind, so that they could meet God; and this is why, in the very dedication with which they take their paralytic friend to Jesus, they also find God. The Evangelist writes: "**when Jesus saw their faith He said to the paralytic, 'Take heart, my son'**" Note: "**when Jesus saw *their* faith!**" The Lord always emphasizes the importance of faith; only this time it is the faith of the others that saves the paralytic.

Christianity "by oneself" is a fiction and can be a dangerous delusion. If we are to be saved, we are saved by cooperating with God's grace and in relation to others; it is only in our sins that we are separating ourselves from the Church (which is why, one of the prayers at Confession says, "unite and reconcile him/her with Thy holy Church").

Indeed, the Church strives to embody the model set forth in today's Gospel. Through fasts and feasts, *we* are journeying, *we* praise God, *we* commit to God ourselves and each other, *we* give thanks, *we* draw near the chalice in faith and love—a love that also binds us together and even vanquishes the horror of death. In short, we are exercising ourselves into becoming "we": the Body of Christ made up of many members, and are learning to call God not only "my God" but "our Father."



THE HOLY GREAT MARTYR PROCOPIUS

This saint was born in Jerusalem in 284 C.E. and, as a pagan, bore the name Neanius. He lost his father in childhood and was raised by his mother. Having received an excellent education, he quickly advanced in government service. In 303 Neanius was sent as a proconsul to Alexandria with orders to persecute the Church of God. On his way, near the Syrian city of Apamea, Neanius had a vision of the Lord Jesus, similar to the vision of Saul on the road to Damascus. He heard, "Neanius, why do you persecute Me?" and asked, "Who are you, Lord?" "I am the crucified Jesus, the Son of God." At that moment he saw a radiant Cross on high. Neanius felt an inexpressible joy in his heart and became a zealous follower of Christ. When he arrived in Alexandria, Neanius asked for the decree of the Emperor Diocletian and tore it up before the eyes of everyone. For this crime of "insult to authority" he was immediately arrested, sent in chains to Caesarea of Palestine, and there thrown in prison. That night, a light shone in the prison, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself baptized him, and gave him the name Procopius. Although Procopius was many

times commanded to renounce Christ and subjected to more and more tortures, he would not give up his faith in Christ. Seeing his courage and faith, some of the guards and many others in the public became Christians. Finally, his mother Theodosia also embraced the faith, confessed it publicly, and was executed. The holy Great Martyr Procopius was then beheaded and entered the Kingdom of God.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Today:** we pray for the departed servant of God Abie Abraham, decorated WWII veteran.
- **Next Sunday (July 15), 10 AM:** Baptism of Jubilee Mae (Heath). We will celebrate Matins, as usual, and the Baptism will be united to the Divine Liturgy.
- **Sunday July 22, after Liturgy:** "Pilgrimage to Greece and Romania" (a slide presentation by Cezar and Roxana Cisloiu).
- **Sunday, August 5:** No Liturgy at St. Anthony's! We will (all) be going to St. Elias in New Castle, where Bishop Thomas will ordain Subdeacon Martin to the Diaconate.

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: Silviu and the Serbanescu family; newborn Jubilee Mae; Sula; Stella & Dimitrios; Ion, Marius & Katherine; Norma; Christine (Abraham); Daniel (Sipos); Venetia (Chrissi's mom); Barbara (Dollie's daughter); Maura; Ann; Ed, Peter, John, Jonathan and Joanna; Andrei; John, Janet, Christy (relatives of Jean); Stelian (Cezar's father); Laura and Stephen, newly married.

DEPARTED: Ross (Chrissi's friend); Richard Johns; Viorica; Bishop Antoun; Vito (DiPento); Miltiades; Jim and Marion (Raimondi); Stephanie (Yazge); Job; George (Georgiades); Abie (Abraham).