



SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
www.orthodoxbutler.org

ADDRESS: 400 S. Sixth Avenue, Butler, PA 16001

PASTOR: Rev. Bogdan Gabriel Bucur

Contact: 724.287.6893 (church); 412.390.8208 (priest); frbogdan@orthodoxbutler.org

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

12 August 2018

TONE 2—Afterfeast of the Transfiguration. Martyrs Anicetus and Photius (Photinus) of Nicomedia, and many with them (305-306). Hieromartyr Alexander, Bishop of Comana (3rd c.).

FIRST ANTIPHON

Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, in the city of our God, in His holy mountain. Refrain: Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us! *Thou art girt about with power, and Who coverest Thyself with light as with a garment. (R.:) The mountains shall rejoice at the presence of the Lord, for He cometh; yea, He is come to judge the earth. (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 wast transfigured on Mount Tabor, who sing to Thee. Alleluia. His foundations are in the holy mountains. The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. (R.:) Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. (R.:) Zion is our mother, a man shall say, and such a man was born in her; and the Most High Himself hath established her. (R.:) *Glory... Now and ever... (Only begotten Son ...)*

THIRD ANTIPHON

Thou wast transfigured on the Mount, O Christ our God, revealing Thy glory to Thy disciples as far as they could bear it. Let Thine everlasting light shine also upon us sinners; through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Giver of Light, glory to Thee!

TROPARION OF THE TRANSFIGURATION with the following verses:

- *Of Thy mercies, Lord, will I sing for ever.*
- *The heavens confess Thy wonders, Lord, and Thy truth the congregation of saints.*
- *Blessed is the people that knows jubilation; in the light of Thy Face shall they walk, and in Thy Name shall they rejoice all the day long.*

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 TRANSFIGURATION (Tone 7): Thou wast transfigured on the Mount, O Christ our God, revealing Thy glory to Thy disciples as far as they could bear it. Let Thine everlasting light shine also upon us sinners; through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Giver of Light, glory to Thee!

KONTAKION OF TRANSFIGURATION (Tone 7): On the mount Thou wast transfigured, and Thy Disciples, as much as they could bear, beheld Thy glory, O Christ our God; that, when they should see Thee crucified, they would know Thy Passion to be willing, and would preach to the world that Thou, in truth, art the Effulgence of the Father.

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.

Today's text from Saint Paul does not seem very "religious"; it 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 embarrass his critics with 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?"

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 Holy Gospel according to 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's service will be followed by a Trisagion for Silviu. The Serbanescu will continue their wake until Monday morning, when we will have the funeral. Anyone is welcome to stop by, light a candle, pray and bring them the comfort of your presence. You may bring a bit of food, too, if you want.
- **Tomorrow (Monday, August 13), 9 AM:** Funeral for Silviu Serbanescu. The burial will take place at 11 AM at the Orthodox cemetery close to Holy Trinity Greek Church. The address is 8941 Ringeisen Road, Allison Park, PA.
- **Wednesday, August 15, 9 AM:** Akathist to the Theotokos and Divine Liturgy for the feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos.

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: grieving members of the Serbanescu family; 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: Silviu (Serbanescu); Ross (Chrissi's friend); Richard Johns; Viorica; Bishop Antoun; Vito (DiPento); Miltiades; Jim and Marion (Raimondi); Stephanie (Yazge); Job; George (Georgiades); Abie (Abraham).