



SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
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THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

26 August 2018

TONE 4—Martyrs Adrian and Natalia and 33 companions, of Nicomedia (4th). Ven. Adrian, Abbot of Ondrusov (Valaam—1550).

FIRST ANTIPHON

Shout with joy to God, all the earth, give thanks unto the Lord and call upon His Name. Declare His works among the nations. Refrain: Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, Savior, save us! *In the city of our God, in His holy mountain, His place has been made in peace, and His dwelling in Zion. (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 art risen from the dead, as we chant to Thee: Alleluia! *God hath laid her foundation unto eternity. We have thought, O God, of Thy mercy in the midst of Thy people. (R.:) The most-high hath hallowed His tabernacle. (R.:) Glory... Now and ever... (Only begotten Son ...)*

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"!

RESURRECTION TROPARION (Tone 4): Having learned the joyful message of the Resurrection from the angel, the women disciples cast from them their parental condemnation, and proudly broke the news to the disciples, saying: "Death hath been spoiled. Christ God is risen, granting 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 OF THE BIRTH OF THE THEOTOKOS (Tone 4): By thy holy nativity, O pure one, Joachim and Anna were delivered from the reproach of barrenness; and Adam and Eve were delivered from the corruption of death; thy people do celebrate it, having been saved from the stain of iniquity, crying unto thee: The barren doth give birth to the Theotokos, who nourisheth our life.

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon: *How magnified are Thy works, O Lord; in Wisdom hast Thou made them all.
Bless the Lord, O my soul!*

From Saint Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians

(1 Cor 16:13-24) **Brethren: be watchful, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love. Now, brethren, you know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints; I urge you to be subject to such men and to every fellow worker and laborer. I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicos, because they have made up for your absence; for they refreshed my spirit as well as yours. Give recognition to such men. The churches of Asia send greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord. All the brethren send greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss. I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed. Our Lord, come! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus, Amen!**

Like any letter, this epistle to the Christians in Corinth shows a number of very personal elements: there are references to specific persons known to the addressee and the addressor (and whom we have no way of knowing), personal greetings are conveyed, and there is even an invitation to acknowledge the authenticity of this letter: **"I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand."**

And yet, there are things in this passage that remain valid over the centuries, even for us today. **"Be watchful, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong!"** Indeed, an essential part of our Christian life is growing in courage. Already by the end of the first century, in an anonymous writing called "The Shepherd," one finds the following dialogue between a Christian and his guiding angel on the topic of fear and courage: *"Listen to me for a moment. Man is eager to keep the commandments of God, and there is no one who does not ask of the Lord that strength may be given him for these commandments. But the devil is hard, and holds sway over them. The angel replied: The devil goes to all the servants of God to try them. As many as are full in the faith resist him strongly, and he withdraws from them, having no way by which he might enter them. He goes to the empty, and finding a way of entrance into them, he produces in them whatever he wishes. But I, the angel of repentance, say to you: Do not fear not the devil; for I was sent to be with you who repent with all your heart, to make you strong in faith. If you return to the Lord with all your heart, and practise righteousness the rest of your days, He will heal your former sins, and you will have power to hold sway over the works of the devil. But as to the threats of the devil, fear them not at all, for he is powerless as the sinews of a dead man. But fear the Lord, for fearing the Lord you will have dominion over the devil."*

So, the icy, paralyzing fright and the phantasms sown by the evil one will be driven out by our taking refuge in God, our Maker and Redeemer. We speak of “fear of God” because all the patriarchs and prophets and saints testify to this. “Fear of God” comes from the fact that, like the prodigal son, we have been hiding and running away for such a long time—since Adam! And yet, the fear of God is mixed with a sense of being summoned by Him, called and asked to come and see and touch and taste something truly amazing, truly beautiful and good for us.

Our patron saint, Anthony the Great, teaches that fear of God will in due time teach us love. Saint Anthony gave witness: *I no longer fear God, but love Him!* Above all, let this word from today’s Epistle accompany us: “**Let all that you do be done in love.**” There are so many reasons and goals for what we do, many of them honorable, justified, important. In Church, however, our actions are measured in this way only: all that we do should be done with love.

TODAY’S GOSPEL READING

From the Holy Gospel according to Matthew

(Mat 21:33-42) The Lord spoke this parable: “There was a householder who planted a vineyard, and set a hedge around it, and dug a wine press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to tenants, and went into another country. When the season of fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants, to get his fruit; and the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first; and they did the same to them. Afterward he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.’ And they took him and cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” They said to him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons.” Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures: ‘The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?’”

To the hearers of this parable, the meaning of what the Lord said was pretty clear: a few verses after the end of the parable, it says, “**Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them.**” How was he speaking of them?

In short: the landowner is God, the vineyard is the revelation to the people of Israel, the vinedressers are the religious establishment of Israel, the servants sent out by the landowner are the prophets sent by God to Israel. And the son of the landowner, as you probably guessed, is the Son of God, Jesus himself. Understood in this way, the parable is a strong indictment of the hardheartedness with which Israel’s priests and theologians kept opposing the proclamation of the Good News, and their killing the messenger rather than to accept the message and be transformed into children of God.

For us, today, however, the parable is no less relevant. Where are we in this parable? The parable pushes us to determine our place in this story. Are we the servants of God, sent out to extend the Liturgy into our daily lives and our interaction with family, friends, neighbors? Or are we those who fancied themselves owners of the vineyard, and who set themselves against God? We must never forget that the Christian Church—the living organism where we gradually change course, repent, and accept God’s work in us—is not something we can take credit for or boast

about. If “it is marvelous in our eyes”, it is because “this was the Lord’s doing”! The cornerstone of the Church is Jesus Christ, his coming from God, his becoming man, his suffering, death, and resurrection.

Everything is here as a gift from God, to be received with open heart, like a child: take, eat, see that the Lord is good; rejoice, and pass it on.

A NOTE ON THE CHURCH NEW YEAR AND THE VIRGIN MARY

On January 1 the Orthodox Church celebrates the Lord's Circumcision and commemorates Saint Basil the Great. Why no mention of the New Year? Because the Church's calendar, inherited from the ancient Jerusalem Temple, counts September as the first month of its New Year. Since Byzantine times, September 1 is counted as the ecclesiastical New Year.

It appears, then, that Church begins its year with the birth of Mary, the Theotokos (September 8) and ends it with her death and translation to everlasting life (August 15). This is neither an accident, nor an arbitrary decision of the Church. Rather, it reflects the Christian view that the Mother of God reflects, in her person, the very nature of the Church: Virgin and Birthgiver of God. A learned monk of the Orthodox Church in America, Fr. Calinic Berger, summarizes our faith very aptly:

The Orthodox approach to the Mother of God remains what it ought to be: warm, filled with love and devotion, yet sober. She is a human being like all of us, and yet she lives such a life. She dies our death because she shares our birth. She was not conceived 'immaculately' in a manner unique and different from all of us; she was not given a special nature, incapable of sin. Neither did she avoid death. Therefore, it was within fallen nature that the Virgin Mary achieved her spiritual perfection. What she did in her life, she did not do in a mechanical, impersonal manner, but with struggle, thereby developing her own personal holiness through her role as the Mother of God. Not only did she live well, but she finished well: she crowned her struggle of spiritual perfection and her unique role as Mother of God with a godly death in the presence of Christ and supremely 'painless, blameless, and peaceful'. The Mother of God is thus a model for all Christians, both in the way she lived and in the way she died.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **TODAY after Liturgy:** Parish Picnic at Dollie’s Estate (119 Maple Grove Drive).

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: grieving members of the Serbanescu family; new born Elisabeth Violetta and her parents Chris and Jillian; 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).

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).