



SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
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FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

2 September 2018

TONE 5 / Eothinon 3—Martyr Mamas of Caesarea in Cappadocia, and his parents Martyrs Theodotus and Rufina (3rd c.). John the Faster, Patriarch of Constantinople (595). The 3618 Martyrs who suffered at Nicomedia (3rd-4th c.). Ven. Anthony and Theodosius of the Kiev Caves (10th-11th 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! (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 Son ...)*

LITTLE ENTRANCE

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ! Save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead, as we chant to Thee, "Alleluia"!

RESURRECTION TROPARION (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 ST. MAMAS (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 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 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: Thou, O Lord, wilt keep and preserve us.
Save me, O Lord, for the godly man has failed*

From Saint Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians

(2 Cor 1:21-2:4) Brethren, it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has commissioned us; He has put his seal upon us and given us His Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. But I call God to witness against me it was to spare you that I refrained from coming to Corinth. Not that we lord it over your faith; we work with you for your joy, for you stand firm in your faith. For I made up my mind not to make you another painful visit. For if I cause you pain, who is there to make me glad but the one whom I have pained? And I wrote as I did, so that when I came I might not suffer pain from those who should have made me rejoice, for I felt sure of all of you, that my joy would be the joy of you all. For I wrote you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.

We all know that the Apostles were sent out by the Lord—this is actually what the word “apostle” means in Greek: one who is sent, an emissary, a messenger—and founded churches everywhere they went. Today we get a glimpse into another dimension of the life of the foremost among the Apostles, Saint Paul: he was also a “pastor,” a shepherd to his Christian flock. He taught, he gave advice, he corrected, and oftentimes he struggled against the temptations that assault each and every community.

In Corinth there were a lot of really difficult problems—heretical ideas, to be sure, and questions of Christian morality, but also issues about organization and the flow of money. Saint Paul speaks about the sorrowful letter he wrote them “**with much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears,**” about paying them a “**painful visit,**” then deciding to not visit in order not to inflict more pain on the community; and he also speaks about himself **suffering pain from those who should have made him rejoice.**

In fact, this work of “discipling” goes back to the Lord himself, who had three years to teach and reshape his followers from fishermen into fishers of men. And he did this sometimes tenderly, sometimes more harshly (just read the Gospel of Mark!), sometimes with praise and sometimes with chastisement (“You are the Rock and on this rock I shall build my church!” he tells Peter; a few moments later: “you are a stumbling block ... get behind me, Satan!”).

Saint Paul reminds the Corinthians, first of all, that “being Church” is the work of God in us, and that discipleship simply is how this work is moving forward. That it is not about Paul forcing his views over them, rather, it is God who establishes us, **it is God who has commissioned us, He has put his seal upon us, He and given us His Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.** Secondly, the work of the

Apostle is, essentially, for the flourishing of those entrusted to him, and it is a work of cooperation between God, the Apostle, and his flock: **we work with you and for your joy**. Thirdly, however, this cooperation will always bring to the surface our estrangement from God and our diseased heart and mind—whence the difficulties, pain, and tears Saint Paul refers to. Any priest, any abbot or abbess in monastery, and any bishop knows just that this portrayal of the struggles in church is absolutely realistic.

What do we learn from today's reading? That "doing Church" is a struggle and that sooner or later it will require uncomfortable changes for the sake of healing; that "doing Church" is the only way to be a Christian; that "doing Church" is not only about "gaining" the blessedness of some distant future, but about a subtle and pure joy here and now—a joy that builds little by little, as it dawns on us that we are training ourselves by cooperating with God and each other. To encourage us on the way, Saint Paul assures us of the essential: **I wrote you ... not to cause you pain but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.**

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

From the Holy Gospel according to Matthew

(Mat 22:2-4) **The Lord spoke this parable: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a marriage feast for his son, and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the marriage feast; but they would not come. Again he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, Behold, I have made ready my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves are killed, and everything is ready; come to the marriage feast.' But they made light of it and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the thoroughfares, and invite to the marriage feast as many as you find.' And those servants went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good; so the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment; and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen."**

This parable is too rich and dense to be "unpacked" in a few paragraphs. Let us therefore note only a few ideas in the parable. First, this parable offers one of the clearest metaphors for the Kingdom of God: when God's "rule" is extended upon us, it is as though we had been seated at a banquet table. God himself launches the invitation, God himself provides the food and drink (**I have made ready my dinner ... everything is ready ... come!**), and the fellowship with God and our fellow participants is the most joyful and satisfying experience one can imagine.

The first thing to note is the indifference and superficiality of those invited. Unbelievable! When a king—the King!—invites one to attend the marriage feast of his son, is it really imaginable that one would find other priorities? Yet, **they made light of it: one went off to his farm, another to his business**. Moreover, when we neglect God's call and replace His Kingdom with all kinds of other "stuff," stupidity and superficiality also make room for something more sinister: some of those who were invited found the invitation too bothersome and **they seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them**. God's call is sometimes met with active and angry rejection, which betrays its evil source.

How to understand the fact that the king was angry, that he destroyed those murderers and burned their city, and that, when an intruder was detected, he was **bound hand and foot and thrown out “into the outer darkness”**? Saint Isaac the Syrian speaks about the “weakness of Scripture”—that is, Scripture presents things not as they are, but as we can understand them. Such “weakness” is obvious in this parable. Theologically speaking, anyone who rejects the gift of God, which is the Holy Spirit (“the wedding garment”) remains incompatible with the presence and rule of God (the “Kingdom”). And this is the outer darkness, the destruction, the fire.

Let us also consider the strange question addressed to the intruder: “how did you get in here without a wedding garment?” Clearly, the man is out of place, does not belong there. But was this not to be expected? After all, the parable speaks of guests collected from all over the place, people who are “both bad and good,” who had to make a quick decision and didn’t have time to prepare. Strictly speaking, then, *nobody* is prepared to come into the presence of the king; nobody really “belongs” there, everybody is out of place. And yet: all those guests have a wedding garment—and this is precisely what the king is asking: where is your wedding garment? *The wedding garment is a gift*: guests at a banquet would have their feet and hands washed, and receive their garments prior to joining the table. To cut to the meaning of this: remember you are a *guest*—you did not buy your way in, you did not earn it; you are treading on holy ground, let the Master of the banquet lead you, don’t imagine the church to be your own club or playground.

We, too, who are gathered in Church, the true wedding hall, are “both good and bad.” Not some good and some bad, but all of us, “good-and-bad.” But the king addresses the intruder as “friend” (“**Friend, how did you get in here?**”)—just as the Lord addressed even Judas as “friend” on the very moment of the betraying kiss. It is a last-minute *call*, which seeks out a fitting reply. Sadly, like Cain when the Lord spoke to him, “the man was speechless”; he missed out on letting go of evil there and then, and of any guilt and shame, and selflessly reply (like all those *addressed* by God: Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Samuel, Isaiah, etc): “Here I am!” A lesson to us all, who are taught that we should lay aside all excuse and entrust ourselves and our whole life to Christ, trusting that he has mercy because he is merciful and the Friend of man.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **TODAY after Liturgy**: memorial service for Viorica (Stan).
- **September 1: Happy New (Church) Year!**
- Many thanks to the parish council and to Seba Michaels for organizing a wonderful parish picnic last Sunday. And special thanks, of course, to Dollie, who hosted us.
- **Sunday, September 23, 10 AM**: Pan-Orthodox Liturgy and Picnic at McDaniel Pavilion, Moraine North Shore.

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: grieving members of the Serbanescu family; Ileana (surgery); Karen (Jane Best’s daughter); Elisabeth, 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); Mother Gabriela (nun from Romania, visiting with the Cisloius).

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