



SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
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SUNDAY BEFORE THE ELEVATION OF THE CROSS Afterfeast of the Nativity of the Theotokos.

9 September 2018

TONE 6 / Eothinon 4— Holy and Righteous Ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna. Martyr Severian of Sebaste (320). Ven. Theophanes the Confessor and Faster, of Mt. Diabenos (ca. 300). Martyrs Chariton and Straton. Bl. Nicetas the Hidden, of Constantinople (12th c.). Commemoration of the Third Ecumenical Council (431).

FIRST ANTIPHON

Lord, remember David and all his meekness. We heard of it at Ephrata; we found it in the fields of the wood. **Refrain:** Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us! *Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early.* (R.:) *Glory... Now and ever...* (R.:)

SECOND ANTIPHON

The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David; and He will not turn from it. Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne. (R.:) Save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead, as we chant to Thee, "Alleluia"! *There will I make the horn of David to bud; I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed.* (R.:) *Glory... Now and ever...* (Only begotten Son ...)

THIRD ANTIPHON

- *Here will I dwell, for I have chosen her.* TROPARION FOR THE NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS (Tone 4): Thy nativity, O Virgin, has proclaimed joy to the whole universe. The Sun of righteousness, Christ our God, has shone from thee, O Theotokos. By annulling the curse, He bestowed a blessing, and by destroying death He has granted us eternal Life!
- *The Most High hath hallowed His tabernacle.* TROPARION
- *Holy is Thy temple, wonderful in righteousness.* TROPARION

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 6): When Mary stood at Thy grave, looking for Thy sacred body, angelic powers shone above Thy revered tomb; and the soldiers who were to keep guard became as dead men. Thou led Hades captive and wast not tempted thereby. Thou didst meet the Virgin and didst give life to the world, O Thou, Who art risen from the dead, O Lord, glory to Thee.

TROPARION FOR THE NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS (Tone 4): Thy nativity, O Theotokos, has proclaimed joy to the whole universe; for from thee did shine forth the Sun of justice, Christ our God, annulling the curse and bestowing the blessing, abolishing death and granting Life everlasting!

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: O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance.
To Thee, O Lord, I have cried, O my God.*

The Reading is from the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Galatians

(Galatians 6:11-18) **Brethren, see with what large letters I am writing to you, with my own hand. It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that would compel you to be circumcised, and only so that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For even those who receive circumcision do not themselves keep the law; but they desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh. But far be it from me to glory, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision: what counts is to be a new creation! Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule, upon the Israel of God. Henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.**

It is clear that Saint Paul is writing here about a matter he views as extremely important. The first line about the "large letters" means something like "I want to emphasize in the bold scrawls of my personal handwriting the immense importance of what I have written." What was the problem? Saint Paul was writing to warn the Galatians against certain Christian leaders who compelled all new converts to the faith to practice circumcision. He warned that such "missionaries" were in fact interested in cultivating their own public image in the Christian

community, while at the same time “keeping a low profile” in the larger society, so as to avoid prosecution by the Roman Empire (as long as Christians would be perceived as a type of Judaism, they would not be persecuted, but tolerated, like the Jews). The false missionaries were not “crazy” to insist on circumcision; it was, to them and to many, a definite mark of religious piety. Today, it would be things like not eating certain foods on certain days, dressing in a certain way, abstaining from this or that, etc.

Saint Paul’s point is that, ultimately, all these things must be placed in a different perspective: what truly matters is not that we do this or that, or that we keep this or that rule of piety; what matters is that we become a “new creation”—and this is God’s work in us. Indeed, as the Apostle writes elsewhere (2 Cor 4:6), the same God who spoke at creation, *let there be light*—and, indeed, *it was light*, now shines in our hearts, drawing us out of darkness and re-creating us into children of the light. “A new creation” means that our Christian life is God’s liturgy in us, where we are co-workers with God.

We should also pay close attention to the following verse: **Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule, upon the Israel of God.** What is “the Israel of God”? Since the Apostle is writing to Christians, it is quite obvious that “the Israel of God” refers to the community of believers in Christ—the Church! Saint Paul sees the Good News as the work of God by which the Gentiles were received into the fold of God’s people; the “dividing wall” between Israel and the Gentiles has fallen down, and “Israel” was extended into encompassing both Jews and non-Jews, and, potentially, the entire world. Ultimately, then, what matters is no longer blood lineage (as the Apostle writes at Gal 3:28: “neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor male and female”) but rather entering the people of God, “the people who seek the Face of the God of Jacob” (Ps. 24:6), being “one in Christ Jesus.”

TODAY’S GOSPEL READING

From the Holy Gospel according to John

(John 3:13-17) **The Lord said, “No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.”**

The Church has selected this text to be read on the Sunday prior to the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross (September 14). We learn that there is only one access to God, namely the cross of Jesus Christ, which unites earth and heaven; and that those who place their hope in the Crucified One shall inherit the eternal life of his Resurrection. This is why, as Saint Paul writes, a Christian is not ashamed or embarrassed that God the Son has accepted death by crucifixion; on the contrary, “I glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

This word of the Gospel should accompany us in our Christian life: **God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.** Somehow, we must always be reminded that the message preached by our Lord and entrusted for us to live by and to bring to the world is called “the Good News” and is truly *good*. The news about a good, gracious, forgiving, and healing God, who draws near to us, brings His Kingdom into this

world, opens up the gates of Paradise, and bids us enter; a God who makes repentance—turning around to Him—worthwhile and appealing, because He promises not to bear a grudge; a God who helps us to live and die with courage by showing through His own example that death is the first step into the Resurrection. A good God, who has come to save us, not to condemn us.

We are told that the Son of Man who comes to us “from above” is a Gift: **God so loved the world that he gave his only Son.** He *gave*, so it is a *Gift!* And what is the point of this Gift? So that we “may not perish, but rather attain eternal life” (3:16). Therefore, in case you were worried that God sent the Son “unto judgment”, rest assured: He sent him “unto [your] salvation.”

But the Gift sent from above may very well turn out to be a trial and the occasion of a Judgment. The Gift brings salvation and eternal life to “whoever believes in him”; what about those who do *not* believe? *They have been judged already* (John 3:18). The Evangelist explains this rejection of the Gift as “loving darkness rather than the light” (John 3:19). Which “darkness”? That darkness, impervious to the light of God’s presence, which Adam invented when he hid from God and wished to not be found out.

Let us recall Judas, who leaves the Last Supper in order to betray Christ, the true Light; and the Evangelist says, “**he went immediately out: and it was night**” (John 13:30). How tragic but silly we can be: closing our spiritual eyes, we can shut ourselves off from God; but God is still there, so that closing ourselves off from the Gift *is the very judgment we are trying to escape.* Nicodemus shows the way to follow: he “comes at night,” from darkness to the true Light.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Today:** Chris and Jill DiNunzio will be enrolled as “catechumens” (that is, those who are learning the Faith in view of being received into the Church). Remember them in your prayers.
- **Congratulations to Cezar Cisloiu** who just graduated from the Antiochian House of Studies with a Master’s Degree in Applied Orthodoxy!
- **Next Sunday (9/16): Sunday School resumes!**
- **Sunday, September 23, 10 AM:** Pan-Orthodox Liturgy and Picnic at McDaniel Pavilion, Moraine North Shore.

Note from the Treasurer: August Receipts: 2,072.00 // Disbursements: 2,403.29 // Deficit: 331.29

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: grieving members of the Serbanescu family; Ileana (recovery from her 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).