



SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
www.orthodoxbutler.org

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

PASTOR: Rev. Bogdan Gabriel Bucur

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

FIRST SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT (“Sunday of Orthodoxy”)

25 February 2018

TONE 5— Tarasius the confessor, archbishop of Constantinople (806); Hieromartyr Reginos, bishop of Skopelos; Hieromartyr Markellos, bishop of Apamea in Syria; Martyr Alexander of Markianopolis

FIRST ANTIPHON

The Lord is King, and hath clothed Himself with majesty. The Lord is robed; He is girded with strength. For He has established the world so that it shall never be moved. Refrain: Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us! Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? Who can cause all his praises to be heard? Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy. (R.:) Glory... Now and ever... (R.:)

SECOND ANTIPHON

Let them praise the Lord for His mercies, and for His wonderful works to the children of men. Refrain: Save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead, as we chant to Thee, “Alleluia”! Let them exalt Him in the congregation of the people, and praise Him in the seat of the elders. (R.:) The eyes of the Lord are upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy; to hear the groaning of the prisoners, to loose the sons of the slain. (R.:) Glory... Now and ever... (Only begotten ...)

THIRD ANTIPHON

Let the heavens and the earth praise Him. This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto Thee forever.
TROPARION FOR THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY (see below)

AT THE LITTLE ENTRANCE

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ! Save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead, 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 FOR THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY (Tone 2): Thy pure image do we venerate, O good One, asking forgiveness of our sins, O Christ our God; for by thine own will thou didst ascend the Cross in thy body, to save thy creatures from the bondage of the enemy. Thou hast verily filled all with joy, since thou didst come, O our Savior, to save the world.

TROPARION OF ANTHONY THE GREAT (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 FOREFEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION (Tone 8): To thee, the Champion Leader, do I offer thanks of victory, O Theotokos, thou who hast delivered me from terror; but as thou that hast that power invincible, O Theotokos, thou alone can set me free: from all forms of danger free me and deliver me, that I may cry unto thee: "Rejoice, O Bride without Bridegroom."

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Blessed art thou, O Lord, the God of our Fathers! Thou art just in all that thou hast done for us.

The Reading is from the Epistle to the Hebrews

(Heb 11:24-26; 32-40) Brethren: by faith Abraham sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. By faith Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was ready to offer his only son, of whom it was said, "Through Isaac descendants shall bear your name." He reasoned that God was able to raise even from the dead, and he received Isaac back as a symbol. By faith Moses was hidden by his parents for three months after his birth, because they saw that he was a beautiful child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict. By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter; he chose to be ill-treated along with the people of God rather than enjoy the fleeting pleasure of sin. And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, and put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated—of whom the world was not worthy!—wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

On this Sunday of Orthodoxy, at the customary procession with icons, we proclaim: "as the prophets beheld, as the Apostles have taught, as the Church has received this is the faith of the Orthodox!" The faith of the Church, that God has come in the flesh in order to restore fallen humanity—the faith expressed in holy icons—is none other than the faith delivered to the Apostles, and it is rooted in *that which the prophets beheld*. That is why, beginning with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, continuing with Joseph, then Moses, the judges and kings and prophets of Israel, today we also evoke the ancestors *of our Christian faith*.

We do not praise the individual qualities of these ancestors (bravery, piety, perseverance, etc) but a certain ever-expecting intimacy with God, which we call *faith*. What is faith? It is, says the same Epistle, “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”; in other words, faith is the foundation under everything, it is what makes this life, which in itself is so often incoherent and meaningless, worth living; faith is our handle on what we can't see. The ancestors were living in faith—looking forward towards Christ, even though He had not yet come in the flesh: “Abraham looked forward” says the text, “Isaac was regarding things still to come.” They were looking forward to the mystery of the God-made-man whom we worship: they beheld in manifold visions the image (the *Icon*) of the God-who-was-to-become-man: Jesus Christ.

We have begun the journey leading to the Cross and Resurrection of Christ. The one who showed himself and spoke to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who met Moses at the burning bush, who gave the Law to Israel, and spoke to his people through the prophets, is the same One whom we proclaim crucified and risen for us and our salvation.

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

From the Holy Gospel according to John

(Jn 1:43-51) At that time, Jesus decided to go to Galilee, and he found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God, you are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these." And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you: you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

“Truly, truly, I say to you: you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.” This solemn statement can only be understood in light of a very important Old Testament text: in Genesis 28, the patriarch Jacob has a vision of a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, with angels ascending and descending on it, and the Lord at the top of the ladder. Returning to the Gospel, we understand that the ladder reaching from earth to heaven is none other than Christ. For those who believe in Him and follow Him, “the heavens are opened,” since the mediator between God and humankind has bridged the gap between the two.

And how is He able to serve as our ladder to heaven? Let us follow the Apostle who tells us to “come and see.” Come and see one who is flesh of our flesh—“Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph the carpenter. Come and see that He is also the One who knows us since Adam: **“when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.”** Come and see our Savior who promises that even **greater things** are in store for us—namely, that we should be healed and restored, that the heavens be opened to us even on earth, and that, under the assistance of our angelic brothers, our “traffic” between earth and heaven be unimpeded and spiritually fruitful.

But why is this Gospel assigned for today, the Sunday of Orthodoxy? Because the icons are the confession of our faith that the invisible God, dimly revealed only in patriarch Jacob's vision, on top of the ladder, has accepted to take on human flesh, and become one of us. As Saint John of Damascus explains in his Apology for the Holy Icons: *In former times, God, Who is without form or body, could never be depicted, but now when God is seen in the flesh conversing with men, I make an image of the*

God Whom I see. I do not worship matter! I worship the Creator of matter, Who became matter for my sake, Who willed to take His abode in matter; Who worked out my salvation through matter. Never will I cease to honor the matter which brought my salvation! I honor it, but not as God. Because of this, I salute all remaining matter with reverence, because God has filled it with His grace and power. Is not the ink in the most holy Gospels matter? Is not the life-giving altar made of matter? From it, we receive the Bread of Life! Are not gold and silver matter? From them, we make crosses, patens, and chalices! And, over and above all these things, is not the body and blood of our Lord matter? Either do away with the honor and veneration these things deserve, or accept the tradition of the Church and the veneration of images. Reverence God and His friends. Follow the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Do not despise matter, for it is not despicable! God has made nothing despicable.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- HOUSE BLESSINGS – Father Bogdan is available to come on Saturday or Sunday afternoon/evening.
- **Today:** memorial for Fr. Matthew Baker.
- **Sunday of Orthodoxy** is, as always, an occasion for pan-Orthodox celebrations. There are two today, both at **4 PM**: Bishop Thomas and local clergy will gather for pan-Orthodox Vespers at the Monastery of the Transfiguration in Ellwood City; Bishop Irinej (Serbian) and the Pittsburgh Clergy Brotherhood will gather at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church in Mount Lebanon.

Wednesday, 2/28, 6 PM: Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts (we are hosting it!). Please bring a small Lenten dish to share with our guests from the other two parishes.

- **Sunday, March 11: GENERAL PARISH MEETING (12-1PM).** There are two spots to fill on the parish council. Diane Schaeffer is gathering nominations and self-nominations.

2018 SCHEDULE OF PAN-ORTHODOX LENTEN SERVICES

- **Wednesday, Feb. 28, 6 pm:** Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts (**St Anthony's**)
- **Wednesday, March 7, 6pm:** Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts (Saints Peter and Paul)
- **Wednesday, March 14, 5:30 pm:** Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts (Saint Andrew's)
- **Wednesday, March 21, 6 pm:** Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts (Saints Peter and Paul)
- **Wednesday, March 28, 6 pm:** Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts (**Saint Anthony's**)

As is customary, each Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts will be followed by a Lenten potluck meal.

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: Archbishop Melchisedek of the OCA; Sula; Stella & Dimitrios; Ion, Marius & Katherine; Fr. Anthony Yazge; Norma; Richard (Johns); Christine (Abraham); Daniel (Sipos); Venetia (Chrissi's mom); Kent (Jean's husband); Barbara (Dollie's daughter); Maura; Christi, Janet, Ann; John and Mary Ann (Jean's relatives); Stelian (Cezar's father); Ed, Peter, John, Jonathan and Joanna; Andrei; John, Janet, Christy (relatives of Jean); Dennis, Vincent, Roy and Laura, Danny, Cathy (relatives of John and Julie); Derek; Phoebe, Tina; Matt and Nancy, newly baptized, and their sponsors, Cezar and Roxana.

DEPARTED: Viorica; Bishop Antoun; Vito (DiPento); Miltiades; Dorothy (Fr Roeber's mother); Jim and Marion (Raimondi); Stephanie (Yazge); Job; George (Georgiades).

PROCESSION OF THE HOLY ICONS (at the end of Liturgy)

- (a.) The people sing "Holy God..." repeatedly, while the priest, the subdeacon, the altar boys, and all other children in the parish carry the cross and the holy icons in procession, as for the Great Entrance;
- (b.) When the priest reaches the solea (in front the holy doors), the chanters sing the Troparion of Feast: "Thy pure image we venerate..."
- (c.) Then the priest leads the faithful in reciting in a loud voice the excerpt from the Synodikon (Confession of Faith) of the Day of Orthodoxy as follows:

As the prophets beheld, as the Apostles have taught, as the Church has received, as the teachers have dogmatized, as the whole world has agreed, as grace has shown forth, as Truth has revealed, as falsehood has been dissolved, as Wisdom has presented, as Christ awarded: thus we declare, thus we assert, thus we preach Christ our true God, and honor as saints in words, in writings, in thoughts, in sacrifices, in churches, in holy icons; on the one hand worshipping and reverencing Christ as God and Lord; and on the other hand honoring as true servants of the same Lord of all and accordingly offering them veneration. [LOUDER] This is the faith of the Apostles, this is the faith of the Fathers, this is the Faith of the Orthodox, this is the faith which has established the world!

- (d.) The chanters sing the prokeimenon (three times): "Who is so great a God as our God? Thou alone art our God, who doest wonders!"
- (e.) Troparion of the First Sunday in Lent: "Thy pure image do we venerate.."
- (f.) Dismissal as usual