



SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
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EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

30 September 2018

TONE 1—Hieromartyr Gregory, Bishop of Greater Armenia (ca. 335). St. Michael, First Metropolitan of Kiev (992). Martyrs Rhipsime, Gaiana and 35 holy virgins with them, of Armenia (4th 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"!

TROPARION OF THE RESURRECTION (Tone 1): While the stone was sealed by the Jews, and the soldiers were guarding Thy most pure body, Thou didst arise on the third day, O Savior, granting life to the world. For which cause the heavenly powers cried aloud unto Thee, O giver of life. Glory to Thy Resurrection, O Christ, glory to Thy kingdom, glory to Thy providence, O Thou Who alone art the lover of mankind.

TROPARION FOR ST. GREGORY THE ENLIGHTENER OF ARMENIA (Tone 4): Thou hast become like the Apostles in their states, a successor to their throne, finding indeed the intelligential ladder, O thou God-inspired. Therefore, thou hast followed the Word of God in righteousness, and striven unto blood for the Faith. O Hieromartyr Gregory, intercede with Christ God to save our souls.

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 FOR THE ELEVATION OF THE HOLY CROSS (Tone 4): Do Thou, Who of Thine own good will was lifted up upon the Cross, O Christ our God, bestow Thy bounties upon the new Nation which is called by Thy Name; make glad in Thy might those who lawfully govern, that with them we may be led to victory over our adversaries, having in Thine aid a weapon of peace and a trophy invincible.

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon: *Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us. Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous.*

The Reading is from Saint Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians

(2 Cor 9:6-11) Brethren, this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. As it is written: "He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever." Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness, while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God.

Saint Paul was not only an apostle, the early Church's most effective missionary, a loving spiritual father and guide to so many, and a man blessed to have heavenly visions and revelations from the Lord; he was also a very practical person. Although he preached about the Church as a mystical, divine-human reality—"the body of Christ"—he also knew that the survival of the early Christian communities depended in significant measure on good stewardship of their earthly resources. Indeed, money is always part of what makes any human institution work; and the holy Apostle was a very good organizer on this front. We would do well to listen to his words.

Saint Paul assumes we already know that the model for everything we are called to do is God. God is abundantly rich and abundantly generous, and He shares his gifts with creation freely, **not grudgingly, nor out of any necessity**. The love that God is *in Himself*, as relation between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, overflows towards creation, so that we experience God as Giver and as Gift. This is why Orthodox theology speaks about the *personal* character of our relation to God (He is the Giver) and about how God's interaction with us is experienced concretely as *divine energies* (He is also the Gift).

What, then, about money and other resources? **He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully**. "Sowing bountifully" is true of God first. And it must become true of the Church, as a whole, and of every disciple of Christ, individually. Imitate God by *giving*.

God loves a cheerful giver. Giving is God's manner of existence; naturally, then, *it is good to give*. To us, *giving* is part of healing our terrible state of separation from God. Therefore, we should realize that giving is, first of all, an opportunity for us. Giving is first of all good *for us!* Why? Because it returns us to the pattern of existence that God Himself has inscribed in us from the beginning. And

since by giving we are returning to our proper “functioning” as sons and daughters of God, let us *be cheerful in giving*.

Saint Paul goes on to quote from Psalm 112: “**He has given to the poor, His righteousness endures forever.**” Again, the first one to fit the description is God. But the Psalm is a recommendation for us: if you want “righteousness” (the kind of intimacy with God that befits a human being), then *practice giving*.

Finally, the Apostle assures us, God is not standing by and watching from a distance: as you give, rest assured that He will supply you with **sufficiency in all things, that you may have an abundance for every good work**. And what is more, He will also **increase the fruits of your righteousness**. In other words, as we practice God’s generous mode of existence, God is at work in us, transforming us. With every act by which we extend ourselves to others, we are being renewed and made *ever more capable* of tasting God’s grace and sharing it with others.

TODAY’S GOSPEL READING

From the Holy Gospel according to Luke

(Luke 6:31-36) The Lord said: “As you wish that men would do to you, do so to them. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.”

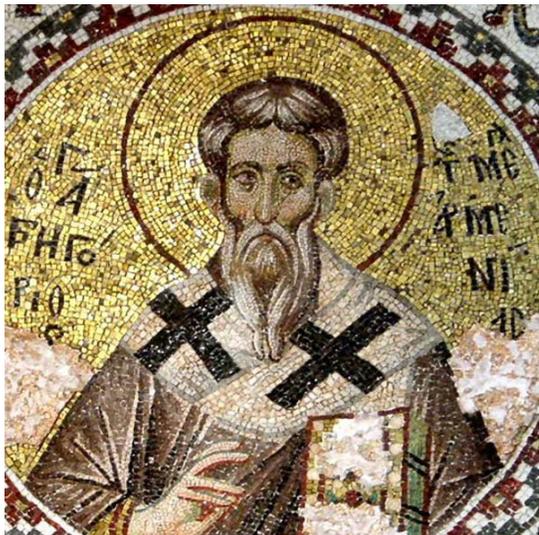
Our relationship with God and our relationship with fellow-humans are two sides of the same reality. Scripture speaks plainly. In the Old Testament: “I desire mercy, not sacrifice!” (Hosea 6:6); and in the New Testament: “if you don’t love your brother, whom you see, how can you imagine to love God, whom you don’t see?” (1 John 4:20). In today’s Gospel these two dimensions our Christian life are again brought together. To paraphrase the last line of our text: “Be merciful to your fellow-humans, just as God is a merciful Father to you!” And just how merciful should we be? The Gospel calls for a measure of mercy that seems, at first, unreasonable: be merciful like God, forgive like God forgives, love like God loves.

Clearly, this is anything but easy; actually, it is impossible! In fact, the Gospel does recognize that most of the things that Christ asks of us are *impossible for any human being!* However, if the standard is so high for Christians, it is because we ought to have learned that God has come to dwell among us, in order to live in us, and *to make the impossible possible*.

We are not called to manufacture and squeeze out some of “our” mercy and love towards others. Rather, we are called to share a Gift that we have ourselves in abundance: to pass on and extend the mercy of God—the mercy received at Baptism, which we continue to receive as our daily bread from God. It is because we have been forgiven that we are able to forgive, it is because God is merciful to us that we become free and able to extend His mercy to others.

“Mercy”: it is hard to find a word more frequently used in our services. If there is anything we ask of God, it surely is mercy. Sometimes we even repeat “Lord, have mercy!” twelve times or forty times—not that God really needs such constant and insistent reminders, but to make sure that we understand how much we are in need of God’s mercy.

HIEROMARTYR GREGORY, EQUAL OF THE APOSTLES AND ENLIGHTENER OF ARMENIA



The Hieromartyr Gregory, Enlightener of Armenia, was born in the year 257. His father, Anak, in striving after the Armenian throne, had murdered the emperor Kursar, in consequence of which all the line of Anak was marked for destruction.

A certain kinsman saved Gregory: he carried off the infant from Armenia to Caesarea in Cappadocia and raised him in the Christian Faith. At maturity, Gregory married, had two sons, but soon was left a widower. Gregory raised his sons in piety. One of them -- Orthanes, afterwards became a priest, and the other -- Arostanes, accepted monasticism and went off into the wilderness.

In order to atone for the sin of his father, who had murdered the father of Tiridates, Gregory entered into the service of the latter and was a faithful servant to him. Tiridates loved Gregory like a friend, but was intolerant of the Christian confession of faith. After he became king, he began to demand that Saint Gregory renounce the Christian Faith. He gave his faithful servant over to cruel tortures.

At the time of these sufferings Saint Gregory sang Psalms. In prison the Lord healed all his wounds. When Gregory again stood before the emperor cheerful and unharmed, he was astonished and gave orders to repeat the torments. Saint Gregory endured them, not wavering, with all his former determination and bearing. They then poured hot tin over him and threw him into a pit filled with vipers. The Lord, however, saved His chosen one: the snakes did him no harm.

Some pious women fed him with bread, secretly lowering it into the pit. A holy angel, appeared to the martyr, strengthening and encouraging him. Saint Gregory remained in the pit for fourteen years. During this time the emperor Tiridates executed the holy virgin Saint Rhipsime, the aged abbess Gaiana and another 35 virgins from one of the monasteries of Asia Minor.

Gregory was released from the pit, and buried the relics of the holy virgins with honor. Then he began to preach, urging people to turn away from idolatry and toward Christ. Soon all of Armenia was converted to Christ. He ordained priests, established schools, founded monasteries, and provided for the good order of the Church. The relics of the holy nuns brought into a newly-built church. St. Gregory brought King Tiridates before the bodies of the saints he had slain, and he repented.

He went into the wilderness, where he departed to the Lord. His son Aristanes was made a bishop in Cappadocia, and was one of the 318 holy Fathers at the Council of Nicea.

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: grieving Serbanescu and Becker families; Ileana and Dollie (recovery from her surgery); Norma; Karen (Jane Best's daughter); Elisabeth, Chris and Jillian; Sula; Stella & Dimitrios; Ion, Marius & Katherine; 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); Edith (Humphrey); Diane.

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