



## SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese  
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### TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

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*TONE 3, Eothonon 9—Fathers of the 7th Ecumenical Council. Martyrs Nazarius, Gervasius, Protasius, and Celsus, of Milan (1st c.). Ven. Paraskeva the New (11th c.). Hieromartyr Silvanus of Gaza (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 3): Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad, for the Lord hath done a mighty act with His own arm. He hath trampled down death by death, and become the first-born from the dead. He hath delivered us from the depths of Hades, granting the world great mercy.

TROPARION OF THE HOLY FATHERS (Tone 8): Thou, O Christ, art our God of exceeding praise Who didst establish our Holy Fathers as luminous stars upon earth, and through them didst guide us unto the true Faith, O most merciful One, glory to Thee.

TROPARION OF ST. PARASKEVA THE NEW (Tone 4): Thou art worthy of praise, holy Paraskeva. Thou didst love the ascetic and hesychast life; with longing thou didst run to your Bridegroom, Christ our God. Thou didst accept His good yoke in thy tender years, marking thyself with the sign of the Cross. Thou didst fight against impure thoughts, and through fasting, prayer and the shedding of tears thou didst quench the burning coal of the passions. Now in the heavenly bridal chamber of Christ, standing together with the wise virgins, intercede for us who honor thy precious memory.

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 ORDINARY SUNDAYS (Tone 4): O protection of Christians that cannot be put to shame, mediation unto the Creator most constant, O despise not the suppliant voices of those who have sinned; but be thou quick, O good one, to come unto our aid, who in faith cry unto thee: Hasten to intercession, and speed thou to make supplication, thou who dost ever protect, O Theotokos, them that honor thee.

## TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon: *Sing praises to our God, sing praises.  
Clap your hands, all ye peoples!*

*From the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Galatians*

(Gal 1:11-19) Brethren, I would have you know that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it; and I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia; and again I returned to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother.

Saint Paul was not one of the twelve disciples; in fact, he never even met the Lord during His earthly ministry. Moreover, in the early years of the Church, Paul (then called Saul) did his best to stop the spreading of the faith, preaching against those who called Jesus "Messiah" (in Greek "Christ") and "Lord," and putting all his time and energy into persecuting the Church. When the authorities executed St. Stephen, the first deacon and martyr, Saul was guarding the clothes of those throwing stones!

Although blind, Paul's zeal was genuine. And since God knows the heart of man, and never fails to guide those that search earnestly for His truth, at a certain moment in God's time,

something extraordinary happened. In St. Paul's words, God "revealed his Son to him." On the way to Damascus, he did meet the resurrected Jesus Christ in an overwhelming, life-changing vision. And it was this meeting that established Paul as an apostle, and a divinely authorized preacher of the Gospel.

But many were skeptical about the Gospel preached by this man (now baptized "Paul"). They kept insisting that he had not received a commission from Christ—like the other apostles—or from Peter, the leader of the apostles, or from James, the leader of the Mother-Church in Jerusalem. Yet Paul knew what he had received from Christ: "the gospel which was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ."

And this special commissioning of St. Paul has borne rich fruit: it is to him and to his disciple, St. Luke, that we owe most of the New Testament; it is he that showed the importance of sharing the Good News with the pagans; it is he that crisscrossed Europe to found its first Church communities; his life ended at Rome in 64, when he was martyred along with St. Peter.

Whether "cradle Orthodox" or converts, we are called, like St. Paul, to allow Christ to be revealed in us, and to gradually learn how to live as His disciples. Nobody ever said it would be easy; but we can all take the advice that the same Apostle Paul gave to one of his spiritual sons: Here is a trustworthy saying: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am first! (1 Tim 1:15).

## TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

### *From the Holy Gospel according to Luke*

(Luke 8:5-15) The Lord spoke this parable: A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path and was trampled, and the birds of the sky ate it up. Some seed fell on rocky ground, and when it grew, it withered for lack of moisture. Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it. And some seed fell on good soil, and when it grew, it produced fruit a hundredfold." After saying this, he called out, "Whoever has ears to hear ought to hear." Then his disciples asked him what the meaning of this parable might be. He answered, "Knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of God has been granted to you; but to the rest, they are made known through parables so that 'they may look but not see, and hear but not understand.'" This is the meaning of the parable. The seed is the word of God. Those on the path are the ones who have heard, but the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts that they may not believe and be saved. Those on rocky ground are the ones who, when they hear, receive the word with joy, but they have no root; they believe only for a time and fall away in time of trial. As for the seed that fell among thorns, they are the ones who have heard, but as they go along, they are choked by the anxieties and riches and pleasures of life, and they fail to produce mature fruit. But as for the seed that fell on rich soil, they are the ones who, when they have heard the word, embrace it with a generous and good heart, and bear fruit in perseverance.

The parable of the sower is well known; it is, however, easily misunderstood. The parable seems, at first sight, to speak of different types of persons: some refuse to hear the Gospel; others hear it but are superficial and lazy; others always seem to put God and their salvation last; and others, again, receive the Gospel like a seed planted in rich soil, which grows and brings forth the fruit of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Let us note, first, that God (the sower) is “foolishly” generous, even prodigal, and sends His Word (the seed) *everywhere and to everyone*: on good soil but also, no less, on the path, on rocky ground, and among thorns. In fact, we see that most of the effort is in vain, since the majority (75% in the parable) reject or misuse the seed. Still, God continues to sow the Word of God even in this world and in this faithless and adulterous generation.

The “soil” that receives the seed is nothing else than our heart. It can be a careless, inhospitable heart (where God’s presence goes unnoticed); a hard heart, which refuses to be pierced through by the Word, and remains shallow, without root; a poisoned heart (“choked by thorns”), where the Word of God is soon overwhelmed by a crowd of other concerns; or, as the Lord explains, the good soil refers to “a good and generous heart.”

So, which type are you? Which “category”? What kind of soil? – What a silly question! Our heart is like *all* those types of soil—sometimes like barren ground, oblivious to God and our neighbor, sometimes reducing God to some shallow feeling or thought, sometimes too anxious about many things and therefore unable to be still in front of God.

To think that “some are just like this – the ‘churchy’ type – and others just aren’t” is simply not Orthodox. It leads to arrogance (remember the Pharisee: “God, I *thank you* that I’m *not like* other people!”) and despair. The point of the parable is rather that we are encountering the very Word of God as a seed being sown in our hearing, that we are called to receive it, and *to change*, to become good soil. And change begins here and now: the Word of God is sown during Liturgy, read in the Psalm verses, the Epistle, and the Gospel, preached in the sermon, and tasted in the Eucharist.

The Word of God is searching for us and searching out our heart. He calls to us to become ***receptive and hospitable*** (because, “to those that *receive* Him He has given power to be children of God,” John 1:12), but also ***patient and perseverant***. Remember, the good soil (the good heart) “will bring forth fruit *in patience*”! Or elsewhere, also in the Gospel of Luke: “by your **endurance** you will gain your lives” (Luke 21:19).

Finally, laboring for the cultivation of the heart, learning to receive God with an open, patient, and perseverant heart is well worth it. The harvest—the fruit of the Spirit—is rich beyond belief, worthy of God’s generosity: **when it grew, it produced fruit a hundredfold. *A hundredfold!***

### ***Remember in your prayers***

LIVING: grieving Serbanescu and Becker families; Ion, Marius & Katherine (Stan); Norma; Karen (Jane Best’s daughter); Elisabeth, Chris and Jillian; Sula; Stella & Dimitrios; 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).