



SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
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TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

4 November 2018

TONE 6, Eothinon 1—Synaxis of the Holy Unmercenaries. Ven. Ioannikios the Great (846). Hieromartyrs Nicander, Bishop of Myra, and Hermas, Presbyter (1st 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 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 OF SAINT IOANIKIOS THE GREAT (Tone 8): The barren wilderness thou didst make fertile with the streams of thy tears; and by thy deep sighing thou hast given fruit through thy struggles a hundred-fold. Accordingly, thou hast become a star for the universe, sparkling with miracles. Therefore, O righteous Father Ioanikios, 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 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: O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance.
To Thee, O Lord, have I cried, O my God.*

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

(Eph 2:4-10) **Brethren: God who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, brought us to life with Christ (by grace you have been saved!), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved, through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—not because of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that God has prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.**

This Sunday's Gospel brings us the story of the foolish rich man, who lost his soul by failing to care for poor Lazarus. Quite fittingly, the Apostle reading also speaks of riches: this time, however, we hear of *God's* way of being rich. Indeed, we hear that our God is "rich," that He holds "immeasurable riches." Yet, God is immeasurably rich *in mercy*; His immeasurable riches are matched by His immeasurable generosity and by "the great love with which He loved us." As we hear at Confession: "Just as Your greatness is beyond compare, so also is Your mercy without limit."

God's way of being rich is the exact opposite of petty and calculated exchange. He does not balance a budget of give-and-take; rather, "**out of His great love with which He loved us,**" He squandered His trust on us "**even when we were dead through our trespasses.**" He did not share His glory only with the angels: He came to us—creatures "dead in our sins, "following the spirit of disobedience," "children of wrath" (read Eph 2:1-3, the verses right before our passage)—and He took us and "seated us with Him in the heavenly places." Unlike the rich man in today's Gospel, God squanders His riches on a humanity that is so often sick, disgusting, and as good as dead, dresses us in the garment of glory, seats us at His rich-laden table, and feeds us the food of immortality. Think of what we experience in the Eucharist!

All of the above, of course, happens "in Christ." It is, in other words, not the fruit of our goodness, but the gift of God's generosity; not of our own making, but the Maker's grace of re-creating us "in Christ." What, then, is our part? Saint Paul leaves us with a stunning answer: our part is simply (although it is not simple at all!) *not to miss* the many opportunities to perform

the good works that God has prepared beforehand. Even our good works are laid before us as a gift, meeting us with every new day: our duty is not to avoid “walking in them.”

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

The reading is from the Holy Gospel according to Luke

(Luke 16:19-31) The Lord said, “There was a rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, full of sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man’s table; moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores. The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died and was buried; and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes, and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus in his bosom. And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy upon me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame.’ But Abraham said, ‘Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.’ And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father’s house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’ But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.’ And he said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’”

It is easy to blame the rich man in this story: he shares nothing with poor Lazarus, he does not care for his sick and dying fellow-human, he is a monster! And yet, judging things on a strictly social and political level, the rich man may have some sort of justification. After all, some would say, the rich man was not responsible for the poverty and sickness of Lazarus; besides, Lazarus should be grateful for the crumbs he is getting!

But the story requires us to approach it differently, so that we understand why the story of the rich man is God’s warning to us not to do like he did. Let us pause over a detail in the Gospel’s portrayal of Lazarus: “the dogs,” it says, “came and licked his sores.” These are the rich man’s guard dogs—fierce creatures. If they befriend Lazarus and even do their best to clean his wounds, it is probably because, although the man has nothing, he has a kind heart and shares the little he gets (the crumbs) with them.

The big turning-point of the story is, it seems, the death of both the rich man and Lazarus. It is now, when they pass from this life, that their truth is revealed. It is as though we, the readers, are given a glimpse into how God sees these men: Lazarus, poor in goods but rich in goodness, is embraced by heaven; the rich man, rich in all kinds of goods but lacking in goodness, finds himself estranged from the Good One.

As always with the Lord’s parables, we should ask ourselves: who are we in this story? And where would we belong? Needless to say, the answer has nothing to do with the amount of money one has accumulated, or one’s social status. Theologically speaking, all of us—rich and poor, men and women, citizens and foreigners, etc— are somewhat like Lazarus, suffering from the incurable sickness of mortality, covered with the boils of sinful and destructive habits, barely alive through our own choice of separating ourselves from the divine source of life. Now, since

God is not responsible for our fallen state, could he not "just tolerate" us, the way the rich man tolerates the poor Lazarus who eats crumbs from his table?

But God shows us a different way. He does not ask whether we "truly deserve" a better state; in dealing with our shortcomings, as the Psalmist says, He does not keep score: "If You should mark our iniquities, who could stand? But with You there is forgiveness." And, unlike the rich man in the parable, He does not feed us mere crumbs. Remember the invitation addressed to us on Pascha: "Rejoice today, *for the table is richly laden! Enjoy all the riches of His goodness!* Let no one mourn that he has fallen again and again; for forgiveness has risen from the grave."

God's mode of existence—generous and forgiving—is what is asked of us. It is asked of us because it is first offered to us in Christ: if we embrace Christ and the risen life that flows from Him, then we are given the power to live out a truly Christian life, a life in which God's abundant generosity is manifested here and now, towards our neighbor.

If we refuse to be like God, we automatically separate ourselves from Him, and choose the same miserable hell as the foolish rich man. Of course, God does not wish any of us to experience in our real existence that which the rich man experiences in the parable, so He sets before us—before our very eyes—many opportunities to share with others the gifts that we have so richly received from Him. The matter is urgent, the stakes couldn't be higher: by choosing either to treat our neighbor as a brother, or to leave him to the dogs, we friendship with God or estrangement from him, heaven or hell.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **TODAY:** Chrismation of Chris and Jill DiNunzio (sponsors: Garrett and Autumn)
- meeting of the parish council
- **Next Sunday, Nov. 11: pan-Orthodox Divine Liturgy at Sts. Peter and Paul.** We continue our beautiful local tradition—namely, that on the last Sunday before the start of the Nativity fast, we gather with all Orthodox in our area for worship and a common meal.
- **Sunday, Nov. 18, 12:30-1:30 pm:** Sunday School for Adults
Deacon Martin: "*Logismoi* and our Day-to Day Life as Christians"

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: Christopher and Jillian; grieving Serbanescu and Becker families; Gabriel; 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).