



## SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese  
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### AFTERFEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD

29 December 2019

*TONE 3— Eothinon 6. Joseph the Betrothed, David the Prophet and King, and James the brother of God.*

#### FIRST ANTIPHON

I will confess Thee, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will tell of all Thy wonders. In the council of the upright, and in the congregation, great are the works of the Lord. (R.:) Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us! *Sought out in all the things that he has willed; confession and majesty are His work, and His righteousness abides unto the ages!* (R.:) *Glory... Now and ever... (R.:)*

#### SECOND ANTIPHON

*Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who delights in His Law. His seed shall be mighty upon the earth; glory and riches shall be in his house, and his righteousness abides unto ages of ages (R.:) Save us, O Son of God, Who wast born of the Virgin, as we chant to Thee, "Alleluia"! For the upright there arises a light in the darkness: He is gracious, full of compassion and righteous. (R.:). Glory... Now and ever... (Only begotten ...)*

#### THIRD ANTIPHON

- *The Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand, until I make Thine enemies a footstool.*  
TROPARION OF THE NATIVITY (Tone 4): Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, has given rise to the light of knowledge in the world; for they that worshipped the stars from the star did learn to worship Thee, O Sun of Justice, and to know Thee, the East from on high. O Lord, glory to Thee!
- *The Lord shall send to you a scepter of power from Zion. With Thee is dominion in the day of Thy power, in the splendor of Thy saints.* THY NATIVITY O CHRIST OUR GOD ...
- *Glory ... Now and ever ...* THY NATIVITY O CHRIST OUR GOD ...

#### LITTLE ENTRANCE

*Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ! O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead, save us who sing to Thee: "Alleluia"!*

TROPARION OF THE RESURRECTION (Tone 3): Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad, for the Lord has done a mighty act with His own arm. He has trampled down death by death and become the first-born from the dead. He has delivered us from the depths of Hades, granting the world great mercy.

TROPARION OF THE NATIVITY (Tone 4): Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, hath given rise to the light of knowledge in the world; for they that worshipped the stars from the star did learn to worship Thee, O Sun of Justice, and to know Thee, the East from on high. O Lord, glory to Thee!

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 OF THE NATIVITY (Tone 3): On this Day the Virgin bears Him who surpasses all essence, and the earth offers a cave to Him who is beyond our approaching! Angels sing along with shepherds, praising His glory. Wise men come; led by a star, they journey to find Him, who for us is now brought forth as a newborn baby, yet He is God before time.

## TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

*Prokeimenon: God is wondrous in His saints. Bless God in the congregations.*

*The Reading is from Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*

(Gal 1:11-19) **Brethren:** I would have you know that 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. 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 up 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 of our Lord. In fact, he never even met Jesus 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 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." Paul did meet the Lord—on the way to Damascus, he had a vision, an overwhelming encounter with the resurrected Jesus Christ. And it was this meeting that established him 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."

This Sunday, the first after the Nativity, we commemorate the holy Righteous Ones: Joseph the Betrothed, David the King, and James the Brother of the Lord. What do they have in common with us? They show us that, whether “cradle Orthodox” or converts to the faith, 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 is 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 that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am first! (1 Tim 1:15).

## TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

### *The Reading is from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew*

(Matthew 2:13-23) When the wise men had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there till I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” And he rose and took the child and his mother by night, and departed to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, “Out of Egypt have I called my son.” Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men was in a furious rage, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time which he had ascertained from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: “A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they were no more.” But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child’s life are dead.” And he rose and took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus reigned of Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. And he went and dwelt in the city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, “He shall be called a Nazarene.”

Christmas is not a yearly commemoration of some event that happened long time ago, in a distant place. What the Church celebrates at the Feast of the Nativity is the beginning of our own journey with Christ. And in order to know how that looks like, we meditate on the saints of God, those brothers and sisters of ours who have learned to live as children of God.

Today we remember Joseph, the man betrothed to the Virgin Mary and entrusted with the task of protecting the newborn child and his mother. What the Church has always celebrated in him is his humility and perfect obedience towards God, and his life of selfless service to the neighbor.

Today’s Gospel reading shows Joseph journeying to and from Egypt, in obedience to divine guidance. All around there is weeping and loud lamentation, a time and place of ruthless and murderous tyranny; but the righteous Joseph and those under his care, are kept safe. It is as in the verses of Psalm 91:

*You who dwell in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shade of the Almighty, say to the LORD, “My refuge and fortress, my God in whom I trust!” He will shelter you with his pinions, and under his wings you may take refuge; his faithfulness is a protecting shield.” Though a thousand fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, near you it shall not come. ... Because you have the LORD for your refuge, and have made the Most High your stronghold, no evil shall befall you, no affliction come near your tent.”*

The Righteous Joseph is, literally, “walking with God”: a living icon of what our Christian life should be. May this feast of the Nativity stir up in all of us a desire to do likewise.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

Next Saturday/Sunday, January 4-5: The Lord's Baptism ("Theophany"), transferred *by oikonomia*.

- Vespers (Saturday, 6:30 PM),
- Festal Matins (Sunday 9AM), Divine Liturgy (Sunday 10AM) and the Great blessing of the waters (in church).

### REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

**LIVING:** Don (Dollie's brother); Frank (Seba's brother); Ann (Wilson), surgery; Nyal, Jean's son-in-law (motorcycle accident); Joseph Totin (recovering from illness and surgery); Ion, Marius & Katherine (Stan); Serbanescu and Becker families; Gabriel; Karen (Jane Best's daughter); Charitini; Stella & Dimitrios; Christine (Abraham); Dollie; Venetia; Maura; Ann; Ed, Peter, John, Jonathan and Joanna; Andrei; Kent, Bob, David (relatives of Jean); Stelian; Diane; Maura (Andronic); Susannah; Ed Sr (Totin).

**DEPARTED:** Kurt (Melinda's father); Jackie (Rose Totin's mother); Maria (Stella Lyras' sister); Sula; Kurt (Diane's son); Viorica; Norma; Miltiades; Tim (Becker); Silviu; Ross (Chrissi's friend); Richard Johns; Viorica; Bishop Antoun; Vito (DiPento); Jim and Marion (Raimondi); Stephanie (Yazge); Job; George (Georgiades); Abie (Abraham); Bill (Thomas); Marta.

### INVITATION TO ST. ANTHONY'S PARISH FEAST!

Come celebrate our spiritual patron, Anthony the Great! Join us anytime you can on **Saturday, Jan. 18** (Vespers at 6PM) and **Sunday, Jan. 19** (Matins, 9AM and Liturgy, 10AM).

Our guest speaker is **Dr. Mark Mourachian**, a scholar and former professor of Early Christianity. Dr. Mourachian earned his Ph.D. in 2012 from the Early Christian Studies Program at the Catholic University of America with a dissertation on St. Ephrem the Syrian's theological anthropology and the centrality it affords to human freedom. He co-edited, with the late Father Matthew Baker, a valuable collective volume entitled *What Is the Bible? The Patristic Doctrine of Scripture* (Fortress Press, 2014). After teaching for six years at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary, Dr. Mourachian now lives with his wonderful family in Cranberry, PA, as part of a community of families intent of cultivating Christian discipleship in the midst everyday family life.

This will also be a day of feasting! Our parish feast also features a spectacular chili cook-off, with many, many types of chilis: hot, mild, with beans, no beans, vegan, Texas style, Chicago Style, Cincinnati Chili, German Chili (with sauerkraut!). Don't worry if you are vegetarian, there will be meatless option. Trust us, you won't regret this.

Since we are celebrating Saint Anthony the Great, "the father of monks," we intend to take a special collection to assist the nuns at the Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Ellwood City. Please be generous to these followers of Saint Anthony, who remember us always in their prayers before God.