



SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH

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FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: ALL SAINTS

23 June 2019

Tone 8 / Eothinon 1—*Martyr Agrippina of Rome (253-260). Martyrs Eustochius, Gaius, Probus, Lollius, and Urban, of Ancyra (4th c.). Hieromartyrs Aristocles the Presbyter, Demetrios the Deacon, and Athanasius the Reader, of Cyprus.*

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 ...)

AT THE LITTLE ENTRANCE

Come, let us worship and bow down before Christ!

Save us, O Son of God Who art risen from the dead, as we sing to Thee: Alleluia!

TROPARION OF THE RESURRECTION (Tone 8): From the heights Thou didst descend, O compassionate One, and Thou didst submit to the threeday burial, that Thou might deliver us from passion; Thou art our life and our Resurrection, O Lord, glory to Thee.

TROPARION OF ALL SAINTS (Tone 4): Adorned in the blood of Thy Martyrs throughout all the world as in purple and fine linen, Thy Church, through them, does cry unto Thee, O Christ God: Send down Thy compassions upon Thy people; grant peace to Thy commonwealth, and great mercy to 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 OF ALL SAINTS (Tone 8): As first-fruits of our nature to the Planter of created things, the world presents the God-bearing martyred Saints in offering unto Thee, O Lord. Through their earnest entreaties, keep Thy Church in deep peace and divine tranquility, through the pure Theotokos, O Thou Who art greatly merciful.

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon: God is wonderful among His saints. Bless God in the congregations!

The Reading is from the Epistle to the Hebrews

(Heb 11:33–12:2) Brethren, all the saints 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, 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 tempted, 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. Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfection of our faith.

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew

(Mat 10:32-33, 37-38; 19:27-30) The Lord said to His disciples, "Everyone who acknowledges Me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father Who is in heaven; but whoever denies Me before men, I also will deny before My Father Who is in heaven. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me." Then Peter said in reply, "Lo, we have left everything and followed Thee. What then shall we have?" Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new age, when the Son of Man shall sit on His glorious throne, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My Name's sake, will receive a hundred fold, and inherit eternal life. But many that are first will be last, and the last first."

From Rabbinic lore about Jewish Pentecost / Shavuot (the giving of the Law): Rabi Levi said, The Holy One appeared to them as though He were an icon with faces on every side. A thousand people might be looking at the icon, but it would appear to be looking at each one of them. When the Holy One spoke, each and every person in Israel could say, "The Divine Word is addressing me." Note that Scripture (Exod. 20:2) does not say, "I am the Lord *your* God" [in the plural], but "I am the Lord *thy* God" [in the singular]. R. Yose bar R. Hanina said: The Divine Word spoke to each and every person according to his

particular capacity. And do not be surprised at this idea. For when manna came down for Israel, each and every person tasted it in keeping with his own capacity—infants in keeping with their capacity; young men in keeping with their capacity; and the elderly in keeping with their capacity ... Now what was true about the manna, was equally true about the Divine Word. Each and every person heard it according to his own particular capacity.

"SUNDAY OF ALL THE SAINTS"

The sequence of feasts that the Church has just celebrated (Pascha, Ascension, Pentecost) is not accidental. With the resurrection of Christ—"Passover" or "Pascha"—the human nature that He took upon Himself is restored, healed, freed from mortality. *In the risen Christ* we see what humankind would have become, if the Fall had not occurred.

We have then celebrated the feast of the Lord's Ascension: upon ascending to heaven as the eternal High Priest of all mankind, Christ invokes the gift of the Holy Spirit upon us all. Finally, the descent of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, makes it possible for the new, resurrected life (the restored and healed humanity) that is *in the Risen Christ* to also flow *into us*.

And today is "All Saints Sunday", the day when we remember all those who have been living out this new, resurrected life, the "life in Christ" made possible by the Holy Spirit. The Gospel read at Pentecost said about those who believe in Christ that **"out of their belly shall flow rivers of living water,"** explaining immediately that the Lord **"said about the Spirit, which those who believed in Him were to receive."** Well, today we consider how this new life actually looks like.

This is of direct concern to us, since *all Christians* are, potentially, saints. In other words, all those baptized into Christ are given all gifts necessary to fulfill their life in Christ. It is also true that faith, hope, and love—the "indicators" of Christian life—are not a static "thing" that you either have or don't have, but an ongoing *process* of growth into God. So, how does this process of living with God and in God look like?

We note, first, that the model for the saints of the Church is the Old Testament. It is in the heroes of Old Israel that the Epistle to the Hebrews finds "the great cloud of witnesses" to a life of faith. Secondly, we read about two major categories among the saints: martyrs (**"Some were tortured ... others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment ... They were stoned, sawn in two, tempted, killed with the sword"**) and ascetics (**"they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, ... wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth"**). Of course, these two categories are not strictly separated. A prophet such as John the Baptist is known for leading a very ascetic life, as a recluse in the desert, but also for his gruesome killing for the faith. Even about the disciples of the Lord, the Gospel states that they **left *everything*** to follow and then to preach Jesus; and almost all of them died as martyrs.

What about us? Are we given the choice to be either martyrs or ascetics, either to die for the faith, or to live like John the Baptist? The answer is that we need to look deeper, beyond the exterior circumstances of earthly existence.

The Epistle to the Hebrews calls the saints **"people of whom the world is not worthy."** Indeed, there is a fundamental incompatibility, a deep-seated disagreement between what the New Testament calls "the world" (that is, the reality of the *fallen* world) and the new life in Christ. The resurrected life has already begun in Jesus Christ, and is "in process" in our case; but it will be generalized only with the Second Coming, when the entire creation will be renewed, and will enter the "new age" or "the world to come" for which we pray at Divine Liturgy, and which we confess in the Creed ("I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come, Amen!"). Until then, however, the new type of existence seems "foolish" to, and is constantly at odds with, "the world."

In reality—that is, in the eyes of the Truly Existing One, God—it is holiness (truth, beauty, justice, love) that is “normal,” while the petty and pathetic clinging to the lies of the evil one is foolish. With every saint that we come to know, we receive a call to wake up and embrace *reality*, the reality of God’s love that can transform even us into images of Christ.

We celebrate All Saints Sunday because we, too, want to grow as faithful disciples of the Lord. The details will be different from person to person, depending on a host of circumstances. But, essentially, it will be the same life: living here and now the life of the age to come, so that at the Second Coming we are found to already be “in Christ.” The Holy Spirit of Pentecost, is given to us all with Baptism and Chrismation, and remains always with us, to aid and to comfort and to strengthen us on our path.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Fast of the Holy Apostles:** June 24-28 (No meat, no dairy ... you know the drill). Due to our circumstances, we will celebrate the Holy Apostles one day later than their actual feast day (June 29), next Sunday, when we also celebrate all saints of America.

LIVING: Kurt (Diane's son); Ion, Marius & Katherine (Stan); Serbanescu and Becker families; Gabriel; Karen (Jane Best's daughter); Charitini; Sula; 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; Joseph (Totin).

DEPARTED: 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.