



SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
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SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Synaxis ("Gathering") of the Twelve Apostles and All Saints of North America

30 June 2019

Tone 1 / Eothinon 2—*The Synaxis ("Gathering") of the Twelve Apostles; All Saints of North America; Martyr Peter of Sinope; St. Peter, Prince of Ordinsk (Rostov—1290); New-martyr Michael the Gardener of Athens.*

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 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 OF THE HOLY APOSTLES PETER AND PAUL (Tone 4): O foremost in the ranks of Apostles, and teachers of the world, Peter and Paul, intercede with the Master of all to grant peace unto the world, and to our souls great mercy.

TROPARION OF THE SAINTS OF AMERICA (Tone 8): As the bountiful harvest of Thy sowing of salvation, the lands of America offer to Thee, O Lord, all the saints who have shone in them. By their prayers keep the Church and our land in abiding peace, through the Theotokos, O most Merciful One!

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 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: Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth.
The heavens show forth the glory of God.*

The Reading is from the First Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

(1 Cor 4:9-16) **Brethren, I think that God has exhibited us Apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute. To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are ill-clad and buffeted and homeless, and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become, and are now, as the refuse of the world, the scourge of all things. I do not write this to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. Though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. I became your father in Christ Jesus through the Gospel. I urge you, then, be imitators of me.**

The ministry of the Holy Apostles, as laid out by the Lord, was to bring the Good News to the entire world, and to make disciples of any and all who want to taste the new life in Christ. "Making disciples" is much more than providing information, or organizing disciplined battalions of followers. It means sharing the life of those who are being "disciple," and gradually reshaping them in the image and likeness of a living model.

This is what the disciples experienced in their three years of following Jesus Christ, and, after Pentecost, in their new experience of the Risen Christ made present through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Apostles received the mandate to bring others into this spiritual fellowship with the Risen Lord: to make anyone willing a disciple—a disciple *of Christ!* And Saint Paul writes: **Even if you should have countless guides to Christ, yet you do not have many fathers, for I became your father in Christ Jesus through the Gospel. Therefore, I urge you, be imitators of me.**

But why does Paul urge the Corinthians to imitate *him*? Why not "imitate Christ"? And why does he speak of himself as their *father*? Let us note, first, that in the same letter, the Apostle writes: **Be imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ** (1 Cor 11:1). Even in today's Epistle, Saint Paul compares "guide *to Christ*" to "father *in Christ*": both "guide" and "father" are explained, specifically, in relation to Christ! It is understood that a "guide to Christ" leads not to Paul, but to Christ. So also with spiritual fatherhood: this much more intimate relation also results in making Paul's disciples into children of Christ.

Christian discipleship today occurs in parishes and monasteries. "Each according to his own gift, one in this manner, and another in that," as the Holy Apostles writes elsewhere (1 Cor 7:7). Even though we have few reliable guides to Christ today, and even fewer fathers in Christ, God will always provide for those who seek him earnestly, and whoever wants to be saved will be given the proper avenue of discipleship. The Lord promised to be us always, unto the end of the ages.

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
[for the feast of the Apostles Peter and Paul]

(Mat 16:13-19) At that time, when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His Disciples, "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father Who is in Heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven."

Today, as we celebrate the holy apostles Peter and Paul, we are asked to start afresh with the very beginning of the journey: faith. More precisely, we must learn and relearn, again and again, *how to believe*.

As the good pedagogue He is, the Lord is asking two questions of his disciples; the two questions come quickly one after the other, gently and effectively leading the disciples closer to the truth. "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" is the first question. And the second, "But who do you say that I am?" The answers are at first a random selection of more or less plausible answers: Jesus, "some say" is perhaps a prophet, perhaps the famous Elijah or the great Jeremiah, perhaps John the Baptist returned from the dead. With these answers we are moving towards the truth, because Jesus is, indeed, a larger-than-life, extraordinary person, a holy man, one who speaks with power, one who shakes his listeners awake and aware of God. Once here, the disciples need a "fine tuning" of their vision, so that they may see and understand who it is that they have before their very eyes. And the Lord provides them with another way of approaching the truth, by asking them to search with the help of another question: Who do *you* say I am? *You*—who do *you* think I am? As they are forced to grapple with the difficult task of speaking of their own convictions, the disciples become silent. Then Peter bears witness to that which God has revealed to him: You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Together with the Holy Apostles Peter, we make this confession of faith every time we approach the chalice. Let me rephrase the question: *Who do I think Jesus is? What do I think I am about to receive at Holy Communion? What am I doing in church? What do I think I have found?* The answer to this question is not some neutral report about what people generally believe about Jesus; it is rather an answers which requires us to take a personal stance, to commit ourselves entirely to this truth.

The truth we confess and gradually learn to experience in Church is not something that we can consider from a distance. To say that He is the Messiah, the Son of God, who has come into this world for our salvation, implies that our very life is involved in this truth. This is what Christ is

teaching his apostles, and this is the kind of truth we, as members of the *apostolic* church of Christ believe and confess: a living truth, a saving truth—ultimately, we do not speak *about* Jesus, but bind ourselves in faith and love to Christ himself, who is the Truth.

Had the Church been a pious club held together by certain dogmas and moral norms, it would long have ceased to exist. But Peter's confession is not a piece of ideology, it is a commitment to Christ, an act of life. It is with this kind of faith that the Apostles have conquered the world, despite countless sufferings—just consider the opening lines of today's Apostle reading; it is this kind of faith that gives a glimpse of heaven, even while on earth, and offered the Apostles a concrete foretaste of eternal life even while they were put to death. It is this kind of faith that constitutes the very foundation of the Church: **on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.**

For the Saints who have flourished in the lands of North America:

Rejoice, O mountains of Pennsylvania; leap for joy, O waters of the Great Lakes; rise up, O fertile plains of Canada; for the elect of Christ who dwelt in you are glorified, men and women who left their homes for a new land. With faith, hope, and patience as their armor, they courageously fought the good fight. Comforted by the beauty of the Orthodox Faith, they labored in mines and mills, they tilled the land, they braved the challenges of the great cities, enduring many hardships and sufferings. Never failing to worship God in spirit and truth and unyielding in devotion to His most pure Mother, they erected many temples to His glory. Come, O assembly of the Orthodox, and with love let us praise the holy men, women, and children, those known to us and those known only to God, and let us cry out to them: Rejoice, all Saints of North America and pray to God for us.

REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

LIVING: 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: 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.