



SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
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FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

21 July 2019

Tone 4 / Eothinon 5—*Prophet Ezekiel (6th c. B.C.). Martyr Victor of Marseilles (290). Ven. Simeon of Emessa, Fool-for-Christ, and his fellow ascetic, Ven. John (ca. 590).*

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 and Word of God ...)

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 4): Having learned the joyful message of the Resurrection from the angel the women disciples of the Lord cast from them their parental condemnation. And proudly broke the news to the Disciples, saying: Death hath been spoiled; Christ God is risen, granting the world great mercy.

TROPARION OF SAINT ANTHONY THE GREAT (Tone 4): 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: How great are Thy works, O Lord!
In wisdom hast Thou made them all. Bless the Lord, O my soul.*

The Reading is from Saint Paul's Letter to the Romans

(Rom 10:1–10) Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, "The man who does those things shall live by them." But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, " 'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

The Scriptures often speak of righteousness as that sum of qualities that express *godlikeness*. Because God himself is righteous, someone (an individual or a community) or something (an idea) is "righteous" when God's way of being is reflected in them.

Today we hear Saint Paul criticize those who, **ignorant of God's righteousness, are seeking to establish their own righteousness**. Their problem is not lack of faith and piety—on the contrary, their "zeal for God" is real. But they are missing the mark by obstinately holding on to their own notion of what God is like, what God desires for us, and what we should do to flourish in our life with God. They have, in the words of the Apostle, **not submitted to the righteousness of God, but are seeking to establish *their own* righteousness**. Not *God's* but *their own*.

He then goes into more specifics. "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down from above). In other words: stop trying to "make it to heaven" on your own terms; stop disbelieving that, indeed, Christ has risen for us, and entered God's presence *for us*, and is at work *in us* to accomplish the same for us. Stop trying to establish your own righteousness (religiosity, piety, zeal) apart from Christ, outside of him.

Also, "Do not say 'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). In other words, stop disbelieving God's mad love for us, "foolish" and real: that He descended to us, the Creator to his creation, the Holy One among sinners estranged from holiness, like a shepherd at the fall of night deciding to seek out a single sheep who had gotten lost on the way. "Who among you would not do this?" asked Christ after he had recounted the parable of the lost sheep; and the many shepherds in the audience must have muttered, "*nobody* would venture out in the darkness, at risk for his own life, to seek a stupid sheep that got lost because it was disobedient. No one in his right mind would even *think* of doing this." And yet, God did, and Saint Paul insists: stop disbelieving that God, out of sheer love for us, descended into the abyss, to find us and return us to himself.

Ultimately, the Apostle calls us to believe that, in Christ, God descended to us, and that, in Christ, we also ascended to God; and that the reunion of God and man, which has occurred in Christ, is to become the real life for all of us, in this life and in the life to come—the risen life. **If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.**

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew

(Mat 8:28-9:1) At that time, when he reached the territory of the Gadarenes on the other side, two demoniacs came towards him out of the tombs; they were so fierce that nobody could use that path. Suddenly they shouted, 'What do you want with us, Son of God? Have you come here to torture us before the time?' Now some distance away there was a large herd of pigs feeding, and the devils pleaded with Jesus, 'If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs. And he said to them, 'Go then,' and they came out and made for the pigs; and at that the whole herd charged down the cliff into the lake and perished in the water. The herdsmen ran off and made for the city, where they told the whole story, including what had happened to the demoniacs. Suddenly the whole city set out to meet Jesus; and as soon as they saw him they implored him to leave their neighborhood. And he got back in the boat, crossed the water and came to his home town.

It is frightening to imagine a human life that has become the playground of demons. We know how painful it is to walk around plagued by a headache or toothache; or how terrible it is to be haunted by regrets and painful memories; and how guilt over things past or anxiety over things future can rob you of your peace and of the ability to enjoy anything in the present. How much worse, then, for the two demoniacs of today's Gospel reading! Although alive, they spend their tortured existence in tombs, haunted by nightmarish frights; they are "fierce" and nobody can pass by without being deeply affected.

It is not so much their apparition and their antics that frighten, as it is the insight that we, "normal" ones, are only a hair's breadth away from their state and not safe at all. Indeed, according to Scripture, "the world lies under the power of the evil one" (1 John 5:19), so that we have here an appropriate image of the fallen existence that Adam chose by trusting the evil one rather than God.

The Lord decides to heal the demoniacs in such a way that people would see and understand the depth of the evil they were facing: he sends the legion of demons into a herd of swine. The resulting stampede, with the swine rushing headlong off a cliff to a miserable drowning, gives us a frightening view of the destructive force that had been ravaging the two demoniacs.

Most frightening, however, is what follows after the demons are banished and the two restored to health. Instead of giving thanks for the healing and perhaps throwing a feast, the Gadarenes **begged Him to leave their neighborhood**. They are afraid, it seems, not of the demons *but of God!* Their situation so far was, in a way, settled and satisfying: the two demoniacs allowed the other inhabitants to view themselves as "good" by imagining that all evil was *elsewhere*—namely *there*, in the tombs, in the two demoniacs. Jesus disrupts this arrangement and now the Gadarenes are afraid that God is coming into their lives. They are unwilling to welcome into their homes a guest that disrupts the status quo by bringing in a new kind of life.

And can anyone believe that the demons drowned with the pigs? Or that they somehow just left the area or vanished? That would be a lie, a deceit—just the kind of deceit with which the "father of lies" tries to convince us that we are "safe." Scripture warns us, rather: **Be alert and of sober mind, for your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour** (1 Peter 5:8). We also live in Gadara, only a hair's breadth away from the tomb. We know where to find salvation: since "the Son of God appeared to destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8), we are taught to pray with these words, "Come Jesus Christ!" and to train ourselves for His coming by responding to the call issued at Liturgy: "With fear of God, faith, and love *draw near!*"



ANNOUNCEMENTS

- God rest the soul of his servant, Athanasia (Sula), and grant her the joy of Paradise in expectation of our common Resurrection.
- Sunday, August 25: parish picnic!
- From the treasurer: June income 1977; disbursements 2808; net loss: 831.

Remember in your prayer

LIVING: Fr. Paisius (recovering from 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; Joseph (Totin).

DEPARTED: 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.