



SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
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EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

27 October 2019

TONE 2 | Eothon 8—*Martyr Nestor of Thessalonica (ca. 306). Ven. Nestor the Chronicler of the Kiev Caves (Far Caves—ca. 1114). Martyrs Capitolina and Eroteis of Cappadocia (304). Saint Claudia Procula, wife of Pontius Pilate (1st c.). Martyr Mark and those with him, on the Isle of Thasos.*

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 has 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 RESURRECTION (Tone 2): When Thou didst submit Thyself unto death, O Thou deathless and immortal One, then Thou didst destroy hell with Thy Godly power. And when Thou didst raise the dead from beneath the earth, all the powers of Heaven did cry aloud unto Thee: O Christ, Thou giver of life, glory to Thee!

TROPARION OF ST. 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: *The Lord is my strength and my song.
The Lord has chastened me severely.*

The Reading is from Saint Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians

(2 Corinthians 11:31-33; 12:1-9) Brethren, the God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he who is blessed for ever, knows that I do not lie. At Damascus, the governor under King Aretas guarded the city of Damascus in order to seize me, but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped his hands. I must boast; there is nothing to be gained by it, but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven (whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows). And I know that this man was caught up into Paradise (whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows) and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter. On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. Though if I wish to boast, I shall not be a fool, for I shall be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me. And to keep me from being too elated by the abundance of revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to harass me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I besought the Lord about this, that it should leave me; but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

In this fragment Saint Paul seems to be affirming two contradictory things: on the one hand, he "boasts" of some extraordinary spiritual experiences—visions, and heavenly journeys—and on the other hand he says that boasting is foolish in itself, and boasting about such experiences even more so, because this is *not* what a Christian should be hunting for!

The context here is very important: other Christian preachers and teachers were carrying out a deceitful mission among the Corinthians, and were denigrating the apostle Paul, claiming that he lacked the necessary spiritual authority because he didn't possess extraordinary "spiritual gifts." It is these false apostles, puffed up by their alleged spiritual experiences, who initiated a sort of contest between themselves and the Apostle Paul. Saint Paul begins his reply with: "**I must boast; there is nothing to be gained by it, but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord.**" He then proceeds to speak of being taken up into the highest heaven and granted visions and mysteries impossible to put in human words. We can see that he feels compelled and is uneasy, because he talks about these experiences in the third person ("I know a man in Christ"), even though he is actually talking about himself. In short, Paul is saying: if *this* is what you want—a "superpowers competition"—then let me tell you that the things I have received from God dwarf anything you can come up with!

The odd thing, however, is that the Apostle frustrates our very expectation for some overwhelming account of a heavenly vision and, perhaps, of a miraculous healing. Nope—he says that **the abundance of revelations** he has received are **things that cannot be told**; and he tells us that the healing he was insistently asking for was *not* granted. The revelation he can share with the Corinthians (and with us) is the following word from the Lord: "**My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.**"

Boasting of spiritual exploits is foolish and a sure sign of spiritual delusion. Christ did not come to rid us of all weakness, to make us healthy, happy, rich, and famous. A quick look at the Apostle Paul suffices: he was in constant danger, often arrested and beaten up, and sometimes escaping narrowly (as we read today: let down in a basket through a window in the wall!); his

health was not the best, he probably had bad eyesight, and his opponents—who claimed to be highly “spiritual” Christians—were mocking him. And yet, it is in Paul’s weakness and humility that Christ displayed his power and wisdom.

In fact, this is what the Apostle teaches: faith in Jesus Christ is not about boosting our ego by using religion to better manage and “improve” ourselves, but about leaving aside all excuse and relying, joyfully, on God’s mercy.

TODAY’S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Holy Gospel according to Luke

(Luke 8:41-56) At that time, there came a man named Jairus, who was a ruler of the synagogue; and falling at Jesus’ feet he besought him to come to his house, for he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she was dying. As he went, the people pressed round him. And a woman who had had a flow of blood for twelve years and had spent all her living upon physicians and could not be healed by any one, came up behind him, and touched the fringe of his garment; and immediately her flow of blood ceased. And Jesus said, “Who was it that touched me?” When all denied it, Peter and those who were with him said, “Master, the multitudes surround you and press upon you!” But Jesus said, “Someone touched me; for I perceive that power has gone forth from me.” And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before him declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. And he said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well go in peace.” While he was still speaking, a man from the ruler’s house came and said, “Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the Teacher anymore.” But Jesus on hearing this answered him, “Do not fear; only believe, and she shall be well.” And when he came to the house, he permitted no one to enter with him, except Peter and John and James, and the father and mother of the child. And all were weeping and bewailing her; but he said, “Do not weep; for she is not dead but sleeping.” And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. But taking her by the hand he called, saying, “Child, arise.” And her spirit returned, and she got up at once; and he directed that something should be given her to eat. And her parents were amazed; but he charged them to tell no one what had happened.

Today’s Gospel abounds in miracles: a chronic, incurable disease goes away instantly at a mere brush with the Lord’s garment—even the fringes of His garment; and a young girl, soon to be taken to the grave, is brought back from death to life. The rapid and overwhelming succession of these miracles speaks of the divine identity of Christ.

But the Evangelist is obviously telling us to connect these two events: a *twelve-year old* girl and a woman who had been sick for *twelve years*; a girl who was dying and a woman whose suffering rendered her as good as dead; a girl raised from the dead far from the crowds and a woman healed secretly, without the crowd noticing; a miracle calling for faith and a miracle made possible by faith. Some of the Fathers see here a symbolic reference to Israel (the daughter of Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue) and the nations (the woman whose blood flow was “impure” under the Law): both lie suffering onto death, awaiting the Messiah; and both are called to become the New Israel, God’s household, the new, unified humanity (since twelve is the symbol of God’s people).

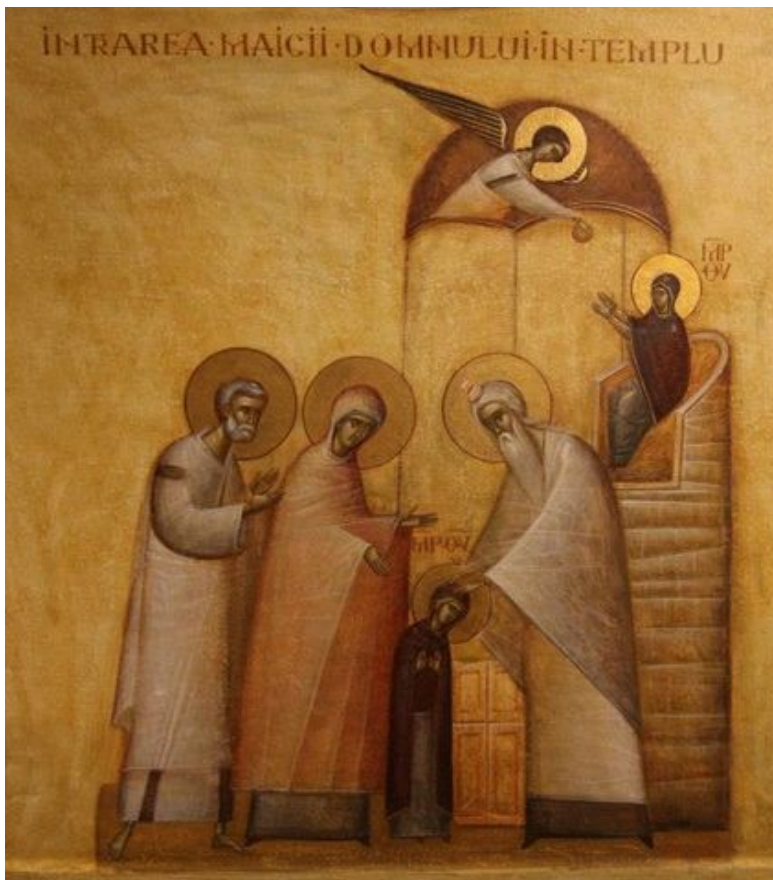
It is no less important to consider that all characters—the girl and her father, the woman who comes seeking healing, the crowd of followers, and the bystanders—represent *me*, who hear the story *today* and who am called to receive the universal Gospel as a word addressed specifically to me. For us, then, the Gospel says that our many and diverse sufferings all intersect on the road that leads to salvations, to Christ.

When Christ reaches the house of Jairus, the family is already weeping, crushed by the tragic and untimely death of the girl. One of the bystanders suggests that, under the circumstances, Jairus should no longer “trouble the Teacher.” This seems to be a common-sense observation, perhaps even an attempt to help the father deal with the loss, and focus on what needs to be done: accept the reality of his daughter’s death, make sure that a proper burial is performed, organize the funeral meal. A bit later, others are ridiculing “the Teacher” for his “unrealistic” denial of the obvious fact that the child is dead. Similarly, we hear the disciples appealing to good common sense: when the crowd is pressing all around Jesus, who could identify the particular individual who touched Him?

By contrast, Jairus and the woman act with a holy foolishness, deciding, against all common sense, to trust Christ. It is this trust that allows the miracle to occur: “your faith has made you well,” Christ tells the woman; “Do not fear, only believe!,” he says to Jairus. Common sense is blind in these instances, because we are paralyzed by fear: fear that we are alone in a hostile world, reduced to surviving, suffering, and “getting over it” in a reality abandoned by God (if there ever was a God). Today’s Gospel exorcizes this kind of fear.

Like Jairus and the suffering woman, we are invited to be bold in “troubling the Teacher,” to approach Him with our open wounds, without fear and with full certainty that the Good News is true: “the Kingdom of God has drawn near!” God has already taken the first step towards us.

ANNOUNCEMENTS



Sunday, November 3
12:30 to 1:30 pm

SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR ADULTS

Mary:
Presenting Ourselves as a Temple

Presentation by Deacon Martin,
followed by Q&A