



SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
www.orthodoxbutler.org

ADDRESS: 400 S. Sixth Avenue, Butler, PA 16001

PASTOR: Rev. Bogdan Gabriel Bucur

Contact: 724.287.6893; 412.390.8208 (priest); frbogdan@orthodoxbutler.org

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

17 November 2019

TONE 5 / Eothon II— *St. Gregory the Wonderworker of Neo-Cæsarea (ca. 266-270). Hilda, abbess of Whitby (680). Ven. Nikon, Abbot of Rádonezh, disciple of Ven. Sergius (1426). Ven. Lazarus the Iconographer, of Constantinople (ca. 857). Martyr Gobron (Michael) and 133 soldiers, of Georgia (914). Ven. Genadius of Vatopedi (Mt. Athos).*

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 5): Let us believers praise and worship the Word; coeternal with the Father and the Spirit, born of the Virgin for our salvation. For, He took pleasure in ascending the Cross in the flesh to suffer death; and to raise the dead by His glorious Resurrection.

TROPARION OF THE GREGORY THE WONDERWORKER (Tone 8): By vigilance in prayer and by the working of wonders, thou didst acquire thine achievements as a name; wherefore, intercede with Christ our God, O Father Gregory, to enlighten our souls, lest we sleep in sin which leads to death.

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 THE ENTRANCE INTO THE TEMPLE OF THE THEOTOKOS (Tone 4): The sacred treasury of God's holy glory, * the greatly precious bridal chamber and Virgin, * the Savior's most pure temple, free of stain and undefiled, * into the House of the Lord * on this day is brought forward * and bringeth with herself the grace * of the Most Divine Spirit; * her do God's Angels hymn with songs of praise, * for she is truly the heavenly tabernacle.

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon: *Thou, O Lord, shalt preserve us and keep us from this generation. Save me, O Lord, for the godly man hath disappeared.*

The Reading is from the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Galatians

(Galatians 6:11-18) **Brethren, see with what large letters I am writing to you, with my own hand. It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that would compel you to be circumcised, and only so that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For even those who receive circumcision do not themselves keep the law; but they desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh. But far be it from me to glory, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision: what counts is to be a new creation! Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule, upon the Israel of God. Henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.**

It is clear that Saint Paul is writing here about a matter he views as extremely important. The first line about the “large letters” means something like “I want to emphasize in the bold scrawls of my personal handwriting the immense importance of what I have written.” What was the problem? Saint Paul was writing to warn the Galatians against certain Christian leaders who compelled all new converts to the faith to practice circumcision. He warned that such “missionaries” were in fact interested in cultivating their own public image in the Christian community, while at the same time “keeping a low profile” in the larger society, so as to avoid prosecution by the Roman Empire (as long as Christians would be perceived as a type of Judaism, they would not be persecuted, but tolerated, like the Jews). The false missionaries were not “crazy” to insist on circumcision; it was, to them and to many, a definite mark of religious piety. Today, it would be things like not eating certain foods on certain days, dressing in a certain way, abstaining from this or that, etc.

Saint Paul's point is that all these things must be placed in a different perspective: what truly matters is not that we keep this or that rule of piety; what matters is that we become a “new creation”—and this is God's work in us. Indeed, as the Apostle writes elsewhere (2 Cor 4:6), the same God who spoke at creation, *let there be light*—and, indeed, *it was light*, now shines in our hearts, drawing us out of darkness and re-creating us as children of the light. “New creation” means that our Christian life is God's liturgy in us, where we are co-workers with God.

We should also pay close attention to the following verse: **Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule, upon the Israel of God.** What is “the Israel of God”? Since the Apostle is writing to Christians, it is quite obvious that “the Israel of God” refers to the community of believers in Christ—the Church! Saint Paul sees the Good News as the work of God by which the Gentiles were received into the fold of God's people; the “dividing wall” between Israel and the Gentiles has fallen down, and “Israel” was extended into encompassing both Jews and non-Jews, and, potentially, the entire world. Ultimately, then, what matters is no longer blood lineage (as the Apostle writes at Gal 3:28: “neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor male and female”), but rather entering the

people of God, “the people who seek the Face of the God of Jacob” (Ps. 24:6), where all are one in Christ Jesus.

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Holy Gospel according to Luke

(Luke 12:16-21) The Lord spoke this parable: “The land of a rich man brought forth plentifully; and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ And he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns, and build larger ones; and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, be merry.’ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.” As He said this, Jesus called out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

The man in today’s Gospel receives a very harsh verdict from God: “you *fool!*” What was so foolish in what he had done? The land had given him good crops—a blessing, something to be happy and thankful about! And, to make sure that the abundant crop would be stored properly and not go to waste, the man was planning to expand his storage facilities. A good, praiseworthy plan! It would have been foolish *not* to have acted in this way. And, as a matter of fact, the parable does not say that God objected to any of the good and reasonable things the man did.

There is something else, however, that is “foolish.” The man seems to have measured his calling as a human being with only one measure: wealth. He says, “**Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, be merry!**” Now, this is foolish: to think that one’s “soul”, one’s deepest longing, can be satisfied with grains or gold or eating and drinking. It is foolish, first, because we are “wired” in such a way that the meaning of who we are is found in God. We are made “after the image of God”—that is, in relation to a godly prototype; and God has placed in us the thirst for eternity. No amount of earthly goods can fill our deep longing; and looking for all kinds of substitutes for God only leads to a pathological craving and abuse of wealth, power, and pleasure. It is foolish.

“God” is not confined to “religion”; He is, rather, present in all aspects of our lives. One sure way to experience God is by extending ourselves to our neighbor. Here we see that the man acted foolishly because he completely left out his fellow humans. “**Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years**” suggests that wealth was to him a matter of *him* enjoying *his* little fortune. But did he not know that the tastiest meal is a *shared* meal? The Gospel hints at another possible use of wealth when it says “**This night your soul is required of you. Now, the things you have prepared, whose will they be?**” If the man had included his neighbor in his elaborate management plan, wealth would have become an asset. Whatever is shared enriches our soul—and it is our soul, our heart, that stands before the Lord in judgment.

Since we are embarking upon the fasting journey to the feast of Christ’s Nativity, today’s Gospel reading is a reminder that fasting cannot be divorced from opening ourselves up for God and for our neighbor. To fast without seeking God is to completely miss the point. Let us not be foolish!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **NATIVITY FAST: November 15 — December 25.** The Nativity Fast is milder than Lent. Although the traditional fasting discipline is observed on most days, Saturdays and Sundays we can eat fish (and some also eat it on Tuesdays and Thursdays). During the period of the Forefeast (December 20th through 24th), the traditional fasting discipline is observed.'
- **Today: meeting of the parish council.**
- **From our bishop**

Dear beloved in Christ,

Both body and soul are involved in the work of our salvation. This is why there is a fasting period prior to any great feast. Fasting is part of the regimen of noetic healing prescribed by the holy fathers along with vigils and prayer. Let me offer an extended quote from Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos that is useful for our understanding on these important therapies. He writes,

Combined with spiritual fasting, bodily fasting introduces man to the atmosphere of cleansing, that is, the struggle to cleanse the heart from the passions of self-indulgence, avarice, boastfulness, and selfishness. In Adam there was balance before the Fall: the nous was inspired by the Grace of God; it nurtured the body and then radiated the Grace to all creation. After the Fall, however, the nous was darkened. The body is fed from the creation rather than from the nous, and bodily passions show up. The soul is fed from the body, and this creates psychological passions. With fasting, vigils, and prayer these contrary-to-nature functions are corrected. This is why cleansing, illumination, and deification are expressed through these gifts.

In this way, the feast of the Incarnation of our Lord and Savior is not a mere historical remembrance but the nativity of our Lord and Savior within our own heart. This is the purpose of the fast and the feast.

Yours in Christ,



Rt. Rev. Bishop THOMAS (Joseph)

Auxiliary Bishop, Diocese of Oakland, Charleston, and the Mid-Atlantic

Remember in your prayer

LIVING: Fr. Paisius (recovering from 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.