



## SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese  
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### TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

24 November 2019

*TONE 6, Eothinon 1—Leavetaking of the Entry of the Theotokos Into the Temple. Great Martyr Catherine of Alexandria (305-313). Clement, bishop of Rome; Hieromartyr Peter, bishop of Alexandria; Hermogenes, bishop of Agrigentum; Martyrs Philoumenos and Christopher; Martyr Alexander of Corinth. Great Martyr Mercurius of Cæsarea in Cappadocia (3rd c.).*

#### FIRST ANTIPHON

*Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised: in the city of our God and in His holy mountain. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Refrain: Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us! God is known in her palaces for a refuge. As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God. (R.:) Glory... Now and ever... (R.:)*

#### SECOND ANTIPHON

*The Most High hath sanctified His tabernacle. Holiness and majesty are in His sanctuary. (R.:) Save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead, as we chant to Thee, "Alleluia"! This is the gate of the Lord, the righteous shall enter through it. (R.:) Holy is Thy temple, and wonderful in righteousness. (R.:) Glory... Now and ever... (Only begotten Son ...)*

#### THIRD ANTIPHON

- *Even the rich among the people shall entreat thy favor. TROPARION OF THE ENTRANCE*
- *The King's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. TROPARION*
- *Virgins shall be brought to the King after her, her companions shall be brought unto Thee.*

TROPARION OF THE ENTRANCE OF THE THEOTOKOS (Tone 4): Today is the prelude of God's good will and the heralding of the salvation of mankind. In the temple of God, the Virgin is present openly, and she proclaimeth Christ unto all. To her, then, with a great voice let us cry aloud: Rejoice, O thou fulfilment of the Creator's dispensation!

#### LITTLE ENTRANCE

*Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ! Save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead, as we chant to Thee, "Alleluia"!*

TROPARION OF THE RESURRECTION (Tone 6): When Mary stood at Thy grave, looking for Thy sacred body, angelic powers shone above Thy revered tomb; and the soldiers who were to keep guard became as dead men. Thou led Hades captive and wast not tempted thereby. Thou didst meet the Virgin and didst give life to the world, O Thou, Who art risen from the dead, O Lord, glory to Thee.

TROPARION OF ENTRANCE OF THE THEOTOKOS (Tone 4): Today is the prelude of God's good will and the heralding of the salvation of mankind. In the temple of God, the Virgin is present openly, and she proclaimeth Christ unto all. To her, then, with a great voice let us cry aloud: Rejoice, O thou fulfilment of the Creator's dispensation!

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 FOR THE ENTRANCE OF THE THEOTOKOS INTO THE TEMPLE (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: O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance.  
To Thee, O Lord, have I cried, O my God.*

*The Reading is from the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Ephesians*

(Eph 2:4-10) **Brethren: God who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, brought us to life with Christ (by grace you have been saved!), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved, through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—not because of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that God has prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.**

This Sunday's Gospel reading speaks of a young man who was very rich. The Apostle reading also speaks of riches—but of *God's* way of being rich. Indeed, we hear that our God is “rich,” that He holds “immeasurable riches.” Yet, God is immeasurably rich *in mercy*; His immeasurable riches are matched by His immeasurable generosity and by “the great love with which He loved us.” As we hear at Confession: “Just as Your greatness is beyond compare, so also is Your mercy without limit.”

God's way of being rich is the exact opposite of petty and calculated exchange. He does not balance a budget of give-and-take; rather, “**out of His great love with which He loved us,**” He squandered His trust on us “**even when we were dead through our trespasses.**” He did not share His glory only with the angels: He came to us—creatures “dead in our sins, “following the spirit of disobedience,” “children of wrath” (read Eph 2:1-3, the verses right before our passage)—and He took us and “seated us with Him in the heavenly places.” Unlike the rich man in today's Gospel, God squanders His riches on a humanity that is so often sick, disgusting, and as good as dead, dresses us

in the garment of glory, seats us at His rich-laden table, and feeds us the food of immortality. Think of what we experience in the Eucharist!

All of the above, of course, happens “in Christ.” It is, in other words, not the fruit of our goodness, but the gift of God’s generosity; not of our own making, but the Maker’s grace of re-creating us “in Christ.” What, then, is our part? Saint Paul leaves us with a stunning answer: our part is simply (although it is not simple at all!) *not to miss* the many opportunities to perform the good works that God has prepared beforehand. Even our good works are laid before us as a gift, meeting us with every new day: our duty is not to avoid “walking in them.”

## TODAY’S GOSPEL READING

*The reading is from the Holy Gospel according to Luke*

(Luke 18:18-27) At that time, a man came testing Jesus and asking, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery. Do not kill. Do not steal. Do not bear false witness. Honor your father and mother.’” And the man said, “All these I have observed from my youth.” And when Jesus heard it, he said to him, “One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” But when the man heard this he became sad, for he was very rich. Jesus, seeing him sad, said, “How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” Those who heard it said, “Then who can be saved?” Jesus said, “What is impossible for human beings is possible for God.”

Here is a man who, by any standards of human morality, is pretty decent: he does not cheat on his wife, he behaves well with his parents, he does not steal, he does not slander or bring false accusations against others, did kill anyone, etc. There probably other vices he has managed to avoid. He is, moreover, a deeply religious person (his concern here is “how to inherit eternal life”), who shows appropriate respect for teachers of the Law (note how politely he addresses Jesus). Moreover, he’s acted like that “since his youth”! A decent person, whom we would do well to emulate.

And yet, even while we recite the litany of this man’s qualities, the Gospel seems to sets him forth as an example of *what to avoid*. The word this man receives from Christ comes as a hard blow to his self-esteem: what he has been doing is far from enough, and what he needs to do is impossibly hard for him. A very depressing answer, indeed, because Jesus puts his finger on a raw nerve: this man was very rich (and liked it), and he would have to give everything up. “The man heard this he became sad, for he was very rich.”

Had the man not been terribly attached to money, but instead sexually promiscuous, the answer would probably been different; perhaps something like “One thing you still lack. Cut out your promiscuity, start living in chastity as of right now, and you will have treasure in heaven.” And the man would have become sad, imagining himself unable to remain faithful to a single woman (chastity in marriage) or faithful to a vow of abstinence (as in monastic chastity). Had he been under the control of vanity, Jesus would have proposed the practice of humility; had he been plagued by anger or violence, the answer would have pointed to *that* problem, and proposed the appropriate spiritual medicine.

In short, the Gospel is not about a particular rich man unwilling to part with his riches; and it is not singling out riches as the major impediment to salvation. In truth, the Gospel applies to each and every one of us. There is no “objective” scale of sins, and no “objective” greatest sin: the greatest sin is always *my* sin. And the word of Christ is not easy to swallow: “it is easier for a camel to go

through the eye of a needle than for *you* to enter the kingdom of God.” When Jesus spoke these words to the rich man, those around him were positively shocked: “In this case, who can be saved?” Obviously, nobody; it is, as the Lord states, “impossible for human beings.”

Before speaking to the rich man about his salvation, the Lord points to the goodness of God: “No one is good but God alone!” We should therefore not react like the rich man, who became sad and preferred to leave as soon as he realized that God was not offering him a confirmation of his decent life, but a call to radical change. Note the encouragement: the very impossibility of our salvation and life in God is made possible for us by God himself. The call of today’s Gospel is echoed by our Liturgy, again and again: “let us entrust ourselves and all our life to Christ our God ... for You are a good God and You love humankind”! In other words, deny yourself and your sins, entrust yourself to Christ, allow Him to clothe you with His grace, allow Him to make possible that which is impossible.

The Nativity of Christ for which we have started our preparations is the joyous event of the beginning of our salvation: the Virgin prepares to give birth, the Son of God prepares to become one of us, our salvation draws near.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Advent.** The rule of fasting is to use these 40 days to re-orient ourselves on “the one thing needful”—the presence of God—by a richer prayer life in church and in private, by seeking peace and reconciliation with God and neighbor, by practicing charity, and by simplifying our diet (abstaining from animal products). Father Bogdan will be available for confessions on Saturdays before and after Vespers, and Sundays after Divine Liturgy.
- **TOYS FOR TOTS.** As we prepare to meet Christ, the Coming One—God’s gift to all humanity—we have the opportunity to bring some happiness to children in needy families. Please place your gift of a toy (20 dollars max.) in the special box. These toys will be delivered to *Toys for Tots*, a program run by the US Marine Corps.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15: SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR ADULTS

### *The Place of Imagination in Orthodox Spirituality*

We will read and try to understand a text from the compendium of ascetical writings known as the *Philokalia*, which deals with the place of imagination in personal prayer.

## 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.