



## SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH

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

1 December 2019

*TONE 7, Eothison 2—Venerable Botolph of Iken (7th c.). Prophet Nahum (7th c. B.C.). Righteous Philaret the Merciful of Amnia in Asia Minor (792). Theoklitos, archbishop of Lakedaemonia.*

#### 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 THE RESURRECTION (Tone 7): Thou didst shatter death by Thy Cross, Thou didst open paradise to the thief; Thou didst turn the sadness of the ointment-bearing women into joy. And didst bid Thine Apostles proclaim a warning, that Thou hast risen O Christ, granting to the world great mercy.

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 PREPARATION OF THE NATIVITY (Tone 3): On this day the Virgin cometh to the cave to give birth to \* God the Word ineffably, \* Who was before all the ages. \* Dance for joy, O earth, on hearing \* the gladsome tidings; \* with the Angels and the shepherds now glorify Him \* Who is willing to be gazed on \* as a young Child Who \* before the ages is God.

## 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 2:14-22) **Brethren:** Christ is our peace, He who made both groups one and broke down the dividing wall of enmity, through His flesh, abolishing the Law with its commandments and legal claims, in order to create in Himself one new person in place of the two, thus establishing peace, and to reconcile both with God, in one body, through the cross, putting that enmity to death by it. He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near, for through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone. Through Him the whole structure is held together and grows into a temple sacred in the Lord; in Him you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

The two groups that are mentioned in this text are the people of Israel and the Gentiles. For the longest time God had been erecting and strengthening a fence around Israel, to keep them—or, rather, *to train them*—as his “treasured possession” (Exod 19:5), as the people chosen to bear witness of living with God before all the families of the earth. With the advent of Christ, however, that dividing wall is no longer necessary and must be abolished, so that both groups are joined into the One Church: both Jews and Gentiles, all those who confess that God has visited His people, becoming flesh for our sake. Saint Paul does not insist on the newness that this tearing down of the wall brought to Israel; since he is writing to a community of Gentile Christians in Asia Minor, his message is tailored primarily for former pagans—for people like us.

We were “far off” from God, and are given most intimate “access to the Father”; we were “strangers and sojourners,” and are now counted as “fellow citizens with the holy ones.” In short, we have been taken in, adopted into Israel, and God no longer differentiates between Israel, his first born, and the Gentiles: as long as any Jews or Gentiles are “in Christ,” they are equally part of the people of God.

Of course, the gate of Baptism through which one enters “in one Spirit” into the new reality of the One Church, is merely the beginning. Our calling is to become “a temple sacred in the Lord,” to “grow into a dwelling place of God.” In other words, Jews and Gentiles alike are called to be, individually, what the ancient Temple was: a receptacle and abode of the divine Glory. We are called to be, individually, what the Theotokos is: a Christ-bearer; or, like the bread and the wine that we bring to the altar, called to be transformed by the Holy Spirit, Who does not shy away from descending upon us and our gifts.

## TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

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

(Luke 18:35-43) **At that time,** as Jesus drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging; and hearing a multitude going by, he inquired what this meant. They told him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.” And he cried, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” And those who were

in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent; but he cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” And Jesus stopped, and commanded him to be brought to Him; and when he came near, Jesus asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” He said, “Lord, let me receive my sight.” And Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.” And immediately he received his sight and followed Him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

Today’s Gospel tells of a spectacular conversion: a man becomes a follower of Jesus after the Lord cures him of his blindness miraculously, in an instant. If the Church has chosen this text for public reading, there is probably much to be learned from the healing of the blind man.

Let us be attentive, first of all, to the way in which the Lord teaches by his deeds. As Jesus enters Jericho, a multitude of people has gathered, so that this visit has turned into a spectacular procession, with crowds that need to be managed effectively. In this tumult, we find a blind beggar, confused about what is going on; nobody wants to see him, everyone is intent on seeing Christ. “**Those who were in front**”—perhaps some of the apostles, perhaps others who were “organizing” and “running” Jesus’ visit to Jericho—find the blind beggar with his insistent yelling an irritating distraction to the great event. So “**they rebuked him,**” trying to keep things orderly and carry on smoothly with the grand procession. *But this is not the way of the Lord.* Without saying much, gently but firmly, he stops everything and asks those self-appointed leaders and body-guards to bring the blind man to him. There is here an effective lesson for them and for us: the Church must never forget about “the little ones,” those in pain, those in need, those on the margins—for God sees and goes searching for all lost sheep.

The beggar with his physical blindness is a reminder that of all of us, fallen humans, are “blind” and “deaf” to God. According to the Psalmist, those who fall into idolatry become like the idols they worship in place of God: like the gods of stone, metal, or wood who “have eyes but do not see, and have ears but do not hear” (Ps 135:15-18; Ps 113:12-16/ 115:4-8), the sons and daughters of Adam have all fallen short of God’s glory (Rom 3:23)—the Glory that feeds us the true life for which we were created—and have become deaf and dumb: we “have eyes but do not see, and have ears but do not hear” (Jer 5:21; Isa 6:10). To be “saved,” that is, to be healed by having our heart of stone turned into a heart that can taste and see the Glory of God (Ezek 11:19; 36:26; Jer 31:33) is only possible by divine intervention.

This man is faithful—unafraid, unashamed, stubborn in his faith. He cries out to the Lord “**Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!**” Even when some are trying to silence him, he does not give up. He knows what he wants, and he has confidence that the Lord is the right one to ask for it: armed with this faith, he bulldozes his way through the hostilities of those around him, and *asks, and does indeed receive.* He knew where to go to find healing. And since “the Lord is the same, yesterday and today” (Heb 13:8), we should learn from the blind man that the same Lord can also bring salvation *to me* and *today.*

The Lord asks the blind man gently and very politely: **What do you want me to do for you?** A somewhat strange, or even weird, question... The man is blind, it shouldn't be so difficult to figure out what he wants: to see! But God also asks us this very same question. Why are you in Church? Why do you call yourself a Christian—**what do you want me to do for you?** And sometimes we give the wrong answer: we may be here out of habit, or for the sake of family tradition and social routine, perhaps to meet like-minded people, perhaps out of fear ... perhaps we've not even given it much thought. The question still stands: do you want to be healed, do you want to be saved? The blind man is our guide: “**Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me! Let me receive my sight!**”

Essentially, what is the blind man's faith? He believes it is the Lord—the God of Israel—who can do anything; but he also believes that this Lord is “the Son of David”—a true human being, one who feels what we feel, one who knows and sympathizes with our weakness. This is the faith of the Church.

Finally, it is remarkable that the man uses his very “profession” to gain salvation. The beggar becomes a beggar for Christ, just like the fishermen become fishers of men, and just like the thief on the cross steals Paradise with his confession of faith. Whatever we have and whoever we are can be placed in the service of Christ, so that we, too, can be saved.

## 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:** Ann (Wilson), surgery; 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.