



SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH

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SECOND SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT

15 March 2020

TONE 6 / Eothinon 6— **St. Gregory Palamas.** Synaxis of the Venerable Fathers of the Kiev Caves Lavra. Martyr Agapius and those with him, at Cæsarea in Palestine (303). Hieromartyr Alexander of Side, in Pamphylia (270-275). Martyr Nicander of Egypt (ca. 302). Apostle Aristoboulos of the Seventy, first bishop of Britain; New-martyrs Manuel of Crete and Parthenios.

FIRST ANTIPHON

The Lord is King, and hath clothed Himself with majesty. The Lord is robed; He is girded with strength. For He has established the world so that it shall never be moved. **Refrain:** Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us! *Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? Who can cause all his praises to be heard? Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy.* (R:) *Glory... Now and ever... (R:)*

SECOND ANTIPHON

Let them praise the Lord for His mercies, and for His wonderful works to the children of men. **Refrain:** Save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead, as we chant to Thee, "Alleluia"! *Let them exalt Him in the congregation of the people, and praise Him in the seat of the elders.* (R:) *The eyes of the Lord are upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy; to hear the groaning of the prisoners, to loose the sons of the slain.* (R:) *Glory... Now and ever... (Only begotten ...)*

AT THE LITTLE ENTRANCE

*Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ!
Save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead, who sing 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 ST. GREGORY PALAMAS (Tone 8): O Star of Orthodoxy, support of the Church and its teacher, O comeliness of ascetics, and incontestable champion of those who speak in theology, Gregory the wonder-worker, the pride of Thessalonica and preacher of grace, implore thou constantly for the salvation of our souls.

TROPARION OF ANTHONY THE GREAT (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 OF THE FOREFEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION (Tone 8): To thee, the Champion Leader, do I offer thanks of victory, O Theotokos, thou who hast delivered me from terror; but as thou that hast that power invincible, O Theotokos, thou alone can set me free: from all forms of danger free me and deliver me, that I may cry unto thee: "Rejoice, O Bride without Bridegroom."

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

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

The Reading is from the Epistle to the Hebrews

(Heb 1:10-2:3) "At the beginning, O Lord, you established the earth, and the heavens are the works of Your hands. They will perish, but You remain; and they will all grow old like a garment. You will roll them up like a cloak, and like a garment they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will have no end." But to what angel has He ever said, "Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies a stool for Your feet"? Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation? Therefore, we must pay closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For if the message declared by angels was valid, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and attested to us by those who heard Him.

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

From the Holy Gospel according to Mark

(Mk 2:1-12) At that time, when Jesus returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that He was at home. And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room for them, not even about the door; and He was preaching the Word to them. And they came, bringing to Jesus a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him; and when they had made an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Now, some of the scribes were sitting there, reasoning in their hearts, "Why does this man speak thus? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" And immediately Jesus, perceiving in His spirit that they thus reasoned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you reason thus in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your pallet and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" – He said to the paralytic – "I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home." And he rose, and immediately took up the pallet and went out before them all. So that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

A well-known Gospel story is recounted here. A paralytic brought to Jesus receives his healing almost instantaneously, in a spectacular manner ("all were amazed and glorified God, saying, 'We never saw anything like this!'"). No less impressive is the fact that Christ knows what people are "reasoning in their hearts"—"immediately Jesus, perceiving in His spirit that they thus reasoned within themselves

...” And who is it that knows our heart—our hidden inner self—even more intimately than we know it ourselves? God alone.

Christ’s adversaries ask themselves **“Who can forgive sins but God alone?”** They decide from this that Jesus is blaspheming, since He cannot possibly be who He says He is; later on, when faced with the reality of so many undeniable healings and miracles, they grant that something happened but accuse Him of being possessed and working with the power of demons. We, however, understand that Jesus heals and forgives because He is truly God. Because He is truly God He shows us the true Image of God: what else does God desire but our healing and return to fullness of Life?

But it is also important to pay attention to another detail of the story. **Today’s Gospel offers us a beautiful image of what the Christian community should be.** Note the relationship between the paralytic and the four men who bring him in on a pallet. Undoubtedly, these are real friends, ready to go to any length for their afflicted friend. After making their way through the massive crowd (surely not an easy task) and realizing that it was simply impossible to advance an inch further towards Jesus, they even **“removed the roof, ... made an opening, and let down the pallet on which the paralytic lay.”**

These four have not left their neighbor behind in hopes of “finding God”: that kind of seeking for God would have been spiritual delusion. What enables them to find the true God, is, rather, precisely the dedication with which they take their paralytic friend to Jesus. When they have finally managed to present the paralytic to the Lord, the Evangelist writes the following: **“And when Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven!’”** Note: **“when Jesus saw *their* faith!”** The Lord always emphasizes the importance of faith; only this time it is the faith *of the others* that saves the paralytic.

Christianity “by oneself” is a fiction, and can be a dangerous delusion. If we are to be saved, we are saved by cooperating with God’s grace and in relation to others; it is only sin that is strictly “individual.” The Church strives to embody the model set forth in today’s Gospel. Through fasting and feasting *we* journey, *we* praise God, *we* commit to God ourselves and each other, *we* give thanks, and *we* draw near the chalice in faith and love. In short, we are exercising ourselves into becoming “we”: the Body of Christ made up of many members, and are learning to call God not only “my God” but “our Father.”

We exercise this manner of existence—being joined together as members of the Body of Christ—when we gather *as the Church*, when we fast *together*, pray *together*, and are *together* called to receive Communion. When our sins and failings estrange us from the Body, we repent—individually—in order to return to fuller communion in Christ. These are the words the priest speaks at Confession: *“Show mercy now on Your servant, and grant to him/her an image of repentance, forgiving all his/sins, whether voluntary or involuntary. Reconcile and unite him/ her to Your Holy Church, through Jesus Christ our Lord!”*

ST. GREGORY PALAMAS ON THE TRANSFIGURATION LIGHT

If an irrational animal happened to be present on the mountain [of the Transfiguration], would it have sensed that light brighter than the sun? I do not think so. For the glory of the Lord that shone upon the shepherds at the nativity of Christ is not written to have been perceived by the flocks. ... If not by the sensible capacity—for then even the animals would have been able to see it—then by the intelligible capacity that comprehends through the senses; or rather not even that, for every eye, in particular those nearby, would have seen the light that was brighter than the sun. If, then, it was not seen not even through the intelligible capacity, then that light is not strictly speaking sensible. And if it is not sensible, it is eternal; for the divine light, which is also called in many passages ‘the glory of God,’ is without beginning or end.” (*Triads* 1.3.27)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dear friends,

In these days, when our region is on the verge of a coronavirus contagion, we must be especially mindful of the elderly and the sick or immunocompromised among those who worship at St. Anthony's, but also of those our friends, neighbors and coworkers who are in danger from this virus. Besides, we should try, as much as possible, to reduce the risk of a spike in cases that would overwhelm the hospitals.

With the blessing of our bishop, our parish will be implementing a number of changes to our liturgical life of St Anthony's.

- *for a while, we shall not have our common meals on Wednesdays and Sundays;*
- *for a while, we shall not be kissing icons, the cross, or the priest's right hand – instead, we shall bow or make a prostration before the icon of the Resurrection.*
- *during Lent we will have services only on Wednesday evening and Sunday morning*
- *those who are elderly, sick, or immuno-compromised and those who have regular interaction with elderly or sick persons at home or work are asked to stay home for a while.*
- *those who are younger and healthy are asked to volunteer their time and energy and run errands for those in the parish and their neighborhoods who must stay home.*

Having said all of this, have no doubts about receiving Holy Communion! It is the very Body of Christ, the very substance of the Kingdom of God, which is given to us, as we confess, "for the healing of soul and body" and "for the forgiveness of sins", as well as fuel for a Christian life in good times and bad times.

The letter sent by Metropolitan Joseph ends with these words: "We are likely entering into a time of trial. Our Lord also spoke on that fateful night of the greatest love we can offer, the love of one who lays down his or her life for another. Our health care workers, first responders, and clergy will be asked to courageously put themselves in harm's way to care for and minister to the sick, and they need our prayers and support. We must pray to God to grant wisdom and discernment to the civil authorities of our land. We must pray for the sick and their loved ones. We must use this holy season to repent and grow to love God and our neighbor more fully."

In Christ,

Priest Bogdan Gabriel Bucur

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: Dollie; Don (Dollie's brother); Ann (Wilson), recovering after surgery; Nyal, Jean's son-in-law (motorcycle accident); Joseph Totin; 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: Frank (Seba's brother); 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.