



SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
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SIXTH PASCHAL SUNDAY

("Sunday of the Blind Man")

24 May 2020

TONE 5 / Eothonon 8—*Ven. Simeon the Stylite (the Younger) of the Wonderful Mountain (596). Ven. Nikita the Stylite, Wonderworker of Pereyaslavl'—Zalesskii (786). Martyrs Meletius the General, Stephen, John, and those with them in Galatia (138-161). St. Vincent of Lérins (d. 445)*

FIRST ANTIPHON

Shout with joy to God, all the earth; sing to His Name, give glory to His praises. *Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us! Say to God: How awesome are Thy works; let all the earth worship Thee, and sing to Thee. (R.:) Glory ... Now and ever ... (R.:)*

SECOND ANTIPHON

May God have mercy upon us and bless us, and may He cause His face to shine upon us and have mercy on us. *Save us, O Son of God, who art risen from the dead, as we chant to Thee, Alleluia! That Thy way may be known on earth, Thy salvation among all nations. Let the people give thanks to Thee, O God, let all peoples give thanks to Thee. (R.:) Glory... Now and ever... (Only begotten ...)*

THIRD ANTIPHON

Christ is risen ... with the following verses:

- Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered, let those who hate Him flee from before His face.
- As smoke vanishes, so let them vanish; as wax melts before the fire, so let sinners perish before the Face of God; but let the righteous be glad.
- This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

LITTLE ENTRANCE

In the gathering places bless ye God the Lord from the springs of Israel. Save us, O Son of God, who art risen from the dead, as we chant 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 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 SUNDAY OF THE BLIND MAN (Tone 4): To thee I come, O Christ, blinded in my soul's eyes like the man blind from his birth, and crying unto Thee in repentance: Thou art the Light of transcendent radiance to those who are in darkness!

KONTAKION OF PASCHA (Tone 8): O Christ God, though Thou didst descend into the grave, yet didst Thou overthrow the power of Hades, and rise as an Immortal Conqueror. Thou didst greet the myrrh-bearing women with joy, and to Thine Apostles Thou didst send Thy peace, and to the fallen O Lord, Thou didst bring resurrection.

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Thou, O Lord, shalt keep and preserve us. Save me, Lord, for the godly man has failed.

The Reading is from the Acts of the Apostles

(Acts 16:16-34) In those days, as we Apostles were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by soothsaying. She followed Paul and us, crying, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." And this she did for many days. But Paul was annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, "I charge you in the Name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out that very hour. But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the rulers; and when they had brought them to the magistrates they said, "These men are Jews and they are disturbing our city. They advocate customs which it is not lawful for us Romans to accept or practice." The crowd joined in attacking them; and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely. Having received this charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened and every one's fetters were unfastened. When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out and said, "Men, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their wounds, and he was baptized at once, with all his family. Then he brought them up into his house, and set food before them; and he rejoiced with all his household that he had believed in God.

Starting with Pascha night, much of what we read in the biblical book entitled "The Acts of the Apostles" deals with the resistance posed to the Good News of Christ's death and resurrection for us. Today's reading shows that this fierce opposition is both spiritual and physical, both seen and unseen, both the work of demonic powers and that of human administrators of power. More specifically, we read about the spiritual battle between the apostles and a woman possessed by a

“spirit of divination”—that is, a spirit that gave this woman the ability to foretell the future—and about the sufferings of the apostles at the hand of the city’s economic and political establishment.

The apostles are mocked, beaten, and thrown in jail. The pretext given is, more or less, “disturbance of public order” and spreading ideas considered to be dangerous to the public good. In reality, however, it all boils down to money: the owners of the woman (she was slave), seeing that the apostle had exorcized her, causing her to lose her magical powers, understood **that their hope of gain was gone**. *This* is why they stirred up the crowd; *this* is why the entire city turned against the apostles.

But what was wrong about what the woman was doing? **She followed Paul and us, crying, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation.”** Nevertheless, Saint Paul found it necessary to exorcize the spirit that was working through her, so that she completely lost her magical abilities. Why? Briefly put, because the demon was attempting to subordinate the Good News and the evangelistic work of the apostles to its own influence. By accompanying Paul and Silas and, as it were, “advertising” them as spiritual authorities, the woman was also placing herself with them in the same general category of “spiritual stuff.”

As a matter of fact, pagans never objected to including the God of Israel in the large family of divinities worshipped throughout the Roman Empire; the problem was the stubborn affirmation, by Jews and Christians, that the Lord is the only true God. As such, the demonic strategy we see at work in today’s reading becomes clear: reject the radical message of the Gospel *by relativizing it*, by making it appear as *one among many roads* to self-fulfillment and salvation. As for us, this is what the Church teaches: “What must I do to be saved?” And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”

TODAY’S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Holy Gospel according to John

(John 9:1-38) At that time, when Jesus was passing, He saw a man blind from his birth. And His disciples asked Him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him. I must work the works of Him Who sent me, while it is day; night comes, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” As He said this, he spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle and anointed the man’s eyes with the clay, saying to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam.” So he went and washed and came back seeing. The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar, said, “Is not this the man who used to sit and beg?” Some said, “It is he”; others said, “No, but he is like him.” He said, “I am the man.” They said to him, “Then how were your eyes opened?” He answered, “The man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash’; so I went and washed and received my sight.” They said to him, “Where is He?” He said, “I do not know.” They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. The Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, “He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.” Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for He does not keep the Sabbath.” But others said, “How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?” There was a division among them. So they again said to the blind man, “What do you say about Him, since He has opened your eyes?” He said, “He is a prophet.” The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight, and asked them, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?” His

parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age, he will speak for himself." His parents said this because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if any one should confess Him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, "He is of age, ask him." So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, "Give God the praise; we know that this man is a sinner." He answered, "Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see." They said to him, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?" He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you too want to become His disciples?" And they reviled him, saying, "You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where He comes from." The man answered, "Why, this is a marvel! You do not know where He comes from, and yet He opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, God listens to him. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, He could do nothing." They answered him, "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" And they cast him out. Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him He said, "Do you believe in the Son of God?" He answered, "And who is He, Sir, that I may believe in Him?" Jesus said to him, "You have seen Him, and it is He who speaks to you." He said, "Lord, I believe"; and he worshiped Him.

It is not by an arbitrary decision that the Church assigns readings from the Gospel of John for the period starting with Pascha. Saint John the Evangelist (or "the Seer", or "the Divine") has left us with the most spiritual of the four Gospels; his symbol, befitting his lofty theology, is the eagle. Much of the stories in this Gospel are pointing to a higher truth, one that lies beyond the mere facts that are being narrated. So it is with the story of the paralytic, read a couple of weeks ago. The words of the Kontakion for that Sunday are to the point: *As Thou didst raise up the paralytic of old, so also raise up my soul paralyzed by sins ... so that being saved I may sing to Thee, O gracious Christ!*

So also it is with today's story of the blind man. Note the manner in which Christ heals him: **he spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle and anointed the man's eyes with the clay.** These words send us to the Book of Genesis, where the Creator makes Adam out of the dust of the earth, as a potter would mold a statue out of the clay. We understand that *the same One* who once made Adam from the earth now mercifully "repairs" the broken vessel of His Image. In the words of St. Ephrem the Syrian,

"He is the Creator's Son, whose treasure stores are filled with every benefit. ... With a little mud he showed how, through Him, our dust was fashioned; the soul of the dead man, too, bore witness to Him how, by Him, man's breath is breathed into him. By these latter witnesses He is to be believed to be the Son [of God], the First Principle."

This Sunday's Kontakion reads: *To thee I come, O Christ, blinded in my soul's eyes like the man blind from his birth, and crying unto Thee in repentance: Thou art the Light of transcendent radiance to those who are in darkness!* Thus, the physical healing, spectacular as it was, is only a shadow of the man's coming to see and recognize *Who it is* that heals him. The story ends with a dialogue between Christ and the man, and the latter's response invites us to join in a confession of faith: "Do you believe in the Son of God?" ... He said, "Lord, I believe"; and he worshiped Him.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ORDINATION OF DEACON MARTIN & REOPENING OF ST ANTHONY'S

Dear friends: Christ is risen!

Beautiful news: Deacon Martin will be ordained to the priesthood on Friday June 5, official assignment to be communicated later this summer. Since Bishop Thomas is not able to travel, the service will take place at the cathedral church in Charleston, WV. God willing, Pentecost Vespers and then Matins and Liturgy on Sunday (June 6-7) will be the first time he will be serving as a priest at our altar.

Since Deacon Martin is currently working at the St Moses the Black and the Neighborhood Resilience Program (formerly FOCUS Pittsburgh), he will also be completing his liturgical preparation there with Fr Paul Abernathy. For us, this means that he will not be available in Butler or Knox until Pentecost. For now we have the following schedule of services planned:

- ***In Butler***, we are planning to re-open for the feast of Pentecost on June 7 (after the "stay-at-home" order expires on June 4). The parish council will meet to discuss our plans for Sunday May 31.
- ***In Knox***, Deacon Martin has served Typika on Sunday 5/17. Fr Bogdan will serve Divine Liturgy for the feast of the Lord's Ascension on Thursday, May 28. Saturday Vespers may also resume.
- ***After Pentecost*** we will determine whether it is prudent to reunite with the Knox families who normally worship at St. Anthony's, or whether we should continue to worship separately (by alternating Sunday Liturgies at each location) until Butler county is moved to the "Green Phase."

Gradually returning to regular worship is cause for rejoicing and thanksgiving; but it will also bring challenges. We must all remember, as the Apostle says, to "receive each other," just as Christ has received all of us into the glory of God (Rom 15:7), to be patient with each other's weaknesses, and to refrain from judgment and gossip. Let these two verses resound in our minds and shape our attitude: 1 Tim 1:15 ("Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am first") and Micah 6:8 ("What does the Lord require of you? ... To love mercy and to walk humbly with your God").

*In Christ,
Fr Bogdan*

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: Dollie; Mother Barbara (recovering after surgery); Maura (Andronic); Don (Dollie's brother); Ann (Wilson), recovering after her latest hospital visit; Nyal, Jean's son-in-law (motorcycle accident); Joseph Totin; Ion, Marius & Katherine (Stan); Serbanescu and Becker families; Gabriel; Charitini; Stella & Dimitrios; Christine (Abraham); Dollie; Venetia; Maura; Ann; Ed, Peter, John, Jonathan and Joanna; Andrei; Kent, Bob, David (relatives of Jean); Stelian; Diane); Susannah; Ed Sr (Totin).

DEPARTED: Dragos (friend of Fr Bogdan); Karen (Jane Best's daughter); 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.

We are very grateful for your continued financial support, which allows St. Anthony's to remain current with its obligations.