



SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
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THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

28 June 2020

Tone 2 / Eothinon 3— *The holy and wonderworking Unmercenaries Cyrus and John (412). Ven. Xenophon, Abbot of Robeiksk (Novgorod—1262). Ven. Sergius and Herman, Wonderworkers of Valaam (ca. 1353). St. Paul, Physician of Corinth. Hieromartyr Basil (1918). Holy Martyr Pappias (4th c.).*

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 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 ...)

THIRD ANTIPHON: THE BEATITUDES

In Thy kingdom remember us, O Lord, when Thou comest in Thy kingdom. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and speak all kinds of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven!

THE 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 2): When Thou didst submit Thyself unto death, O Thou deathless and immortal One, then Thou didst destroy hell with Thy godly power; and when Thou didst raise the dead from beneath the earth all the powers of heaven did cry aloud unto Thee: “O Christ, Thou giver of life, glory to Thee!

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 OF ORDINARY SUNDAYS (Tone 4): O protection of Christians that cannot be put to shame, mediation unto the Creator most constant, O despise not the suppliant voices of those who have sinned; but be thou quick, O good one, to come unto our aid, who in faith cry unto thee: Hasten to intercession, and speed thou to make supplication, thou who dost ever protect, O Theotokos, them that honor thee.

TODAY’S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon: *The Lord is my strength and my song. The Lord has chastened me sorely.*

The Reading is from the Epistle to the Romans

(Rom. 5:1–10) **Brethren: since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us. While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Why, one will hardly die for a righteous man—though perhaps for a good man one will dare even to die. But God shows His love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we are now justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by His life. Not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom we have now received our reconciliation.**

In explaining what Christ has done for humankind, Saint Paul writes to the Christians at Rome that, through the Lord Jesus Christ, we are given **access to God’s grace** and the possibility of **sharing the glory of God**. A few lines further he offers a different explanation: through Christ’s blood we are **saved from the wrath of God**. The lofty idea of “sharing the glory of God”—being transformed, that is, being made holy—seems utterly separate from the frightful notion of “God’s wrath” being appeased by the blood of Jesus’ sacrifice. How are these two images both true and compatible, and why would the holy Apostle write in both these ways?

Saint Paul is expressing his Christian faith and theology by drawing on the Holy Scriptures of Israel. It is in the Old Testament, therefore, that we should first look for the meaning of “glory” and “blood,” and seek to understand their connection.

Ancient Israel had a sacrificial religion: sacrifices of many kinds (oxen, lambs, birds) were brought to the temple, for a variety of reasons. It is not that God’s wrath needed to be “appeased” by the blood of animals; rather, by offering a sacrifice, the giver acknowledged his wrongdoing and symbolically offered himself to God. The priests who brought the sacrifices and prayers of the people before God did this with a precise understanding: **“This is the thing which the Lord has spoken; do it, so that the**

glory of the Lord may appear among you” (Leviticus 9:6). In short, the point of sacrifices and prayers was to be able to receive “the glory of God.” But what is this “glory”?

“Glory” is, in Scripture, much more than some vague “honor” given to God. The “glory” is the concrete way in which God manifests himself as a fiery presence to the patriarchs and prophets. Whenever the glory of God manifests itself, the receiver is changed. So, for instance, after his face-to-face with God, “like a friend speaks to a friend” (Exodus 34), the face of Moses becomes intensely luminous. This is what “glorification” is.

And what is the “wrath”? Well, it is none other than the glory of God experienced as a consuming (rather than cleansing and illumining) fire when one is not properly disposed or prepared to meet God. So, for instance, the same glory that Moses sees as the burning bush (Exodus 3) sometimes descends in judgment as a destructive fire against slanderers and persecutors; the same glory of God that guides the fugitive Hebrews as a luminous pillar, holds the incoming Egyptian army at bay. This is the “wrath of God.”

Let us, then, return to today’s Epistle. Saint Paul speaks about the same reality—what living in Christ “does to us”—in two different ways, both of them soundly rooted in the life of ancient Israel. Through Christ’s sacrifice on our behalf, we are no longer enemies of God, and, thus, we are becoming more and more “compatible” with God—“we are saved from the wrath of God.” Being saved from the wrath of God, **“we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God.”** Our hope is for the glorification that will encompass soul and body in the renewed world of the universal Resurrection. But that hope is rooted in the joy that we start experiencing here and now.

TODAY’S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew

(Mat 6:22-33) **“The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then, the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! ‘No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.’ Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.**

Today’s Gospel invites us to adopt the correct perspective on reality, to look at reality with the right “eyes.” This is, indeed, crucial: as the Lord puts it, **if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then, the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!** We are urged to *see clearly* something that is not evident to those outside the faith.

It all starts with the proclamation at the very beginning of Christ’s preaching: *the Kingdom of heaven is at hand!* Even though the full manifestation of the Kingdom of God will occur only with the

Second Coming of the Lord, and although we pray “Thy Kingdom come!”, this is *already* a reality-in-progress, and we are *already* citizens of that Kingdom. For Christians, this faith brings with itself a radically new way of looking at reality.

Fundamental to the new perspective is the insight that God’s presence (this is what “the Kingdom of God” means) pervades all of reality. “God” and “our life” are not separate realms; God is at work in the very midst of our mundane reality, and we are to be His co-workers within the concrete circumstances of our lives—involving Him in our everyday negotiation of time, money, clothes, food, daily practices, family, friends, etc. When we invite God into our lives (and we do that as we pray: “Spirit of truth: *come and dwell in us!*” or “Our Father: *Thy will be done!*”), our reality is rearranged, reoriented. It may not be as radical as it was with the Apostles, who left their homes and jobs, eventually left to preach the Gospel elsewhere, and finally gave their lives in martyrdom. But a change should happen, because, essentially, we are to practice what today’s Gospel teaches: **“Strive first for the Kingdom of God, and all these things will be given to you as well!”**

We are not told to become careless about our daily life, our basic needs, our responsibilities: we are still *in this world*, and, in fact, called to make a difference in *this world*, in *this society*, and in *this time*. We are called, however, to live with the lofty perspective that comes from knowing ourselves to be citizen of the Kingdom-to-come: knowing that we are dear to God (“**of more value**” than anything else, says the Gospel) and that God looks at us with a parent’s love and care (“**your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things**”); and knowing above all that the sun of the Resurrection has already dawned, and that its full light will soon transfigure and restore this valley of tears to its former glory as the Garden of Eden.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

TODAY: Annual Parish Meeting. We will start our meeting in church immediately after Liturgy. There is one opening on the parish council. Please consider that this "administrative stuff" is a ministry to others: time, energy, and know-how spent so that we may all be able to pray, learn, and fellowship together safely and in good order, in a building that is well maintained.

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: Michael (Stephine's husband); Vassila (Georgia's godmother); Dollie; Mother Barbara; Maura (Andronic); Don (Dollie's brother); Ann (Wilson); Nyal, Jean's son-in-law (motorcycle accident); Joseph Totin; Ion, Marius & Katherine (Stan); Serbanescu and Becker families; Gabriel; Charitini; Stella & Dimitrios; Christine (Abraham); Venetia; Maura; Ann; Ed, Peter, John, Jonathan and Joanna; Andrei; Kent, Bob, David (relatives of Jean); Diane; Susannah; Ed Sr (Totin); Aaron (Wathall) & family.

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.