



SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
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FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

5 July 2020

Tone 3 / Eothinon 4—*venerable Athanasius, the founder of monasticism on Mt Athos. Venerable Lampados of Irenoupolis; Hieromartyr Cyprian of Mount Athos; synaxis of the 23 martyrs of Lesvos; uncovering of relics of Sergios the wonderworker of Radonezh*

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 3): Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad, for the Lord hath done a mighty act with His own arm. He hath trampled down death by death, and become the first-born from the dead. He hath delivered us from the depths of Hades, granting the world great mercy.

TROPARION OF ST ATHANASIUS THE ATHONITE (Tone 3): The Angels' ranks were awed by thy life in the flesh, * how, though corporeal, and clad with earthly clay, * thou didst set forth with courage to invisible wars and wrestlings * and didst boldly smite the hordes * of the demons with mortal wounds. * Wherefore, Christ rewarded thee * with abundant gifts in return. * Entreat Him that our souls find salvation, * O most renowned Father Athanasius.

TROPARION OF SAINT 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 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 saints shall boast in glory, and they shall rejoice upon their beds.
Sing unto the Lord a new song; His praise is in the church of the saints.*

The Reading is from the Epistle to the Galatians

(Galatians 5:22-6:2) **Brethren: The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also follow the Spirit. Let us not be conceited, provoking one another, envious of one another. Brothers, even if a person is caught in some transgression, you who are spiritual should correct that one in a gentle spirit, looking to yourself, so that you also may not be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so you will fulfill the law of Christ.**

To be a Christian is to be a disciple of Christ; to be disciple of Christ means, in Saint Paul's language, to be "a new creation"—no longer a descendant of Adam, determined exclusively by the Fall, but one born of Jesus Christ, emerging out of the waters of Baptism cleansed and reshaped by the Holy Spirit. Descending in the waters of Baptism (just as, in Genesis, over the waters of creation), descending over the gifts of wine and bread, the Holy Spirit "comes and abides in us" and reshapes our entire being in the image of Christ, the Son of God; the Spirit enables those who believe in Jesus as Lord and God become children of God (John 1:12). Just as dough is transformed by the active presence of yeast, so also do Christians grow and mature through the mysterious presence of the Holy Spirit. In short, the Holy Spirit works out a "spiritual leavening" of the entire person.

If all of this sounds abstract, let us remember that theology is verified in practice. As Saint Paul writes to us today, the real test comes when we examine how we "walk the Spirit." Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control: this is how being Christian should look like. As Orthodox, if we believe that we enjoy the fullness of the Christian faith and the fullness of grace, we are held to unique standards. Rather than patting ourselves on the back for "having" the true faith—self-conceit is one of the greatest temptations for us!—we must walk the walk: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Our relation with others, including non-Orthodox and especially those who work against us, must always be governed by "a spirit of gentleness." It is noteworthy that correcting others, even when we are

called to do so, implies some sort of judgment, and therefore always puts us at risk. This is why the Apostle warns: "if someone falls into sin, correct him in a gentle spirit. *And look to yourself: you might be needing forgiveness before the day's out.*"

The spiritual treasure we are entrusted with is not ours. As the Apostles states elsewhere, we carry this treasure in earthen vessels. Therefore, *if we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit!*

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew

(Mat 8:5-13) When he entered Capernaum, a centurion approached him and appealed to him, ' saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, suffering dreadfully." ' He said to him, "I will come and cure him." ' The centurion said in reply, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof; only say the word and my servant will be healed. ' For I too am a person subject to authority, with soldiers subject to me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come here,' and he comes; and to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does it." ' When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, "Truly I say to you: in no one in Israel have I found such faith. ' I say to you, many will come from the east and the west, and will recline with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the banquet in the kingdom of heaven, ' but the children of the kingdom will be driven out into the outer darkness, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth." ' And Jesus said to the centurion, "You may go; as you have believed, let it be done for you." And at that very hour (his) servant was healed.

For those who were around our Lord when He met and spoke to this centurion, as well as for the first hearers and readers of the Gospel, it must have been quite shocking to see a Roman centurion set forth as the model for what it means to lead a life in faith. A Roman officer? But this was, first of all a pagan! Not only that, but also a member of the arrogant and brutal Roman occupation.

And yet, the centurion is our model. The Lord himself commends him in the strongest possible words: "Truly I say to you: in no one in Israel have I found such faith!" *Such faith:* the faith that is proposed as a model for us to emulate. There are quite a few things that are noteworthy.

First, the centurion understands that Christ holds *authority*. He does not mean authority over the ragtag bunch of Jews who follow him. The centurion is convinced that the Lord has supreme divine authority, so as to command that someone be healed. Whether this Roman soldier imagined the paralysis to be demon-induced, or whether he thought in more strictly medical terms, he was convinced of Jesus' authority to "say with the word" and make those words reality at once. "Such faith," indeed!

Imagine also how embarrassing it must have been for a Roman officer to come searching for some Jewish miracle-worker, and beg him for a healing by professing faith in the supernatural authority of said Jew! In short: faith with humility, humble faith.

What is most impressive is the fact that the centurion is not asking a favor for himself, he is interceding for somebody else—namely for his servant! The centurion is impressive because of how he understands his own authority. He cares for his servant, and does not ignore his pain: **my servant is lying at home paralyzed, suffering dreadfully.** For his suffering slave, the officer is willing to embarrass himself in front of the populace only to obtain the miraculous healing. The centurion displays love, humility, and unwavering faith; no wonder the Church proposes him as a model.

When it was written, this text was a statement about how God was calling even pagans to salvation. To quote from a similar text in an earlier chapter of Matthew (Mt 3:9), "do not say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham!"

If we, today, were to think that we are now "safe" because we are precisely those pagans whom God has made sons of Abraham, we would terribly misguided. This Gospel is also a call to humility for us. Let us try the following exercise in actualizing its message: "Truly I say to you, in no one among the

Orthodox have I found such faith"; "do not say to yourselves, 'we are sons of the Orthodox Church! I tell you that God can create Orthodox out of these very stones!"

May God's grace help us become true children of Abraham, true imitators of the centurion, and true disciples of Christ.

ON ST ATHANASIUS THE ATHONITE

St Athanasius of Athos, in holy Baptism named Abraham, was born in the city of Trebezond. He was orphaned at an early age, and being raised by a certain good and pious nun. After the death of his adoptive mother, Abraham was taken to Constantinople, where he was enrolled as a student under the renowned rhetorician Athanasius. He led a strict and abstinent life, and had decided to become a monk. He was eventually received as a novice at the Kyminas monastery, where he was later tonsured him with the name Athanasius. After some years of monastic life, he received a blessing to seek a stricter life as a hermit. He found a place called Melanos, at the very extremity of Athos, far off from the other monastic dwellings.

The monk made himself a cell and began to live an ascetical life in works and in prayer, bravely withstanding terrible attacks from the demons. One night, at prayer, a heavenly light suddenly shone upon him, filling him with an indescribable joy. All oppressing thoughts dissipated, and from his eyes welled up graced tears. The saintly monk now knew that his dwelling on Athos was only a first step.

With generous funding from the Emperor Nicephorus Phocas, Saint Athanasius set about the building of a large monastery on the Holy Mountain, a guest house for wanderers, a hospice for the sick, and other necessary structures. Brethren flocked to the monastery from everywhere within the Byzantine Empire. The saint established at the monastery a cenobitic monastic Rule on the model of the old Palestinian monasteries. Due to the many visions and miracles that St Athanasius experienced through the prayers of the Birthgiver of God, the entire monastic establishment of Mount Athos was deemed, and remains known to this day, as "the garden of the Theotokos."

ANOUNCEMENTS

- **Our Annual Parish Meeting** took place last Sunday. Chris DiNunzio has accepted to serve on the parish council and will be its secretary.
- **Today, 1 PM:** Chrissi (Georgiades) and Jason (McCalpin) are getting crowned in holy matrimony. Anyone who wishes to attend the service is very welcome!

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: Mother Barbara (hospitalized after a fall); Michael (Stephine's husband); Vassila (Georgia's godmother); Dollie; 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).

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.