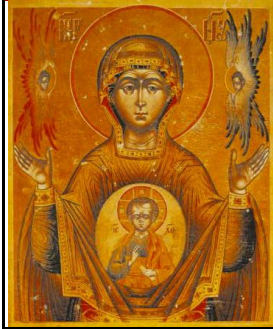


# SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



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## SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST — *Tone 4.*

17 February 2013

Greatmartyr Theodore the Tyro (“the Recruit”)—ca. 306; St. Mariamne, sister of Apostle Philip (1st c.); Venerable Finan, bishop of Lindisfarne (661).

### FIRST ANTIPHON

*It is good to give praise unto the Lord, and to chant unto Thy Name, O Most High! (R.):* 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 hath girt Himself! (R.):* O Son of God Who art risen from the dead, save us who sing 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 and Word of God ...)*

### AT THE LITTLE ENTRANCE

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ! *O Son of God Who art risen from the dead, save us who sing to Thee: “Alleluia”!*

TROPARION OF THE RESURRECTION (Tone 4): Having learned the joyful message of the Resurrection from the angel, the women disciples cast from them their parental condemnation, and proudly broke the news to the disciples, saying: “death hath been spoiled! Christ God is risen, granting the world great mercy!”

TROPARION OF ST. THEODORE (Tone 2): Great are the achievements of faith! In the fountain of flame, as by the water of rest, the holy martyr Theodore rejoiced; for having been made a whole-

burnt offering in the fire, he was offered as sweet bread unto the Trinity. By his prayers, O Christ God, save our souls!

TROPARION OF ST. 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 ORDINARY SUNDAYS (Tone 4): O undisputed intercessor of Christians, the mediatrix who is unrejected by the Creator, turn not away from the voice of our petitions, although we be sinners. Come to us in time with aid, as we cry unto thee in faith, for thou art good. Hasten to us with intercessions, O Theotokos, who dost ever intercede for those who honor thee.

## TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon: *Make your vows to the Lord your God! In Judah God is known.*

*The Reading is from Saint Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians*

(2 Cor 6:16-7:1)

**Brethren, we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters," says the Lord Almighty. Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and make holiness perfect in the fear of God!**

How realistic is God's command that we "**cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit**"? How can we "**make holiness perfect**"? If you think this is just a radical expression of the Apostle, remember the similar words of the Divine Liturgy: "the holy things are for *those who are holy!*"

God seems to require *the impossible!* True. But it is also true that if we are thinking of God "over there" making such requirements of us "over here"—well, then we have misunderstood the whole point. Let us start with the Orthodox confession of faith: "God became man, so that man may be deified." He did not simply order us to "be like God," but rather came among us, became one of us, so as to lead the way to God; and He sent the Holy Spirit to "dwell in us" and assist us on the way.

It is true that the Liturgy proclaims "the holy things are for the holy"; but we also hear at Liturgy, "*You* – that is God – are our sanctification." And the Apostle begins by telling us that we are temples of the living God, and that God lives and moves in us. Not some lofty *concept* of God or some pious emotions, but the living God, the fire unconsumed who comes to purify, enlighten, and transform us.

Yes, God demands the impossible. But He is himself at work in us, to make the impossible possible—to cleanse us from every defilement of body and spirit" and to perfect His holiness in us. The point is simply to allow Him to live and move in us. And the first step is to receive the gift of God Himself given to us in the Holy Eucharist: *Receive the Body of Christ, taste the fountain of immortality!*

## TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

*The Reading is from the Gospel according to Saint Matthew  
(Matt 15:21-28)*

At that time, Jesus went to the district of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and cried, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely possessed by a demon." But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, "Send her away, for she is crying after us." He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." And he answered, "It is not fair to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table." Then Jesus answered her, "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly.

This is a difficult Gospel: Christ first ignores the woman that is begging him; He even ignores the pleas of the disciples; He then says that His ministry is only for Israel, not for pagans. Finally, He even insults the woman: **"it is not fair to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."**

But we know from the witness of the Gospels that Jesus had mercy on those who approached Him. We also know that He was concerned not only with the sons of Israel, since He said, "I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice" (John 10:16). And we know that He was always particularly caring and gentle in His interaction with women (remember the woman caught in adultery: He does not shame her by looking at her when she was most likely half-naked).

All of this leads us to understand that what is going on is a testing of sorts, an exam. A hard exam, which the Canaanite passes with flying colors: she continues to ask, full of faith, despite all the setbacks; she does not give up, she does not become bitter or cynical, she does not respond with insults of her own. She is humble, acknowledging her lowly status ("Yes, Lord, but even the dogs ..."). And she does all of this out of love, because she is not begging for herself but for her daughter!

The Lord's response is unique. **"O, woman!"** he addresses her. This type of exclamation the Gospels reserve only for her. And then, **"great is your faith!"** Nobody ever received such congratulation from the Lord. Finally, **"Be it done for you as you desire!"** Not "according to your faith" (as the Lord addresses several others), but "as you desire". The message is, of course, the same. And yet, this expression, "as you desire," bespeaks a special intimacy. The woman already receives that which the Lord promises His disciples for the future: "You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. ... Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy. In that day you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name" (John 16).

### *Remember in your prayers*

LIVING: Seba, Richard (Johns), Bill, Ed, Peter, Georgia and Scot, Richard (Michaels), Sam, Karen (Joanna's mother), Victoria (Frank's mother), Diane, Sula, Dollie, Dolores (Bingham), Angelica, Karyn, Ignatius and Amy, Jonathan and Joanna, Andrei and Nyoka, Benjamin, John, Hilda (Chris Abraham's mother).

DEPARTED: Edmund (Ed's uncle), Richard, Dolores Patricia (Thompson), Leatrice (Totin), Ed (Joanna's grandfather), Joseph (Rose's father), Fred (Dollie's uncle), Bob (Diane's father), Michael, Gabriel, Eugenia (Cristina's godmother).