

SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

www.orthodoxbutler.org

ADDRESS: 400 S. Sixth Avenue, Butler, PA 16001

PASTOR: Rev. Bogdan Gabriel Bucur

CONTACT: 724.287.6893 (church); 412.390.8208 (priest);

E-mail : frbogdan@orthodoxbutler.org

SUNDAY OF THE LAST JUDGMENT (MEATFARE)— *Tone 3.*

19 February 2012

Apostles of the Seventy Archippus and Philemon, and Martyr Apphias (1st c.); Martyrs Maximus, Theodotus, Hesychius and Asclepiodota, of Adrianopolis (305-311); Sts. Eugene and Macarius, Presbyters and Confessors, at Antioch (363); Ven. Dositheus of Palestine, disciple of Ven. Abba Dorotheus (7th c.); St. Rabulas of Samosata (ca. 530); Martyr Philothea the Monastic of Athens (1589).

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, 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! **Refrain:** 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 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 and become the first born from the dead. He hath delivered us from the depth of hades, granting the world great mercy.

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 FOR MEATFARE SUNDAY (Tone 1): When Thou comest, O God, to earth with glory, and all creatures tremble before Thee, and the river of fire floweth before the altar, and the books are opened and all sins revealed: deliver me then from that unquenchable fire, and make me worthy to stand at Thy right hand, O righteous Judge!

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon: *The Lord is my strength and my praise. The Lord chastising hath chastised me, but He hath not delivered me over to death.*

The Reading is from the First Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

(1 Cor 8:8-9:2)

Now food will not bring us closer to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, nor are we better off if we do. But make sure that this liberty of yours in no way becomes a stumbling block to the weak. If someone sees you, with your knowledge, reclining at table in the temple of an idol, may not his conscience too, weak as it is, be "built up" to eat the meat sacrificed to idols? Thus through your knowledge, the weak person is brought to destruction, the brother for whom Christ died. When you sin in this way against your brothers and wound their consciences, weak as they are, you are sinning

against Christ. Therefore, if food causes my brother to sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I may not cause my brother to sin. Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? Although I may not be an apostle for others, certainly I am for you, for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

St Paul writes that abstention from meat shows a certain weakness of the faith. Elsewhere (Rom 14:2) he speaks more explicitly: “One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables.” This is quite surprising! Eating only vegetables is a sign of *weakness*? In this case, is it OK—even commendable—to eat meat during Lent?

The fact is that the Apostle is speaking to a state of affairs that is very different from the one we are in. The Christians in Corinth were concerned with eating or not eating meat that had been used in pagan religious ceremonies—was it “tainted” and demonic, now that it had been offered to pagan divinities? His judgment is that, in truth, food cannot defile us; food is just food: **food will not bring us closer to God; we are no worse off if we do not eat, nor are we better off if we do.** Pagan rituals and consecration to gods or demons have no power over a man in Christ. And yet ... The issue, says St. Paul, is not the food as such, but our relationship to our brothers and sisters. If anyone is troubled, scandalized by my eating meat or anything else, better **never to eat meat again, so that I may not cause my brother to sin.**

And how does this concern us, who simply don't have to bother about food offered to the Greek idols? If we read this text, it is probably because it has something to teach us. To us, today's Epistles is a reminder that, in our Lenten journey, we should be mindful of the discipline of fasting in letter and spirit: keeping the Church's rules of fasting *must* be accompanied by humility (so that we should not think too highly of our efforts) and by a strict abstention from any judgment about the practices of others. In short: fast to the best of your abilities, but don't take yourself too seriously, and do not—*never, ever!*—think that you are doing better than anyone else.

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Gospel according to Saint Matthew

(Matthew 25:31-46)

The Lord spoke this parable: When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?' And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.' Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.' Then they will answer and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?' He will answer them, 'Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.' And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.

The teaching of this parable could not be clearer. On this Sunday, called "Sunday of the Last Judgment," we are reminded that there will be a reckoning, an accounting for our lives, our choices, our actions. **Some will go off to eternal punishment, others to eternal life.**

Let us only remember a few points. First, the judge of all is "the Son of Man": our Lord Jesus Christ. "God has given *all judgment* to the Son" (John

5:22) so that we are judged by human standards, by the One who tasted our life with all its weaknesses and temptations. Father Alexander Schmemmann noted that the measuring stick, the criterion, for this judgment is, essentially, *love*: “not a mere humanitarian concern for abstract justice and the anonymous ‘poor,’ but concrete and personal love for the human person, any human person, that God makes me encounter in my life.”

Second, let us note that there will be great surprise at the Judgment. Those of us who may deem ourselves “OK with God” but fail to translate that presumed love for God into love of our neighbor, will be surprised to find that that presumed intimacy with God was pure delusion. However, the Lord begins with the great surprise of many who never imagined that they had any dealings with God. “**Lord, when did we *see* You? When did we *visit* You? When did we *care* for You?**” Many will not be Orthodox, many will not even be Christians, many will be atheists. A great surprise to them, and an important reminder for us today.

God is closer to us than we understand, and his presence is hidden from our arrogant and deluded claims to “know” and “understand” ourselves, much less others. That is why we should not judge anybody else’s relation with God. Our job is only to be faithful to our Lord, and to remember that “faith is working through acts of love” (Galatians 5:6).

PLEASE KEEP IN YOUR PRAYERS

LIVING: Bill, Jennifer, Karen (Joanna’s mother), Abie, Victoria (Frank’s mother), Diane, Sula, Fran, Dolores (Sipos), Leatrice (Totin), Ed, Dolores (Bingham), Angelica, Karyn, Brian, Justin, Sara, Lorine, Jonathan and Joanna, Andrei and Nyoka.

DEPARTED: Joseph (Rose’s father), Fred (Dollie’s uncle), Bob (Diane’s father), George (Botsis), Michael, priest James, Gabriel, Eduard, Lance, Nancy.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **“One parish, one book.”** We already listen to the same Gospel proclaimed and preached on Sundays; why not take an additional step and read one book together *as a parish*? Since we are preparing to enter Lent, let’s learn together from Fr. Alexander Schmemmann’s beautiful book *Great Lent: Journey to Pascha*. Excerpts will be provided along with the bulletin every Sunday. The book can be purchased easily from amazon.com or from the Antiochian Village; most of its content is also available on google.books.
- **Sunday 3/11: General Parish Meeting.** (Please do not leave ...). Among other things, we will have one slot to fill for the parish council, since Bill Thomas will be stepping down as chairman of the parish council. We ask that you consider, prayerfully, if you would like to serve as a member of the council. Nomination or self-nomination is open to any person receiving Holy Communion at St. Anthony’s, and will be subject to vote at the meeting; Bishop Thomas will formally install the parish council during his visit.
- **3/17-18 Pastoral Visit by His Grace, Bishop Thomas.** Our bishop will be with us on Saturday and Sunday, March 17th and 18th. Please try to attend Vespers that Saturday, and Matins and Liturgy the next morning. The bishop will meet with the parish council on Saturday evening, and with the entire congregation on Sunday after Liturgy.

Vespers and confessions on Saturdays, 6:30 PM;

Matins on Sundays 9:15 AM.