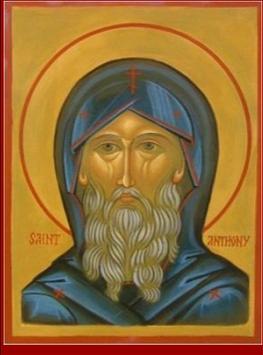


SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

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SUNDAY OF FORGIVENESS ("Cheesfare")

2 March 2014

— *Tone 3. The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise. Hieromartyr Theodotus, Bishop of Cyrenia (ca. 320); Virgin Martyr Euthalia of Sicily (257). Martyr Troadius of Neo-Cæsarea (3rd c.); Ven. Agathon of Egypt (5th c.); 400 Martyrs slain by the Lombards in Sicily (579).*

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 by death, and became the first-born from the dead; He hath delivered us from the depths 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 THE SUNDAY OF FORGIVENESS (Tone 6): O Thou Who guidest to wisdom, and givest understanding and intelligence, the Instructor of the ignorant, and Helper of the poor: strengthen my heart and grant it understanding, O Master. Give me word, O Word of the Father; for behold, I shall not refrain my lips from crying to Thee, O merciful One: "have mercy upon me who am fallen!"

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: Norma, Richard (Michaels), Victoria (Frank's mother), Richard (Johns), Bill, Ed, Peter, Georgia and Scot, Sam, Karen (Joanna'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), Janet (friend of Jeff's).

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).

FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT: PATRIARCH ABRAHAM (2)

Genesis 17 When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless! And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly." ... And God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your descendants after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised."

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon: *Sing praises to our God, sing praises.*

Sing praises to our king, sing praises! Clap your hands, all you nations!

The Reading is from the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Romans

(Rom 13:11-14:4)

Brethren: salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed; the night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us conduct ourselves becomingly as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires. As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not for disputes over opinion. One believes he may eat anything, while the weak man eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who abstains, and let not him who abstains pass judgment on him who eats; for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for God is able to make him stand.

It is no accident that the Church decided on the public reading of this passage on the day we are starting our long Lenten journey. As he does elsewhere (Ephesians 6), Saint Paul uses the metaphor of "**putting on the armor of light.**" But what is this "armor of light" and how does one "put it on"? The text actually speaks of "clothing" oneself with this armor; and a little later, it speaks of "clothing oneself in the Lord Jesus Christ." This helps us understand that the armor is the power, the grace, the inworking of Christ in us. This power—the seed of the Risen Life (which is in the Risen Christ) in us, which should grow and become a luminous garment of divine glory—we have received at Baptism: as St. Paul writes elsewhere, "as many of you as have been baptized into Christ *have put on (been clothed with) Christ!*"

Baptism is merely the beginning. We are called to guard and treasure our Baptism, and to "work out our salvation"—*to grow and to mature!* Christianity is not for wimps: it is not easy, it requires discipline and constant vigilance. Just as one would when joining the army, we are to cut out drunkenness, debauchery, quarreling, jealousy—anything that gets in the way of our objective.

Much more important than anything we might do or not do during Lent, however, is our relationship with our neighbor. The Apostle is quite explicit: **Let not him who eats despise him who abstains, and let not him who abstains pass judgment on him who eats.** It is very easy to notice the (real!) imperfections of the other person. Yet, as we learn from today's Gospel, fasting is between each person and God, not "so that others see it." As such, nobody has any kind of right to judge what another does. After all, Saint Paul explains by using an example from ancient society, you would not think of interfering between a master and his servant; so also, then, you are not to interfere between God and his servants: **Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls.** Whatever we think we might "achieve" through fasting and praying must grow out of humility, and lead to increased humility: *God* is the Lord, we are not; *God* judges, we don't; our assignment for now is simply to entrust ourselves to Him, asking Him to heal our many infirmities.

As we start our seven-week marathon of Lent, let us take to heart this call to humility. Let us find hope, as we anticipate the joy of the Resurrection: "salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed; the night is far gone, the day is at hand"; and let us be encouraged, knowing that in this fight each one of us "will be upheld, for God is able to make us stand."

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Gospel according to Saint Matthew

(Mat 6:14-21)

If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who sees in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes, and

where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

This is the last “pep talk” we receive before entering the spiritual battle of Great Lent. Our commander-in-chief, the “Lord Sabaoth” (that is, Lord of angelic hosts or armies) gives us clear, practical advice, and calls attention to the area where the struggle of Lent will be hardest: a call to forgiveness and humility, a warning against self-righteousness, an appeal to consider the point of it all.

First, forgiveness. The Lord does not mince words: if we don’t forgive others, we are preventing God from forgiving us. Just as in the Lord’s Prayer, God will forgive our trespasses “as we forgive those who trespass against us.” What if we don’t forgive? Then we are already getting a foretaste of hell, the torment of refusing to meet God by refusing to seek the face of our brother. True, forgiving is often not as easily done as it is said; it can be a hard and long process, because soul injuries don’t heal overnight. Perhaps, then, we should start by reminding us of God’s graciousness towards us: He is the first one who set in motion the gift of forgiveness, a gift that keeps growing in us if we share it with others. We can also remind ourselves of the abundance of joy and beauty He has in store for us. At the beginning of Lent, Christ pleads with us to let to and forgive, so that we can move on from death and receive the wealth and glory of being children of the Resurrection.

Finally, the Lord reminds us of the purpose of this entire enterprise. Why forgive? Why keep the Fast? Why do battle with ourselves? The Lord gives us the following answer: **Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven ... for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.** We remember these words every time we celebrate the Liturgy, when the priest raises his hands as says, “Lift up your hearts!,” to which the congregation responds, “We lift them up unto the Lord!” In short, the point of it all, the horizon we are looking at is “heaven.” Not some sort of ethereal pie in the sky, not some other place, but “heaven” in the sense of God’s dwelling-place here and now. And where is that “heaven” where God dwells? We say it at the beginning of each prayer, private and public: “who art everywhere present and fillest all things ... *come and dwell in us!*”

The point of it all, then, is to grow in the experience of God dwelling in us even here and now; to train ourselves—our hearts—to make room for the gentle Spirit of God, rising like incense in us and making all the treasures of

grace abound in us; to grow in our ability to taste the Resurrection even in our mortal life.

In truth, this is a never-ending journey; but unless we start right here and right now, it will never happen to us. Let us then stand upright and be counted as fellow-travelers with all the saints and with our brothers and sisters in all the world, let us journey to the Resurrection.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Today, Cheese Fare Sunday:**
 - Vespers of Forgiveness (around 12:30-1pm)
- **Saturday, March 10, 5:30pm: Bible Study**
- **Sunday, March 16:** Annual parish meeting. We have one opening on the parish council!
- **House blessings.** please schedule with Fr. Bogdan during the coming weeks.
- **Our Archdiocese contribution for 2014 is \$125/ adult.** Parishes send this money to the Antiochian Archdiocese, where it is redistributed for a variety of administrative, pastoral, educative, charitable, and missionary needs.

SCHEDULE OF LENTEN SERVICES

First Week of Lent, 6pm [St. Andrew's]

Monday-Thursday: Great Canon of St. Andrew; Friday: Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts

Wednesday, March 12, 6pm: Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts [Sts. Peter and Paul]

Wednesday, March 19, 6pm: Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts [St. Anthony]

Wednesday, March 26, 6pm: Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts [St. Andrew's]

Wednesday, April 2, 6pm: Liturgy of Pre-Sanctified Gifts [Sts. Peter and Paul]

Thursday, April 3, 6pm: Great Canon of St. Andrew [St. Andrew's]

Wednesday, April 9, 6pm: Liturgy of Pre-Sanctified Gifts [St. Anthony's]

HOW AND WHY DO WE FAST?

by Fr. Steven Ritter (abbreviated)

First of all, **fasting marks our return to God**. Fasting helps to remind us that we are putting off the things that separate us from God in order to slowly climb back to the Paradise that we lost.

Secondly, **fasting disrupts our normal routine** and self-centered wills. As creatures of tremendous habit, and often bad habit at that, we need something to serve as a "circuit breaker" to interrupt this process of continuous self-regard. Fasting reminds us of our need to reach out and help *others*, to dedicate an increased amount of time to spiritual reading and conversation, and to make every effort to attend the extra services offered during this season. God doesn't need this, but we do, and those who neglect this are missing a great opportunity for a quick injection of spiritual growth.

Lastly, **fasting is a way of practicing obedience**. That's right! The one thing that we all talk about as being important in the spiritual life is probably the one thing that we hate most of all! By being obedient to the rules of the Church rather than our own re-interpretation of them, we are practicing the purest form of spiritual and bodily obedience possible, and it's a fact of life that if we cannot do this then the instructions of the most saintly elder would prove impossible for us!

- Challenge yourself—you can probably do much more than you do. Find a way of fasting that is within your means, that makes you stretch a bit, but that doesn't frustrate so much that you give up. We are all on different spiritual levels and practical abilities.
- Once you find your level, stick to it—nothing disrupts obedience more than variance and making excuses.
- Make your fast a broad-based effort. Find time for reading and extra attendance at the services. The excuse of not having enough time will not suffice, since we all find time for those things we really want to do, no matter how crowded the schedule.
- Always remember to repent for your failings. God is not there to strike you down, but to lift you up, and nothing reaches his heart like sincere repentance.
- Remember that breaking the fast, or failing to keep it as well as you might is not a sin, but failing to keep the spirit of the fast in mind, or denying its importance as a precept of the church, certainly is. And no matter how we might ignore this time of the year, it is still a holy one whether we pay attention or not, and the evil one certainly knows what time of the year it is, and will increase his attacks whether you are prepared for them or not!
- Most of all, approach the fast with joy and anticipation, a time of year that the church gives us to draw closer to God, and to achieve true and genuinely heartfelt reconciliation and forgiveness with and for our family, friends, neighbors, congregation, nation, and the world at large.