



## Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

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### THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

(The Fathers of the Ecumenical Councils)

14 July 2013

*TONE 2 — Fathers of the Ecumenical Councils; Apostle Aquila of the Seventy (1st c.); Martyr Justus at Rome (1st c.); Ven. Hellius of Egypt (4th c.); Ven. Onesimus of Magnesia (4th c.); Venerable Nicodemos of the Holy Mountain (1809).*

#### 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 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 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 God, Thou Giver of life, glory to Thee!"

TROPARION OF THE HOLY FATHERS (Tone 8): Thou, O Christ, art our God of exceeding praise Who didst establish our Holy Fathers as luminous stars upon earth, and through them didst guide us unto the true Faith, O most merciful One, 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 FOR ORDINARY SUNDAYS (Tone 2): O Undisputed intercessor of Christians, the mediatrix who is unrejected by the Creator, turn not away from the voice of our petitions, though 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.

*Please remember in your prayers*

LIVING: pr. Joseph, Richard, Sam, Lisa, Richard (Johns), George (Georgiades), Bill, Ed, Peter, Georgia and Scot, Karen, Victoria, Diane, Sula, Dollie, Dolores, Angelica, Karyn, Jonathan and Joanna, Andrei and Nyoka, Ignatius and Amy, Benjamin, John.

DEPARTED: Hilda (Chris Abraham's mother), Helen (Fr. Wargo's mother), Andy (Michaels), Jeannie (Ferver), Edmund, Richard, Dolores Patricia, Leatrice, Ed, Joseph, Fred (Dollie's uncle), Bob, Michael, Gabriel, Eugenia, Trevor, Faynasia.

## TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon:

*Blessed art Thou, O Lord, the God of our Fathers. For Thou art just in all that Thou hast done to us!*

*The Reading is from Saint Paul's Letter to Titus*

(Titus 3:8–15)

Titus, my son, the saying is sure. I desire you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good deeds; these are excellent and profitable to men. But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels over the Law, for they are useless and futile. As for a man who is factious, after admonishing him once or twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is perverted and sinful; he is self-condemned. When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. Do your best to speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way; see that they lack nothing. And let our people learn to devote themselves to good deeds, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not to be unfruitful. All who are with me send greetings to you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen.

Whether baptized as children or becoming Orthodox later in life, we are all called to “come to believe” and to entrust ourselves and our whole life to Jesus Christ our Lord, God, and Savior. But we do not come to the Faith in order to be “right,” members in the most correct, most orthodox of Christian churches—as opposed to everyone out there who “doesn’t get it.” This arrogant attitude usually leads one pretty soon to question even the Orthodoxy of the Orthodox; and one starts speaking of “true Orthodox” and arguing about all kind of elements by which “correctness” of faith is to be assessed—the calendar, the dress code of clergy, the length of services, the length of the beards, the type of food used during fasting periods, even some intimate details of family life.

These, Saint Paul writes forcefully, are all “foolish arguments, rivalries, and quarrels about the law”; for “they are useless and futile.” Instead, we

should be focusing on things truly useful, excellent and beneficial to others: **Let our people learn to devote themselves to good deeds, so as to help cases of urgent need!** God knows that the urgent needs of the imperfect human community we inhabit, and of the entire broken world around us are not healed by *more* disagreements and *more* bitterness.

There are persons who become addicted to constantly arguing one's correctness against the errors of others. In this kind of delusion, the living God has been replaced with some religious ideology that has become an idol. Such a person, Saint Paul instructs his disciple, should be confronted and stopped from spreading foolishness; if there is no repentance, "break off contact with the factious person, realizing that he is perverted in himself and sinful and stands self-condemned." The hope is that, ultimately, such persons would come to their senses, realize how unfruitful they have become, and return to the living God. Until such time, however, the Church must be kept safe from **foolish controversies, dissensions, and quarrels over the Law.**

The Church is a training-ground for the Kingdom of Heaven: it is not about proving ourselves right and others wrong, but a training in humility, love, and service to others.

## TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

*The Reading is from the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*

(Mat 5:14-19)

The Lord said to his disciples: "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them, but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

Note just how highly the Lord speaks about his disciples: **“You are the light of the world!”** And He does not mean only the twelve apostles, or the three among them who receive special attention (Peter, James, and John)—no, Christ is speaking here to all those who would be his disciples throughout all times and places—this is a saying for all insiders of the faith.

But are we, who count ourselves Christians, really the light of the world? Isn't the same Gospel according to Matthew warning us about *the darkness* that is in us? (**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!**) Besides, doesn't the Lord say clearly in the Gospel of John: **“I am the light of the world”** (John 8:12)? How does He now call us “the light of the world”?

Yet, the Church—the community of Christ's disciples—is, in the language of Scripture, “the bride of Christ.” And the bride shares in all that the bridegroom has. This, indeed, is a great mystery, as Saint Paul writes! Christ, who is the true Light, shares Himself with us, enlightens our darkness, kindles the fire of divine presence in us, and works in us to make us also into children of the light. This is the covenant we have entered into by Baptism, this is the yoke of faith: to be yoked together with Christ, to learn to live with God and in God, feeding on God's very life and light.

The Holy Fathers who have defended and defined the Orthodox faith at the Ecumenical Councils call all of this “deification”: a gradual process of becoming godlike. Nothing new here: the Lord Himself said that a perfect disciple is *like his master* (Luke 6:40), doing the same works as the master or even “greater works” (John 14:12).

Let us also note that Christ explains the point of being called to deification: **“You are the light of the world . . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”** Whatever we receive from God is not out possession, but should become in turn a gift to others. As on Pascha night, when the priest calls out “Come receive the Light,” we approach and light our candle only to pass it on to those next to us.

What all of this boils down to is the following: we are, indeed, *called to be* a light in the world; we can only fulfill this calling to be a light to others by allowing the true Light, Christ our true God, to enlighten *our* darkness first; finally, the light that we are to bring to others is the light of Christ: his mercy and meekness and grace and love.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Today:** memorial service for the departed members of the Isaac family
- **Next Sunday, July 21:** memorial service for the departed members of the Joseph and Sipos families, and for Frank Harrison's father.

Parish picnic at Dollie Sipos' house!  
(119 Maple Grove Drive)

The Church will provide hotdogs and buns.  
If you want to contribute, please see the sign-up sheet in the hall.

- **Sunday, July 28:** Trisagion for the departed family members of George and Venetia Georgiades (Panayiotis, Martha Andromache, Nikephoros, and Irene)
- **Sunday, August 4:** Chris Abraham invites us to picnic at her place (142 Hoffmann Lane, Renfrew, PA 16053). Potluck meal, everyone welcome!
- **Tuesday, August 6:** for the **Feast of the Transfiguration** everyone is invited to drive up to the Monastery of the Transfiguration in Ellwood City. Orthodox parishes from the entire region are going on this day pilgrimage. It is not only very beautiful, but also an occasion to participate in Divine Liturgy and Holy Unction. This year the nuns will host His Grace, Bishop John Abdallah (our former dean), who will preside and deliver the homily.