

SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

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FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

28 July 2013

TONE 4 — Holy Apostles of the Seventy and Deacons: Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, and Parmenas (1st c.); Martyr Julian of Dalmatia (2nd c.); Martyr Eustathius (ca. 321), of Apamea; Ven. Paul of Xeropotamou, founder of the Monastery of St. Paul on Mt. Athos (10th c.).

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 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 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 OF THE TRANSFIGURATION (Tone 7): Thou wast transfigured on the mountain, O Christ God, and thy disciples beheld thy glory as far as they could bear it; so that when they would behold thee crucified, they would understand that thy passion was voluntary and would proclaim to the world that thou art truly the Radiance of the Father.

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: How magnified are Thy works, O Lord! In Wisdom hast Thou made them all.
Bless the Lord, O my soul!*

*The Reading is from Saint Paul's Letter to the Romans
(Rom 10:1–10)*

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

The heart of our Christian faith and hope is that Christ died and rose for us, and that "as many as received Him, to them He gave power to become sons of God" (John 1:12). He came to be with us, in our mortal life, so that we may be returned from the slavery of sin and mortality to sonship and glory. In the words of Saint Paul, our journey as Christians is to become disciples of the Crucified One, and inherit the same resurrected state in which He is now: "we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together."

We are reading and hearing today one of the "meatiest" passages written by the great theologian and spiritual teacher of the Apostolic Church—Saint Paul. As often is the case with Pauline writings, the nourishment is so theologically dense that the recipient would do well to chew on it by reading and re-reading this text, until it gradually "unpacks" and delivers its message.

But how exactly does this work? Concretely, how do we become "children of God"? Saint Paul answers: **"you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father!'"** **"The Spirit of adoption"** is a way of saying that the Holy Spirit of God is the one "powering" the entire process by which we are made again compatible with God. Note also that our being "adopted" by God is, in fact, our being taken back as children of God (remember, we are like the prodigal son, who ran away, and lived as if his father was dead.).

It is important to realize that this "adoption" is not a one-time event: you are not simply "declared adopted"—as with any child, one has a whole life ahead, an entire journey of actually living as adopted children of God. As Saint Paul writes, **"as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."** Note that we are being "led"! This is a crucial point: the Spirit of adoption guides and accompanies us on a journey. Orthodox spirituality describes a dynamic reality: the images we use are all about transformation, change, becoming, ascending, going deeper, never content, always athirst for more.

Finally, the human that God made with so much love and care, He also placed in the midst of creation, as a magnificent link between creation and the Creator. A priest of sorts, Adam is to make God present to creation, and convey God's blessing upon it, and to return it to God full of glory. Thus, from the very beginning, we are bound up with the rest of the world. Saint Paul has this cosmic perspective when he writes that our restoration from estrangement to adoption will have an impact on the entire creation: **"creation will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."** Indeed, the entire created realm is suffering, "subjected to futility" as it is: some kind of distortion, some kind of pointlessness, has spread everywhere with the fall of Adam. Our separation from God and "invention" of mortality has been matched by the world's adaptation to our state. And conversely, our return to God and entering Christ's resurrected state—the "adoption" and "glorification" we have been reading about—will also awaken the rest of creation to its original beauty.

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Gospel according to Saint Matthew

(Mat 8:28-9:1)

At that time, when Jesus came to the country of the Gergesenes, two demoniacs met Him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one could pass that way. And behold, they cried out, "What have we to do to Thee, O Son of God? Art Thou come here to torment us before the time?" Now a herd of many swine was feeding at some distance from them. And the demons begged Him, "If Thou cast us out, send us away into the herd of swine." And He said to them, "Go." So they came out and went into the swine; and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, and perished in the waters. The herdsmen fled, and going into the city they told everything, and what had happened to the demoniacs. And behold, all the city came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw Him, they begged Him to leave their neighborhood. And getting into a boat He crossed over and came to His own city.

It is frightening to imagine a human life that has become the playground of demons. We know how painful it is to walk around plagued by a mere headache, or how terrible it is to be haunted by regrets and painful memories, and how guilt over things past or anxiety over things future can rob you of your

of peace and of the ability to enjoy anything in the present. How much worse, then, for the two demoniacs of today's Gospel reading!

Although alive, they spend their tortured existence in tombs, haunted by nightmarish frights; they are "fierce" and nobody can pass by without being deeply affected. Ultimately, it is not so much their apparition and their antics that frighten, as it is the insight that we, "normal" ones are only a hair's breadth away and not safe at all. Indeed, according to Scripture, "the world lies under the power of the evil one" (1 John 5:19), so that we have here an appropriate image of the fallen existence that Adam chose by trusting the evil one rather than God.

When the Lord meets him and heals him, he decides to bring the evil out in a spectacular display, so that people see and understand the extent of this man's torment: he sends the legion of demons into a herd of swine. The resulting stampede, with the swine rushing headlong off a cliff to a miserable drowning, gives us frightening insight into the kind of dark and destructive force had been ravaging the two demoniacs.

Most frightening, however, is what follows after the demons are banished and the two restored to health. Instead of giving thanks for the healing and perhaps throwing a feast, the Gergesenes **begged Him to leave their neighborhood**. They are afraid, it seems, not of the demons but of God. Their situation so far was, in a way, settled and satisfying: the two demoniacs allowed the other inhabitants to view themselves as "good" by imagining that all evil was elsewhere—namely there, in the tombs, in the two demoniacs. Jesus disrupts this arrangement and now the Gergesenes are afraid that God is coming into their lives. They are unwilling to welcome into their homes a guest that disrupts the status quo by bringing in a new kind of life.

As for us, we are called to move in the opposite direction. The Bible ends with these words: "Come Jesus Christ!" And we train ourselves for that coming when we respond to the call issued at Liturgy: "With fear of God, faith, and love *draw near!*"

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Today:** Trisagion for the departed family members of George and Venetia Georgiades (Panayiotis, Martha Andromache, Nikephoros, and Irene)
- **Saturday, August 3, 5:30 – 6:15 pm: BIBLE STUDY**, followed by the Paraklesis of the Theotokos. We will focus on the parable of the sower (Matthew 13).
- **Sunday, August 4:** Chris Abraham invites everyone and anyone 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.