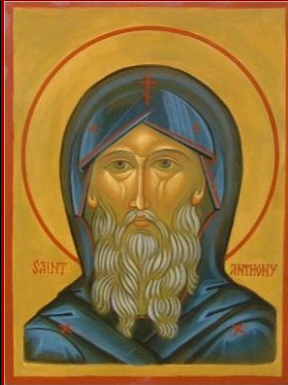


# SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



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## ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

8 September 2013

*TONE 2 — The Nativity of the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary.*

### FIRST ANTIPHON

*Remember, O Lord, David and all his meekness. **Refrain:** Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us!*

*Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God; God is in the midst of her, she shall not be shaken. **(Refrain)***

*Glory... Now and ever... **(R.:)***

### SECOND ANTIPHON

*The Lord has in truth sworn an oath to David, and He will not turn back from it: Of the fruit of Thy body I will set upon your throne. **(R.:)** O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead: save us who sing to Thee, "Alleluia"!*

*I will make a horn sprout for David, I will set a lamp for my Christ. **(R.:)***

*For the Lord has chosen Zion, He has desired it for His dwelling place **(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 NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS (Tone 4): Thy Nativity, O Theotokos, hath proclaimed joy to the whole world; for from thee hath dawned the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God, annulling the curse and bestowing the blessing, abolishing death and granting us life everlasting.

KONTAKION OF THE NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS (Tone 4): By thy holy nativity, O immaculate one, Joachim and Anna were delivered from the reproach of barrenness, and Adam and Eve from the corruption of death. Thy people celebrate it, having been saved from the penalty of their transgressions, crying unto thee: "The barren doth give birth to the Theotokos, the nourisher of our Life!"

## TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

*My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!  
For He has regarded the lowliness of His handmaiden.*

*The Reading is from Saint Paul's Letter to the Philippians*

(Phil 2:5-11) Brethren, have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, Who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

## TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

*The Reading is from the Gospel according to Saint Luke*  
(Luke 10:38-42; 11:27-28)

At that time, Jesus entered a certain village; and a woman named Martha received Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to His teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving; and she went to Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her to help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled

about many things; but one thing only is needful. Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her." As He said this, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore Thee, and the breasts that Thou didst suck!" But He said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"

## SPECIAL THEOTOKION

Magnify, O my soul, the Virgin Mary, born of a barren womb! Verily, virginity, O Theotokos, is impossible for a mother, as birth-giving is impossible for virgins. Yet in thee hath the dispensation of both been accomplished. Wherefore, all we families of the earth ceaselessly bless thee.

## PASTOR'S NOTE

The Church's calendar, inherited from the ancient Jerusalem Temple, counts September as the first month of its New Year. It appears, then, that Church begins its year with the birth of Mary, the Theotokos (September 8) and ends it with her Dormition (her passing, on August 15). This is neither an accident, nor an arbitrary decision of the Church. Rather, it reflects the Christian view that the Mother of God reflects, in her person, the very nature of the Church: Virgin and Birthgiver of God.

A learned monk of the Orthodox Church in America, Fr. Calinic Berger, summarizes our faith very aptly: "The Orthodox of the Mother of God remains what it ought to be: warm, filled with love and devotion, yet sober. She is a human being like all of us, and yet she lives such a life. She dies our death because she shares our birth. She was not conceived 'immaculately' in a manner unique and different from all of us; she was not given a special nature, incapable of sin. Neither did she avoid death. Therefore, it was within fallen nature that the Virgin Mary achieved her spiritual perfection. What she did in her life, she did not do in a mechanical, impersonal manner, but with *struggle*, thereby developing her own personal holiness through her role as the Mother of God. Not only did she live well, but she *finished* well: she crowned her struggle of spiritual perfection and her unique role as Mother of God with a *godly death* in the presence of Christ and supremely 'painless, blameless, and peaceful'. The Mother of God is thus a model for all Christians, both in the way she lived and in the way she died."

To better understand the significance of the Theotokos, the Church assigns as Epistle readings for her feasts a section of Saint Paul's letter to the Philippians. This text talks about humility. He sets forth Christ himself as a model of perfect obedience and humility: Christ **humbled Himself and became obedient unto death**. Although God, He accepted to take on the realities of his creatures; although almighty, He accepted to

live within the confines of our human existence—even to the point of sharing our mortality, and even to the point of accepting the atrocious and humiliating death by crucifixion.

The Gospel reading assigned for today speaks of another Mary, whose attitude is precisely that of the Theotokos: **Mary sat at the Lord's feet and listened to His teaching. ... Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her.** Indeed, the icons of the Theotokos almost always portray her together with her Son, often pointing at Him, urging us to direct our gaze to Him. The Theotokos, in other words, is our supreme model in being conformed to the model set by Christ. She humbled herself and was obedient in response to Christ's humbling Himself unto taking on our mortal flesh. She is the first reply, on behalf of all humanity, to God's quest for us, fallen and lost creatures.

If there is a "point" to our commemoration of the Virgin Mary, it is precisely the point that the Lord makes, emphatically, at the end of today's Gospel: **Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!**

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Next Saturday, September 14, 5:30 – 6:15 pm: BIBLE STUDY**, followed by Vespers. We will focus on three very short parables in Matthew 13: the Mustard Seed, the Leaven, and the Hidden Treasure.

**Next Sunday, September 15: No service at St Antony's! We shall celebrate a Pan-Orthodox Liturgy** at Butler Township Park Building (468 Duffy Road) together with our brothers and sisters from the other two parishes. Whether or not you choose to stay at the picnic, please come for the Divine Liturgy!

**Supporting our Seminarian:** We hope to continue our monthly support for Ignatius and Amy, now beginning their second year at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary. To renew (or increase or decrease) your pledge, please talk to Seraphim (Leigh) ASAP.

*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, Lawrence, Linda, Barbara, Mike, Brooke.

DEPARTED: Alex (Julie Smolen's brother), Demetra (Connie) Svolos, Hilda (Chris Abraham's mother), Helen (Fr. Wargo's mother), Andy (Michaels), Jeannie (Ferver), Edmund, Richard, Dolores Patricia, Leatrice, Ed, Joseph, Fred Joseph, David (Dollie's family), Bob, Michael, Gabriel, Eugenia, Trevor, Faynasia.

## PASTORAL LETTER

The Holy Antiochian Synod has set the **15th of September of this year as a day of solidarity for all local and international parishes in order to support the humanitarian and relief work**, which the Patriarchate of Antioch and the All the East has undertaken in the collaboration with national, governmental, ecclesiastic, and civil entities.

The amount of pain and suffering endured by our sons and brothers in Syria until today is beyond any description. Moreover, the available resources are limited and can only cover a small part of the basic and essential needs of life, such as food, water, clothing, medicine, medical treatment, and shelter.

We believe that God created us, gave us life and asked nothing in return for this precious gift. He was generous with us in a way that is proper to the Creator. He granted us the blessings which allow us to have a royal life in every sense. Yet we drifted away from the truth and willingly chose to go astray from his grace; thus, our lives were filled with pain, sickness, evil, and death. God Himself did not remain distant from this new reality for He sent His only Son to live among us as one of us in order to return us to the right path again, enlighten our darkness, lead us to life, show us the Truth, teach us how to use our freedom, heal our wounds, give life to our souls, forgive our sins, and grant us His heavenly happiness.

He humbly shared human life with us; He accompanied the widow of Nain at the funeral of her only son and brought him to life; he searched for the bleeding woman and healed her soul and body; He taught His disciples to share their bread and fish with the people who marched after Him and how to feed them with their hands; He tested the faith of the Canaanite woman and granted her what she desired after having strengthened her faith; He healed the centurion's servant; He did not arrive on time to the house of His sick friend Lazarus, but He brought him back to life and for his sisters Mary and Martha; He approached and touched the eyes of the blind man, the possessed, the leper, and the man with the withered hand, and dismissed them all healed both in soul and body.

He gave us the best of all commandments, a solution to all our suffering: to love God through loving our brother and neighbor. Humanity is subject to evil and miseries we bring onto ourselves, knowingly or out of ignorance, because of our egoism and our own interests, whether we are individuals, groups, or countries.

The Lord did not request anything for Himself. He did not ask us to honor Him, nor to express gratitude or acknowledgment. On the contrary He accepted suffering from our hands; and, from us, He heard curses, encountered blame and aggression, bore neglect and betrayal, and accepted flagellation, mockery, and crucifixion.

He firmly commanded us, to love our neighbor, for He made this love the criterion of our belonging to the Reign of heaven. He commanded that our worship be associated with serving our neighbor, and He made loving and helping the weak and the needy equal in dignity to serving Him. He placed us between two charges: on one hand the parable of the Samaritan enlightens our minds and stimulates our solidarity

with our needy brothers, taking care of them and standing by their side; on the other hand the parable of the last judgment, which confronts us with determining our eternal life starting now, by choosing for instance to be deaf to the voice of the needy, to remain blind to their suffering, to keep our hands tied instead of reaching out to help our neighbors, to shut our hearts to the pains of our brothers, or distract our minds with other than helping others.

Today the perseverance of most of our children who are affected, in need, homeless, sick, wounded, unemployed, and facing adversity cannot continue without the support of all brothers, whether wealthy or not, and not only financially speaking, but also through the effective love given, and factually expressed in the consideration provided to he who lost a job, a home, a loved one, a provider, or others. God never stops stretching His hand towards us in our misery; He helps us, heals us and saves us instead. Ought we not stretch our hands towards our brothers in return?

Some are doing so daily on the ground. But today those who live geographically afar from this reality, their tangible help is needed, as is their participation through a donation graciously given to their Church, which would be sent to the Patriarchate to support the efforts it is undertaking in this field.

The Church today invites you, with all the love, zeal, and gratitude it has received, to honor your brother so that God honors you. The wounded heart calls your generous, loving and giving heart, wherever you are, it asks you to stretch the hand of brotherhood, support and solidarity. Grant graciously as God graciously granted you the countless generousities and the bounties beyond description. Seek to fulfill the needs of your people, and be their consolation. They are your fathers in the most precious of what you possess: faith. Give what is less in return: your contribution and generosity.

May God bless your deeds and multiply the fruits of your charities in His heavenly Reign. Amen.

*Issued from our Patriarchal Residence in Damascus Dated the 6th of August, 2013*

**John X Patriarch of Antioch and all the East,**  
by the mercy of God John X Patriarch of Antioch and All the East