

# SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese  
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## NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

19 October 2014

*Tone 2* —Prophet Joel (ca. 800 B.C.). Martyr Varus, and with him six Monk Martyrs (ca. 307); Blessed Cleopatra of Palestine (327); Hieromartyr Sadoth, Bishop of Persia and 128 Martyrs with him (342).

### 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"!*

RESURRECTION TROPARION (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, Thou giver of life, 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.

*Glory... Now and ever ...*

KONTAKION OF ORDINARY SUNDAYS (Tone 4): O undisputed intercessor of Christians, the mediatrix who is unrejected by the Creator: turn not away from the voice of our petitions, although 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 doth ever intercede for those who honor thee!

## TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

*The Lord is my strength and my song.  
The Lord has chastened me severely.*

*From the Second Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians*

(2 Corinthians 11:31-33; 12:1-9) Brethren, the God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he who is blessed for ever, knows that I do not lie. At Damascus, the governor under King Aretas guarded the city of Damascus in order to seize me, but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped his hands. I must boast; there is nothing to be gained by it, but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven (whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows). And I

know that this man was caught up into Paradise (whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows) and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter. On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. Though if I wish to boast, I shall not be a fool, for I shall be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me. And to keep me from being too elated by the abundance of revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to harass me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I besought the Lord about this, that it should leave me; but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

In this fragment Saint Paul seems to be affirming two contradictory things: on the one hand, he "boasts" of some extraordinary spiritual experiences—visions, and heavenly journeys—and on the other hand he says that such experiences are not what a Christian should be hunting for.

The context here is very important: other preachers were carrying out a deceitful mission among the Corinthians, and were denigrating the apostle Paul, claiming that he lacked the necessary spiritual authority because he didn't possess extraordinary "spiritual gifts." In reply Saint Paul notes: "I must boast; there is nothing to be gained by it, but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord." He then proceeds to speak of being taken up into the highest heaven and granted visions and mysteries impossible to put in human words. We can see that he feels compelled and is uneasy, because he talks about these experiences in the third person ("I know a man in Christ"), even though he is actually talking about himself. In short, Paul is saying: if that is what you want—a "superpowers competition"—then let me tell you that the things I have received from God dwarf anything you can come up with!

However (and this is the crucial element), Saint Paul also says that such boasting is foolish. Christ did not come to rid us of all weakness, to make us healthy, happy, rich, and famous. A quick look at the apostle suffices: he was in constant danger, often arrested and beaten up, and sometimes escaping narrowly (as we read today: let down in a basket through a window in the wall!); his health was not the best, he probably

had bad eyesight, and his opponents—who claimed to be highly “spiritual” Christians—were mocking him. And yet, it is in Paul’s weakness and humility that Christ displayed his power and wisdom.

In fact, this is what the Apostle teaches: faith in Jesus Christ is not about boosting our ego by using religion to better manage and “improve” ourselves, but about leaving aside all excuse and relying, joyfully, on God’s mercy.

## TODAY’S GOSPEL READING

### *From the Gospel according to Saint Luke*

(Luke 8:5-15) The Lord spoke this parable: A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path and was trampled, and the birds of the sky ate it up. Some seed fell on rocky ground, and when it grew, it withered for lack of moisture. Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it. And some seed fell on good soil, and when it grew, it produced fruit a hundredfold." After saying this, he called out, "Whoever has ears to hear ought to hear." Then his disciples asked him what the meaning of this parable might be. He answered, "Knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of God has been granted to you; but to the rest, they are made known through parables so that 'they may look but not see, and hear but not understand.'" This is the meaning of the parable. The seed is the word of God. Those on the path are the ones who have heard, but the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts that they may not believe and be saved. Those on rocky ground are the ones who, when they hear, receive the word with joy, but they have no root; they believe only for a time and fall away in time of trial. As for the seed that fell among thorns, they are the ones who have heard, but as they go along, they are choked by the anxieties and riches and pleasures of life, and they fail to produce mature fruit. But as for the seed that fell on rich soil, they are the ones who, when they have heard the word, embrace it with a generous and good heart, and bear fruit in perseverance.

The parable of the sower is well known; it is, however, easily misunderstood. The parable seems, at first sight, to speak of different types of persons: some refuse to hear the Gospel; others hear it but are superficial and lazy; others always seem to put God and their salvation last; and others, again, receive the Gospel like a seed that planted in rich soil, where it continues to grow and to bring forth the fruit of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Let us note that apart from telling us that God (the sower) is “foolishly” generous, even prodigal, and sends His Word (the seed) *everywhere and to everyone*: on good soil but also, no less, on the path, on rocky ground, and among thorns. In fact, we see that most of the effort is in vain, since the majority (75% in the parable) reject or misuse the seed. Still, God continues undeterred to sow the Word of God even in this world and in this faithless and adulterous generation.

Let us also note that, the “soil” that receives the seed is nothing else than our heart. It can be a careless, inhospitable heart (where God’s presence goes unnoticed); a hard heart, which refuses to be pierced through by the Word, and remains shallow, without root; a poisoned heart (“choked by thorns”), where the Word of God is soon overwhelmed by a crowd of other concerns; or, as the Lord explains, the good soil refers to “a good and generous heart.”

So, which type are you? Well, this is a silly question! Our heart is like *all* those types of soil—sometimes like barren ground, oblivious to God and our neighbor, sometimes reducing God to some shallow feeling or thought, sometimes too anxious about many things and therefore unable to be still in front of God. To think that “some are just like this – the ‘churchy’ type – and others just aren’t” is a profoundly un-Christian theology. It only leads to arrogance (remember the Pharisee: “God, I thank you that I’m not like other people!”) or to despair.

The point of the parable is rather that we are encountering the very Word of God as a seed that is sown in our hearing, that we are called to receive it, and *to change*, to become good soil. And change begins here and now: the Word of God is sown during Liturgy, read in the Psalm verses, the Epistle, and the Gospel, preached in the sermon, and tasted in the Eucharist.

The Word of God who is searching for us and searching out our heart. He calls to us to become *receptive and hospitable* (because, “to those that receive Him He has given power to be children of God,” John 1:12), but also *patient and perseverant*. Remember, the good soil (the good heart) “will

bring forth fruit *in patience*! Or elsewhere, also in the Gospel of Luke: "by your **endurance** you will gain your lives" (Luke 21:19).

Finally, laboring for the cultivation of the heart, learning to receive God with an open, patient, and perseverant heart is well worth it. The harvest—the fruit of the Spirit—is rich beyond belief, worthy of God's generosity: **when it grew, it produced fruit a hundredfold. A hundredfold!**

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Saturday, 10/25: Rummage and Cookie Sale.** Volunteers are needed for baking cookies, and for set-up, clean-up, and the day of the sale. For any info on the Rummage and Cookie Sale, please contact Seba Michaels (724.285.1540).
- **Saturday, 11/8: Kibbee Bake Sale!** We do need volunteers to work hard a few hours so as to have the kibbee ready for pick-up by 2pm. For details please see Georgia.
- **Sunday, 11/9: pan-Orthodox Liturgy** (last Sunday before the Nativity Fast) at Sts Peter and Paul. We will try to "mix-and-match" the music: some Byzantine, some Slavic. To make sure that we truly "make a joyful noise unto the Lord," all singers—from our three parishes—are asked to rehearse the music that will be sung at the pan-Orthodox Liturgy. We will hold two **choir practices at St. Anthony's on Saturday, 11/1 and 11/8, 6-7:30.**
- **Saturday, 11/15: Bible Study.** We will return to the Parables of the Lord and discuss two references to shepherding (Luke 15:4 and John 10:1-18) and their Old Testament references. It is all about us!

### *Remember in your prayers*

**LIVING:** Ron (upcoming surgeries), George (Georgiades), Christine (Abraham), Jim, Tony, Samantha, Luke (relatives of Dollie's), 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), Karyn, Ignatius and Amy, John, Jonathan and Joanna, Andrei and Nyoka, Benjamin, John, Janet, Craig, Christy (relatives of Jean).

Shea and Katie, Timothy and Carolyn – seeking for the true faith.

**DEPARTED:** Angeliki, Metropolitan Philip; Joe and David Sipos; Bill (Georgia's father-in-law), Glenn (Jean's grandson); Stella, 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, Hilda (Chris Abraham's mother).