

# SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



## Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

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## SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST (20 October 2013)

*TONE 8 —Greatmartyr Artemius at Antioch (362); Righteous Child Artemius of Verkholsk; Ven. Gerasimos the New Ascetic, of Cephalonia (1579); Ven. Matrona of Chios (14th c.).*

### FIRST ANTIPHON

*It is good to give praise unto the Lord, and to chant unto Thy Name, O Most High! (R.):* 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 ...)*

### 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 8): From the heights Thou didst descend, O compassionate One, and Thou didst submit to the three-day burial, that Thou mightest deliver us from passion. Thou art our Life and our Resurrection: O Lord, 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 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 do ever intercede for those who honor thee!

## TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

*Make your vows to the Lord our God. God is known in Judah; His Name is great in Israel.*

### *The Reading is from the Second Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians*

(2 Cor 6:16-7:1) Brethren, we are the temples of the living God; as God said, "I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Come out from them, therefore, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and make holiness perfect in the fear of God.

"God" can be a very ambiguous word. To make sure we are not confusing the God to whom we entrust our lives with some "imaginary friend" or imaginary fear, Saint Paul speaks of "the living God": **We are the temples of the living God; God said, "I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God!"**

This is neither some vague "higher being" out there, nor some abstract notion of "God" that provides an explanation for all that we do not understand about ourselves and the world. "The living God" is the God of whom the patriarchs and prophets have testified, the One whom they met and whose power they experienced; the God whose Face the Apostles have seen in the Face of Jesus Christ; the One whom we address as "Father," who adopts us as his beloved children. The religious supermarket of our days offers many types of "gods" and "idols" to bow down to. Yet, the only God worth worshipping, the only God that can touch and heal our lives is the "living God," the God who has come to lived our life and vanquish our death.

Our state is far from ideal: it is a state of servitude, uncleanness, and estrangement. However, God—the living God—cares for his creature, and seeks us out. How does this intimacy with God look like? Scripture provides us with icons that give us a glimpse of this mysterious encounter, which words fail to describe.

One such image is that of a face-to-face encounter, "like a friend speaks to his friend": this is how Moses experiences God on Mount Sinai (Exod 33:11). Another image is that of God "walking" among his people: God moves about in the garden of Eden (Gen 3:8), later in the tent of worship (2 Sam 7:6), in the camp of Israel (Deut 23:15), and, more generally, He is in the midst of chosen people (Lev 26:12). This is also what Saint Paul says about Christians: **I will move among them, and I will be their God.** Finally, there is the image of a temple filled with the luminous presence of God. Just as the temple was designed to be a receptacle of the glory of God, so also are we called to become temples of Christ, sacred places where the very Glory of God is present and from which the light of glory shines out into the world.

In short, then, to be a Christian means to strive to become a temple of God. This involves, of course, an effort on our part. God's voice beckons us: **Come out, be separate, touch nothing unclean ... let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement.** To take one's faith seriously means to engage in an ongoing struggle to separate oneself from whatever

is evil, ugly, impure, and contrary to our covenant with God in Christ. This growth in holiness (“to make holiness perfect,” as Saint Paul writes) is not a matter of solitary effort, but a cooperation between us and God; essentially, it means making ourselves more and more available to the work of grace in our mind, soul, and body.

Any place that has been consecrated and turned into a worship site must be kept clean and beautiful. It is not different in our case: advancing in holiness calls for repeated consecration of ourselves to God. Let us heed the word of the Apostle: **We are the temples of the living God! Make holiness perfect in the fear of God.**

## TODAY’S GOSPEL READING

### *The Reading is from the Gospel according to Saint Luke*

(Luke 8:26-39) At that time, as Jesus arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, there met him a man from the city who had demons; for a long time he had worn no clothes and he lived not in a house but among the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him, and said with a loud voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beseech you, do not torment me." For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many a time it had seized him; he was kept under guard, and bound with chains and fetters, but he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the desert.) Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him. And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss. Now a large herd of swine was feeding there on the hillside; and they begged him to let them enter these. So he gave them leave. Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned. When the herdsmen saw what happened, they fled, and told it in the city and in the country. Then people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had gone, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. And those who had seen it told them how he who had been possessed with demons was healed. Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gadarenes asked him to depart from them; for they were seized with great fear; so he got into the boat and returned. The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him; but he sent him away, saying, "Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you." And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.

A recent saint (St. Nikolai of South Canaan) wrote that "God gives teaches not only through the sky, filled with angels and adorned with stars, or through the earth, all covered with the media of God's created beings, *but even through the demons.*" Indeed, Christ allowed the demons to show us vividly just what is at stake in the Gospel's call to repentance and life with God.

At the very beginning, we learn that this person, although alive, was spending his tormented existence “not in a house but among the tombs”: a “dead life,” haunted by nightmarish frights. The man was out of his mind: his mind, that is, was the playground of a legion of spirits; and, just as sleepwalkers play out their dreams by moving about physically, at the risk of gravely injuring themselves, so also was this man’s body wounded

by being dragged along as the demons were harassing his spirit. This is indeed disturbing to any reader or hearer of the Gospel, because 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 man from Gadara. The account is frightening, especially bearing in mind that, according to Scripture, "the world lies under the power of the evil one" (1 John 5:19).

Most frightening, however, is what follows after the demons are banished and the man restored to health. Instead of giving thanks for the healing and perhaps throwing a feast, the Gadarenes are "seized with great fear" and ask Jesus to leave the area at once! They are afraid, indeed, but not of the demons. They are afraid that God is coming into their lives, and are unwilling to welcome into their homes a guest that disrupts the status quo by bringing in a new kind of life. Frightening indeed it is to note that the Gadarenes are not speaking with complete freedom, but are in fact mouthing the words of the demons: "What have you to do with us, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?"

Today's Gospel makes it clear that the choice we are given in our life is a deadly serious one. God or a legion of demons; being enslaved and harassed by evil, or healed by the Savior of all mankind. Let us leave our tombs and run to Christ, heeding the call that has gone out to us: "With fear of God, faith, and love *draw near!*"

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Next Saturday, October 26: Fall rummage sale!** Bring to church anything you'd like to sell or donate, and come to see what others bring.

In preparation for the new icons to be installed, Steve repainted the altar, Seraphim made some modifications to the iconostasis and the curtain, and Frank has replaced the lighting. We are thinking now of repainting the entire church, and volunteers are needed!

### *Remember in your prayers*

LIVING: pr. Joseph, Sam, Richard (Johns), George (Georgiades) and family, Bill, Maura, Georgia and Scot, Karyn, Victoria, Diane, Sula, Dollie, Lawrence, Linda, Barbara, Mike, Dolores (Bingham), Angelica, Ignatius and Amy, Jonathan and Joanna, Andrei and Nyoka, Brooke.

DEPARTED: Mariana, Alex (Julie Smolen's brother), Connie (Svolos), Hilda, Andy (Michaels), Jeannie (Ferver), David (Sipos), Edmund, Richard, Dolores Patricia (Thompson), Leatrice (Totin), Abie, Nicolae (Silviu's father), Joseph (Rose's father), Fred (Dollie's uncle), Bob (Diane's father), Eugenia (Cristina's godmother), Faynasia.