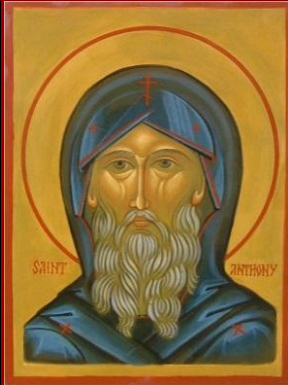


SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



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NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

3 November 2013

TONE 2 —Martyrs Acepsimas the Bishop, Joseph the Presbyter, and Aithalas the Deacon, of Persia (4th c.); Martyrs Atticus, Agapius, Eudoxius, Carterius, Styrax, Tobias, and Nictopolion, at Sebaste (ca. 320). Ven. Acepsimas the Hermit, of Cyrrhus in Syria (4th c.); St. Snadulia of Persia (4th 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 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 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

*The Lord is my strength and my song; He has become my salvation.
The Lord has chastened me sorely, but has not given me over to death.*

The Reading is 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, ascensions to heaven—and on the other hand he explains 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 couldn't see well, 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

The Reading is from the Gospel according to Saint Luke

(Luke 16:19-31)

The Lord said: "There was a rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, full of sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table; moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried; and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes, and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus in his bosom. And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.' And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.' But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if some one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if some one should rise from the dead.'"

It is easy to blame the rich man in this story: he shares nothing with poor Lazarus, he does not care for his sick and dying fellow-human, he is a monster! And yet, judging things on a strictly social and political level, the rich man may have some sort of justification. After all, some would say, the rich man was not responsible for the poverty and sickness of Lazarus; besides, Lazarus should be grateful for the crumbs he is getting! But the story requires us to approach it differently.

As always with parables in the Gospel, we are called to ask ourselves: who are *we* in this story? The answer has nothing to do with the amount of money one has accumulated, or one's social status. Theologically speaking, *all of us*—rich and poor, men and women, citizens and foreigners, etc— are Lazarus. In relation to God, we are all a Lazarus, suffering from the incurable sickness of mortality, covered with the boils of sinful and destructive habits, barely alive through our own choice of separating ourselves from the divine source of life. Now, since God is not responsible for our fallen state, could he not "just tolerate" us, the way the rich man tolerates the poor who eats crumbs from his table? But God shows us a different way.

He does not ask whether we "truly deserve" a better state; in dealing with our shortcomings, as the Psalmist says, He does not keep score: "If You should mark our iniquities, who could stand? But with You there is forgiveness." And, unlike the rich man in the parable, God does not feed us mere crumbs. Remember the invitation addressed to us on Pascha night: *"You that have kept the fast, and you that have not, rejoice today, for the table is richly laden! The calf is a fatted one, let no one go away hungry! Enjoy all the riches of His goodness! Let no one grieve at his poverty, for the universal kingdom has been revealed. Let no one mourn that he has fallen again and again; for forgiveness has risen from the grave."*

If we refuse to be like God, we automatically separate ourselves from Him, and choose the same miserable hell as the foolish rich man. God does not wish for this; therefore He sets before us many opportunities to share with others the gifts that we ourselves have so richly received from Him.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today: "Stump the priest!" instead of a sermon.

Fr. Bogdan meets with the children of our parish who are over 7.

Friday 11/8: Feast of the Holy Archangels. If you can, please attend the services held at St. Andrew or Sts. Peter and Paul.

Sunday 11/10: No service at St Anthony's \implies Panorthodox Divine Liturgy at Sts. Peter and Paul, followed by pre-Advent dinner.

Advent fast begins November 15!

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, Thomas Joseph.

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