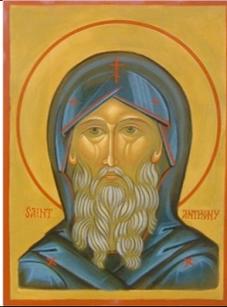


SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

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TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

16 November 2014

TONE 6 —*Holy Apostle and Evangelist Matthew (60 A.D.). St. Fulvianus, Prince of Ethiopia, in Baptism Matthew (1st 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 6): When Mary stood at Thy grave, looking for Thy sacred body, angelic powers shone above Thy revered tomb; and the soldiers who were to keep guard became as dead men. Thou led Hades captive and wast not tempted thereby. Thou didst meet the Virgin and didst give life to the world, O Thou, Who art risen from the dead, O Lord, glory to Thee.

TROPARION OF THE HOLY APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST MATTHEW (Tone 3): O holy Apostle and Evangelist Matthew, intercede with the merciful God, to grant our souls forgiveness of sins.

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 FOR THE ENTRANCE OF THE THEOTOKOS IN THE TEMPLE (Tone 4): The all-pure temple of the Savior, the most precious bridal chamber and Virgin, the treasure-house of the glory of God, today enters the Temple of the Lord, bringing with her the grace which is in the divine Spirit: whom also the angels of God do celebrate in song; for she is the heavenly tabernacle.

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon: *Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance. To Thee, Lord, have I cried, my God!*

The Reading is from the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Ephesians

(Eph 2:4-10) **Brethren: God who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, brought us to life with Christ (by grace you have been saved!), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved, through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—not because of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that God has prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.**

Today's Apostle reading also speaks of *God's* way of being rich. Indeed, we hear that our God is "rich," that He holds "immeasurable riches." Yet, God is immeasurably rich *in mercy*; His immeasurable riches are matched by His immeasurable generosity and by "the great love with which He loved us." As we hear at Confession: "Just as Your greatness is beyond compare, so also is Your mercy without limit."

God's way of being rich is the exact opposite of petty and calculated exchange. He does not balance a budget of give-and-take; rather, "**out of His great love with which He loved us**"; He squandered His trust on us "**even when we were dead through our trespasses.**" He did not share His glory only with the angels: He came to us—creatures "dead in our sins, "following the spirit of disobedience," "children of wrath" (read Eph 2:1-3, the verses right before our passage)—and He took us and "seated us with Him in the heavenly places." Unlike too many of those blessed with earthly wealth, God squanders His riches on a humanity that is so often sick, disgusting, and as good as dead; God dresses us in the garment of glory, seats us at His rich-laden table, and feeds us the food of immortality. Think of what we experience in the Eucharist!

All of the above, of course, happens "in Christ." It is, in other words, not the fruit of our goodness, but the gift of God's generosity; not of our own making, but the Maker's grace of re-creating us "in Christ." The Apostle repeats, again and again: ***By grace you have been saved! . . . By grace you have been saved, through faith; this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God.*** What, then, is our part? Saint Paul leaves us with a stunning answer: our part is simply (although it is not simple at all!) *not to miss* the many opportunities to perform the good works that God has prepared beforehand. Even our good works are laid before us as a gift, meeting us with every new day: our duty is not to avoid "walking in them."

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Gospel according to Saint Matthew

(Matthew 9:9-13) At that time, as Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax office; and He said to him, "Follow Me." And he rose and followed Him. And as He sat at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Jesus and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" But when Jesus heard it, He said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

The Reading is from the Gospel according to Saint Luke

(Luke 10:25-37) At that time, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? How do you read?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." And he said to him, "You have answered right; do this, and you will live." But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' Which of these three, do you think proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed mercy on him." And Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise!"

From very early on, the Fathers of the Church have interpreted the parable of the Good Samaritan in a spiritual key: the man who fell among robbers and is found wounded, barely alive, is fallen humankind; the priest and the Levite who come by but do not help signify the Old Testament Law, which pointed out sin but was not able to heal it; the Good Samaritan is God the Son, who came to raise the fallen, to heal the sick, to restore humankind to its lost Paradise glory; water, oil, and wine stand for the sacraments of the Church. This is not just fanciful allegory. It is not difficult to see that the first one to be our neighbor, by showing mercy, is precisely God! Indeed, this is the content of the Gospel, the Good News: God has come searching for us, fallen and wounded as we were, has come bearing healing and restoration.

Let us remember, however, that the Lord is perfectly clear about what we, the hearers, have to do: "go and do likewise!" To do so, we have plenty of pointers from the Good Samaritan. The Samaritan does not (not for an instance) ask whether the man is "worthy" of his attention or help. He also does not enquire about what got the poor man into his predicament: was the man perhaps drunk? Did he congregate with the wrong sort of people? Was it perhaps a trick to ambush innocent and naïve

passers-by? The Good Samaritan also did not mind forsaking his own interests for as much time as was necessary to help, he did not limit the extent of his expenses, and he made sure that he would remain anonymous to the one he saved.

As for us, we are called to work together with the Good Samaritan—Christ—and extend His presence and work to others here and now, so that our fellowship with Him would extend into eternity.

Like the religious scholar in this text (the “lawyer” wasn’t really a lawyer, but a specialist of the divine Law), we may think that “to love God” is a pretty clear command: it means thinking of God, reading Scripture, worshipping God in Church and in private prayer, and keeping the commandments of God. By contrast, to love our neighbor can seem less clear: should we love those outside our circle of family and friends? Should we love those who are against us, our enemies and persecutors? And if we don’t go as far as that, how exactly should we love our “neighbor”? Who exactly is our neighbor?

The fact is that people are often deluded in our claims to love God; and atheists *do* have a point when they note that deeply religious folks are often unpleasant, judgmental, self-righteous, pompous, vain, and even ready to kill those who disagree with them. It is not easy to say, even among those who claim to worship the God we believe in, just what kind of “god” it is that they believe in? Our neighbor, by contrast, should be a reality easier to spot just by looking around.

Christ turns these considerations upside down. The Gospel of the Good Samaritan contains two crucial questions—“what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” and “who is my neighbor?”—and tells us, forcefully, that love of God and love of our fellow man are like the two bars of the cross, never to be separated. Christ hears the theologian recite the *two* commandments—“**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind**” and “[**you shall love**] **your neighbor as yourself**”—in the same breath, and He praises him: you have spoken well! And then he tells us: **do this, and you will live!** And Saint John, the beloved disciple of the Lord, writes very, very clearly: “**Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. If a man says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar**” (2 John 4:20).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Next Saturday (11/23): no Vespers!**
- **Sunday, 30 November:** we are invited to participate in the patronal feast of St. Andrew Orthodox Church. Let us join them for Divine Liturgy, just as they will join us for our own feast of Saint Anthony (Sunday, January 18).

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 (and newborn Judson), 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).

