

# SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese  
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## TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

1 December 2013

**TONE 6** —Prophet Nahum (7th c. B.C.); Righteous Philaret the Merciful of Amnia in Asia Minor (792); Martyr Ananias of Persia.

### 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.

### *Glory ...*

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.

### *Now and ever ...*

KONTAKION FOR THE PREPARATION OF THE NATIVITY (Tone 3): The Virgin cometh today to the cave to give birth, ineffably to bring forth the Word eternal. Therefore, rejoice, O world, at the message; with the angels and shepherds, give glory to Him Who shall appear by His own will as a young child—He Who is from eternity God.

### *Remember in your prayers*

LIVING: Dollie and her family, Cristina and Miruna, Chris (Abraham), Sam, Richard (Johns), George (Georgiades) and family, Bill, Georgia and Scot, Karyn, Victoria, Sula, Dolores (Bingham), 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, Abie (Abraham).

## TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

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

Last Sunday's Gospel spoke of the rich young man whose attachment to riches cost him the Kingdom of God. Today's Apostle reading also speaks of riches: this time, however, we hear 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, 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.” 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 Luke  
(Luke 18:35-43)*

At that time, as Jesus drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging; and hearing a multitude going by, he inquired what this meant. They told him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.” And he cried, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent; but he cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” And Jesus stopped, and commanded him to be brought to Him; and when he came near, Jesus asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” He said, “Lord, let me receive my sight.” And Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.” And immediately he received his sight and followed Him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

Today’s Gospel tells of a spectacular conversion to Christ: a man becomes a follower of Jesus after the Lord cures him of his blindness miraculously, in an instant. If the Church has chosen this text for public reading, there is probably much to be learned from the healing of the blind man.

First off, his physical blindness is a reminder that of all of us, fallen humans, are “blind” and “deaf” to God. To be healed and made well (this is what the word “salvation” actually means: healing) is possible only by divine intervention. We cannot cure ourselves of the separation from God. The blind man knew where to go to find healing—Jesus Christ. What about me,

today? Scripture says, “The Lord is the same, yesterday and today” (Heb 13:8); therefore, the same Lord can bring salvation also to me today.

Second, this man is faithful—unafraid, unashamed, stubborn in his faith! He cries out to the Lord “**Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!**” Even when some people try to silence him, he does not give up. He knows what he wants, and he has confidence that the Lord is the right one to ask for it: armed with this faith, he bulldozes his way through the hostilities of those around him, and *asks, and does indeed receive*.

Third, note the question that the Lord poses to the blind man: **What do you want me to do for you?** At first, we may think it is a weird thing to ask (the man is blind, it shouldn't be difficult to figure out that he wants to see!). But God asks the same question, very frankly, from us as well. Why are you in Church? Why do you call yourself a Christian—**what do you want me to do for you?** And sometimes we give the wrong answer: we may be here out of habit, for the sake of family tradition, social routine, perhaps to meet like-minded people, perhaps out of fear ... perhaps we've not given it too much thought. The question still stands: do you want to be healed, do you want to be saved? The blind man is our guide: “**Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me! Lord, let me receive my sight!**”

Essentially, what is the blind man's faith? He believes it is the Lord—the God of Israel—who can do anything; but he also believes that this Lord is “the Son of David”—a true human being, one who feels what we feel, one who knows and sympathizes with our weakness. This is the faith of the Church.

It is remarkable that the man uses his very “profession” (he is “professional beggar,” one might say, because this is all he does) to gain salvation. The beggar becomes a beggar for Christ, just like the fishermen become fishers of men, and just like the thief on the cross steals Paradise with his confession of faith. Whatever we have and whoever we are can be placed in the service of Christ, so that we, too, can be saved.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Today:** Stump the priest!  
Meeting of the parish council  
Choir practice

### **'Tis the season...**

We are one month away from the great feast of the Nativity. The Nativity Fast is our opportunity to renew our relationship with Christ, so as to rejoice with the Theotokos and all creation about God's love for us. As Orthodox Christians, our preparation for Christmas should be

- to come to confession "with fear of God, with faith, and love";
- to practice generosity, especially towards those most needy;
- to forgive and ask forgiveness;
- to remember God with joy, and to pray for oneself and others
- to keep the dietary rules of the Church with humility, joining fasting with prayer and almsgiving. Before December 20, fish is allowed on Saturdays and Sundays (some allow it also on Tuesdays and Thursdays).