

# SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

[www.orthodoxbutler.org](http://www.orthodoxbutler.org)

ADDRESS: 400 S. Sixth Avenue, Butler, PA 16001

PASTOR: Rev. Bogdan Gabriel Bucur

CONTACT: 724.287.6893 (church); 412.390.8208 (priest);

E-mail : [frbogdan@orthodoxbutler.org](mailto:frbogdan@orthodoxbutler.org)

## TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

4 December 2011

*On this day, we commemorate the Greatmartyr Barbara and Martyr Juliana, at Heliopolis in Syria (ca. 306); Ven. John of Damascus (+776); St. John, Bishop of Polybotum (8th c.); Hieromartyr Alexander (Hotovitzky) (+1937). Since we will not celebrate Divine Liturgy on December 6, we are also remembering St. Nicholas, the Bishop and Wonderworker of Myra (4th 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.:)** Save, O Son of God Who art risen from the dead, 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! Save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead, who sing to Thee: "Alleluia"!*

TROPARION OF THE RESURRECTION (Tone 8): From the heights Thou didst descend, O compassionate One, and Thou didst submit to the three-day burial, that Thou might deliver us from passion; Thou art our life and our Resurrection, O Lord: glory to Thee!

TROPARION OF VEN. JOHN OF DAMASCUS (Tone 3): Ye faithful, come let us honor with songs of praise the comely sounding and sweet-spoken nightingale, who doth adorn and captivate the Church of Christ with his sweet songs: John, the all-wise Damascene, let us honor resplendently, the divine and eloquent, and the chief of hymnographers; who verily was filled to the utmost with every divine and earthly wisdom.

TROPARION OF ST. NICHOLAS (Tone 4): The truth of thy deeds has shown thee to thy flock as a rule of faith, an example of virtue, and a teacher of temperance. Therefore thou didst acquire greatness by humility, and by poverty riches. O Father and Bishop Nicholas, intercede with Christ our God that our souls may be saved!

*Glory...*

TROPARION OF SAINT ANTHONY (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.

## TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon:

*God is wondrous in His saints. In the churches bless ye God!*

*The Reading is from the Epistle to the Galatians*

(Gal 3:23-4:5)

Brethren before faith came, we were preserved under the Law, enclosed within, until the faith would afterward be revealed. The Law then was our tutor leading us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is no male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise. Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ much from the bond-servant, though he is lord of all; but he is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father. So we also, when we were children, were held in bondage under the rudiments of the world: But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order to redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

Today's reading from the Apostle Paul does not belong to the sequence of Epistle readings appointed on Sundays of the Advent; sometimes a special Epistle text is read in honor of a special saint—today the holy martyr Barbara.

Nevertheless, this passage from the Epistle to the Galatians ends with a sentence that couldn't be more relevant for our Advent journey: **“when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman ... in order that we might receive the adoption as sons.”** Note that God did not send us an extra-terrestrial, an angel, or some heavenly spirit—he sent *his Son*: his very own Word, the very Light of his glory, the very light of his Face. Neither did He come in the fullness of His glory: He came to be **born of a woman**. A real human baby, nourished on his mother's milk; one of us. And, surely, God became one of us not because *He* needed it; rather **“in order that we might receive the adoption as sons.”** Now, this adoption as sons had,

for the first Christians, a very concrete, even “technical” meaning: adoption into the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, grafting into the olive tree of Israel. To be “sons of God” means, in the Bible, to be part of the covenant—the binding mutual agreement—between God and Israel. And with the advent of the Messiah, the Christ, even the Gentiles were invited in, and made “sons.” In the words of the Apostle, **if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, heirs according to promise.**

We will hear more on this topic in the Advent Sundays to come, as the Church recalls the ancestors of Christ according to flesh.

## TODAY’S GOSPEL READING

*The Reading is from the Gospel according to Saint Luke*  
(Luke 13:10-17)

At that time Jesus was teaching in a synagogue on the sabbath. And a woman was there who for eighteen years had been crippled by a spirit; she was bent over, completely incapable of standing erect. When Jesus saw her, he called to her and said, “Woman, you are set free of your infirmity.” He laid his hands on her, and she at once stood up straight and glorified God. But the leader of the synagogue, indignant that Jesus had cured on the sabbath, said to the crowd in reply, “There are six days when work should be done. Come on those days to be cured, not on the sabbath day.” The Lord said to him in reply, “Hypocrites! Does not each one of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his ass from the manger and lead it out for watering? This daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound for eighteen years now, ought she not to have been set free on the sabbath day from this bondage?” When he said this, all his adversaries were humiliated; and the whole crowd rejoiced at all the splendid deeds done by him.

It is always good to be reminded that Jesus was not a Christian: not only theologically, in the sense that we does not “belong” to us, but we belong to Him, but also in a basic, historical, sense. He was a first-century Jew, a Palestinian rabbi, who was circumcised (we still celebrate his Circumcision on January 1), who kept the sabbath, went to the Jerusalem Temple and attended

local synagogues regularly. Today we see him *teaching* in the synagogue. True, this is a most unusual rabbi! He not only teaches the Law, he also heals miraculously, and through both teaching and healing he claims extraordinary authority in challenging the synagogue authorities and in interpreting the Law.

The teaching we receive from today's Gospel is captured best by the famous phrase in Mark 2:27, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath!" Evidently, this applies just as much to us, Orthodox Christians. It is quite easy to idolize the externals of our faith—rules of worship, rules of piety, rules of Church discipline—and to treat them as independent realities, venerable in themselves. The Lord reminds the Pharisees (*and us*) that all religious laws and practices are only means to an end: they are meant to shape our awareness of God and to reorder our lives in relation to God.

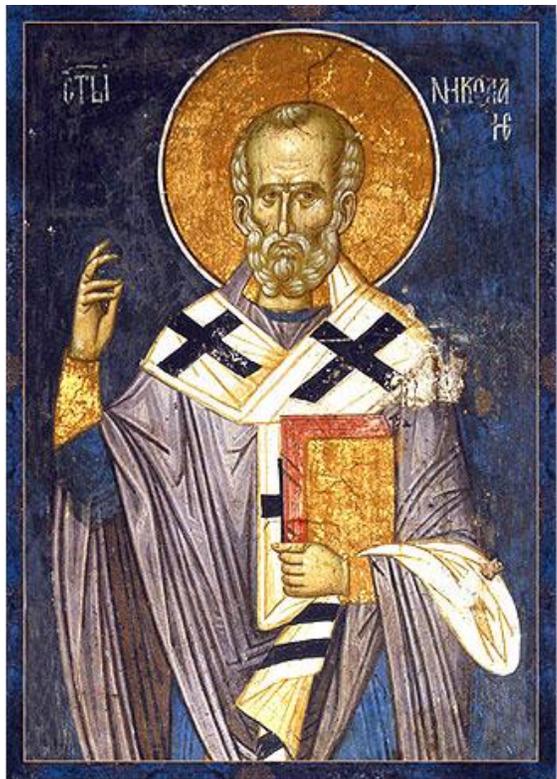
As for the miraculous healing—a chronic illness goes away "at once"—the Gospel speaks about more than just this extraordinary incident. We hear that the woman was "crippled *by a spirit*," so that "she was bent over, completely unable of standing erect," and then that "*Satan* had her bound for eighteen years." The crippled state of the woman is an image of fallen humanity: crippled, infirm, hopelessly under the power of the evil one. Like the woman, we receive, with the advent of the Lord, the truly Good News, "you are set free of your infirmity!"

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Replated chalice and censer:** we have received back our censer and big chalice. Many thanks again to all members and friends of our parish for donating the necessary money!

**Sunday, Jan. 15:** The nuns of Holy Transfiguration Monastery have confirmed that they will join us for the celebration of our patron saint, Anthony the Great, the father of monasticism. In light of last year's experience, we should think about the type of hospitality we want and are able to extend to the nuns as well to our brothers and sisters from the other two Orthodox parishes. Note that the nuns do not eat meat (but everyone else *does*)!

**Nativity services:** we will celebrate Christmas on Saturday evening, with Matins and Divine Liturgy, with Christmas party following. Exact starting time of the service will be announced soon.



As all of us, children and adults, remember Saint Nicholas, let us also try to emulate his deeds.

- **FOOD FOR HUNGRY PEOPLE:** we are collecting non-perishable items (cans, etc), to be donated to the Society of St. Vincent DePaul, which will distribute them directly to the needy persons of Butler. Please give with a generous heart, remembering St. John Chrysostom's powerful word: **"Feeding the hungry is a greater work than raising the dead"**!

### PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

**LIVING:** Abie (Abraham), Victoria (Frank's mother), Diane, Sula, Bill, Norm, Fran, Dolores (Sipos), Leatrice (Totin), Ed, Dolores (Bingham), Angelica, Karyn, Brian, Justin, Sara, Miguel, Christine, Jeaneen, Lorine, Ignatius and Amy, Jonathan and Joanna.

**DEPARTED:** George (Botsis), Michael, priest James, Gabriel, Eduard, Lance, Nancy, Petruța, Peter, Michael, William, Mariana, James, Mary Ann, Michael.