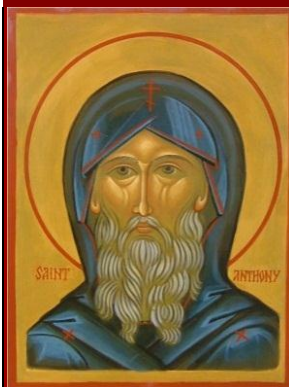


SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

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TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

8 December 2013

TONE 7 —Holy Apostles of the Seventy: Sosthenes, Apollos, Cephas, Tychicus, Epaphroditus, Cæsar, and Onesiphorus (1st c.); Holy 362 Martyrs of Africa, martyred by the Arians (477); Martyr Anthusa, at Rome (5th c.); Ven. Patapius of Thebes (8th c.); Martyr Filoftea of Argeş (13th 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 7): Thou didst shatter death by Thy Cross; Thou didst open Paradise to the thief; Thou didst turn the sadness of the ointment-bearing women into joy, and didst bid Thine Apostles proclaim a warning that Thou hast risen, O Christ, granting to the world great mercy.

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: Julie, 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; Abbess Pelagia and the nuns of St Thecla Monastery in Syria, who have been abducted.

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: *The Lord will give strength to his people. Ascribe to the Lord, O sons of God, ascribe to the Lord honor and glory.*

The Reading is from the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Ephesians
(Eph 2:14-22)

Brethren: Christ is our peace, He who made both groups one and broke down the dividing wall of enmity, through His flesh, abolishing the Law with its commandments and legal claims, in order to create in Himself one new person in place of the two, thus establishing peace, and to reconcile both with God, in one body, through the cross, putting that enmity to death by it. He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near, for through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone. Through Him the whole structure is held together and grows into a temple sacred in the Lord; in Him you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

The two groups that are mentioned in this text are the people of Israel and the Gentiles. For the longest time God had been erecting a fence around Israel, to keep them as his “treasured possession” (Exod 19:5), as the people chosen to know God and bear witness to him before all the families of the earth. With the advent of Christ, however, the dividing wall is abolished, and both groups are joined into the One Church: both Jews and Gentiles, all those who confess that God has visited His people, becoming flesh for our sake. Saint Paul does not insist on the newness that this tearing down of the wall brought *to Israel*; since he is writing to a community of Gentile Christians in Asia Minor, his message is tailored primarily *for us*, former pagans.

We were “far off” from God, and have been given most intimate “access to the Father”; we were “strangers and sojourners,” and are now counted as “fellow citizens with the holy ones.” In short, we have been taken in, adopted into Israel, and God no longer differentiates between Israel, his first born, and

the Gentiles: as long as any Jews or Gentiles are “in Christ,” they are equally part of the people of God.

Of course, the gate of Baptism through which one enters “in one Spirit” into the new reality of the One Church, is merely the beginning. Our calling is to become “a temple sacred in the Lord,” to “grow into a dwelling place of God.” In other words, Jews and Gentiles alike are called to be, individually, what the ancient Temple was: a receptacle and abode of the divine Glory; called to be, individually, what the Theotokos is: a Christ-bearer; or, like the bread and the wine that we bring to the altar, called to be transformed by the Holy Spirit, Who does not shy away from descending upon us and our gifts.

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 Christ 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, who was addressed as "rabbi" by both his disciples and his opponents, 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. Ultimately, one's closeness to God is measured in the sensitivity towards all those created in the image of God. All "religion" that renders one callous and inattentive to the fellow human beings is delusion.

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

Today: Stump the priest!

Pledges for Ignatius and Amy: the amount pledged so far is 100 dollars. Compared to the 170 from last year, we are **70 dollars short**. If you would like to help our seminarian, please talk to Georgia or Seraphim ASAP.

Nativity:

Tuesday, December 24:

9 AM – First, Third, and Sixth Royal Hours

6 PM – Ninth Royal Hour and Vespers Divine Liturgy of St. Basil

Feast of Theophany: TBA

Feast of Saint Anthony: we will celebrate our patron saint with a pan-Orthodox service on **Sunday, January 12, 2014**. We are hoping that the other two churches will join us in the celebration and the lunch following. (The plan is to have a spectacular chili lunch, with many, many types of chilis -- hot, mild, with beans, no beans, vegan, Texas style, Chicago Style, etc, etc, etc). Our guest speaker is Fr. Anthony Yazge, who is also our Dean, and in charge of the programs at the Antiochian Village.

'Tis the season...

We are only three weeks 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).