

SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

www.orthodoxbutler.org

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SUNDAY THE FOREFATHERS

14 December 2014

TONE 2. *Martyrs Thyrsus, Leucis and Callinicus of Apollonia (251); Martyrs Philemon, Apollonius, Hypatios and Arrianus of Alexandria (287).*

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, Thou giver of life, glory to Thee.

TROPARION OF THE FOREFATHERS (Tone 2): By faith Thou didst justify the Forefathers, when through them Thou didst betroth Thyself aforetime to the Church from among the nations. The Saints boast in glory that from their seed there is a glorious fruit, even she that bare Thee seedlessly. By their prayers, O Christ God, save our souls!

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 OF THE PREPARATION OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY (Tone 3): Today the Virgin cometh to the cave where she will give birth in an ineffable manner to the Word Who is before all the ages. Rejoice, therefore, O universe, when thou hearest it heralded: Glorify Him, with the angels and the shepherds, Who chose to be seen as a new-born babe, the God Who is before all the ages.

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon: *Blessed art Thou, O Lord, the God of our fathers.
Thou art just in all that Thou hast done to us!*

The Reading is from the Epistle to the Colossians

(Col 3:4-11) **Brethren: when Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience. In these you once walked, when you lived in them. But now put them all away; anger, wrath, malice, slander, and foul talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature with its practices and have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian and Scythian, slave and free man, but Christ is all and in all.**

Today's Epistle speaks about cutting out anger, malice, lies, slander, foul talk, all manner of sexual impurity, and greed. We all know pretty well that these vices estrange us from God and His Kingdom. If there is something surprising, it is that Saint Paul adds a special note to greed—covetousness: he says that greed is a form of idolatry. Idolatry? Yes, greed is idolatry! Because greed is a twisted emotional attachment—an addiction—to wealth.

It is natural to seek personal security and a place, a status, in society. But *covetousness* means that we entrust ourselves, with our aspirations and our need for trust and security, to "having" all kinds of earthly possessions. In short, it means believing that security comes from money, and that being someone comes from stuff, and lots of it. With this attitude we make money into a god and sell ourselves into slavery to this god. And Christ warns us at: "No one can serve two masters. You cannot serve both God and money!" (Mat 6:24). The same applies to all other vices. Therefore, Saint Paul writes, we must put away all these evil masters: anger, wrath, malice, slander, foul talk, and all the rest.

Let us now turn to what being a Christian means, according to the Apostle. It is not simply about doing certain things and abstaining from others. If we avoid cursing, lying, and slandering, it is not merely because they are "not nice" or "bad for society." Christian morality is not about keeping a certain set of rules, but about exercising here and now "the life of the age to come" (the last item we

confess in the Creed). The life of the age to come is, in fact, communion with Christ Himself. That is why, being with Christ in the age to come is possible only if we practice living “in Christ” *in this age*.

Note the wording of the Apostle: “**when Christ *who is our life* appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.**” In other words, when Christ appears in glory, either He will be the very content of our lives, or we will find ourselves outside of the life of the Kingdom. It is for this reason that our day-to-day existence matters tremendously: either we struggle to make Christ’s life our own, anticipating the full glory of the Kingdom to come, or we are increasingly sabotaging our chances in the age to come.

Our life in Christ is a return to true humanity. With his becoming man (as we celebrate at Christmas), the Word of God has taken on our human nature and healed it. What is more, this renewed humanity is not His personal privilege, but a gift He shares with us: “**Christ *in all!*”** Christian morality means, therefore, to give ourselves and all our life to Him, “trading in,” as it were, our fallen humanity for the life of the “new Adam.” In the words of the Apostle, “**put off the old nature with its practices** (anger, malice, lies, slander, foul talk, sexual impurity, etc) **and put on the new nature renewed after the image of the Creator.**”

TODAY’S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Gospel according to Saint Luke

(Luke 14:16-24) Then Jesus said to him, “Someone gave a great dinner and invited many. At the time for the dinner he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, ‘Come; for everything is ready now.’ But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a piece of land, and I must go out and see it; please accept my regrets.’ Another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please accept my regrets.’ Another said, ‘I have just been married, and therefore I cannot come.’ So the slave returned and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his slave, ‘Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.’ And the slave said, ‘Sir, what you ordered has been done, and there is still room.’ Then the master said to the slave, ‘Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled. For I tell you, ‘none of those who were invited will taste my dinner.’”

To speak of God’s call addressed to the estranged humanity, the Church uses the image of a rich banquet, with food and drink and much rejoicing. As we hear on Pascha night: *Rejoice today for the table is richly laden! Feast royally on it, the calf is a fatted one. Let no one go away hungry. Partake, all, of the cup of faith. Enjoy all the riches of His goodness!* Let us summarize today’s Gospel: a “great dinner” is organized; the dinner is free; “everything is ready”; “many” are invited (and it turns out, in the end, that *everyone* is invited).

The parable also portrays the petty excuses that humanity makes when receiving this call. By contrast with the greatness of the person organizing the banquet (Matthew 22 speaks of a king and a kingly banquet!), the magnitude of the celebration, and the attention devoted to sending out the invitations you, the response is embarrassing. People make their excuses arguing (unconvincingly) that they have to attend to various less pressing and much less important duties.

In its original context, those who first receive the invitation represent the people of Israel; the second group—the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame—to whom the call goes out afterwards, are the nations, the pagans. In the life of the Church, however, the parable also speaks about God’s

ongoing work of calling home his estranged children –with fear of God, with faith and love, draw near! – and about our *ongoing* work of receiving God in our lives, and *ongoing* work of drawing near to God in the banquet of the Church – *of Your mystical supper receive me today, O Son of God!*

How do we respond to God’s invitation? And if we already have responded and taken the first step (some of us by our baptism as children, others by joining the Orthodox Church later in life), how do we live out this fellowship with Christ? A Christian life is not easy. Saint Paul describes it as an ongoing work of “putting off the old nature with its practices, and putting on the new nature.” The journey is hard, the world is full of snares, and we are flawed creatures. And yet, we draw strength by reminding ourselves that we are at the Lord’s Table, called by a good and generous Lord to share in the light of His goodness. *Christ is among us! He is and ever shall be!*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Wednesday, December 17, 6:15-8 pm: Fellowship and Study Group in Cranberry. We will be reading and discussion Saint Ignatius of Antioch’s Epistle to the Ephesians. The text is available on the parish website (under “News and Current Events”).

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 24:

- **9am:** service of Royal Hours of Nativity
- **6pm:** Vespertal Divine Liturgy, followed by parish potluck

Sunday, 11 January, 1:30 pm: Outdoor Blessing of the Waters. After Divine Liturgy, we will gather at Lake Arthur in Moraine State Park, joining the parishes of Sts Peter and Paul and St Andrew, as well as the nuns at Transfiguration Monastery. The blessing of waters will “expand” our celebration of the Lord’s Baptism by bringing the blessing of the Jordan to all of creation.

Sunday, 18 January: Feast of Anthony the Great, our patron saint. As we did in previous years, we will be hosting our brothers and sisters from the other two Orthodox parishes, donate the collection to the nuns of Transfiguration Monastery (since they are the followers of Saint Anthony, “the father of monasticism”), and learn something about how the life and teachings of Saint Anthony can help us today. Our speaker will be **Dr. Timothy Becker**, a student of the Fathers and an ardent seeker for the fullness of Truth, who received his doctoral degree after working with one of the very important Orthodox scholars today, Fr. John McGuckin.

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: Rick and Seba (Michaels), Bill and Ann, Ron, 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: Phyllis (Seba’s sister), 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).