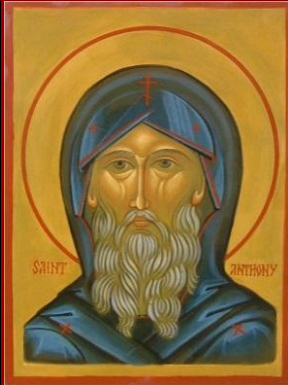


SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



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TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

15 December 2013

TONE 8 — **Sunday of the Forefathers.** Hieromartyr Eleutherius, Bishop of Illyria, and his mother, Martyr Anthia (2nd c.); Ven. Paul of Latros (955); Stephen the Confessor, Archbishop of Surozh in the Crimea (8th c.); Ven. Pardus of Palestine (6th 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 8): From the heights Thou didst descend, O compassionate One; and Thou didst submit to Thy three-day Burial, that Thou might deliver us from passion. Thou art our Life and our Resurrection, O Lord, glory to Thee.

TROPARION OF THE FOREFATHERS (Tone 2): Thou hast justified by faith the ancient forefathers, and through them Thou hast gone before and betrothed unto Thyself the Church of the Gentiles. Let the saints, therefore, take pride in glory; for from their seed sprouted forth a noble fruit, and she it was who gave birth to Thee without seed. Wherefore, by their pleadings, 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 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: *Blessed art Thou, O Lord, the God of our fathers.
For 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 even, to wealth.

We are all looking for personal security and for a place, a status, in society. This is natural. 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, money is a god, and we have sold ourselves into slavery to this god. And Christ warns us at: "No one can serve two masters. You cannot serve both God and money!" (Matthew 6:24).

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 live 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.'"

The Church uses the image of a rich banquet, with food and drink and much rejoicing, to convey God's generous call addressed to all of us. 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 recapitulate: a "great dinner" is organized; the dinner is free; "everything is ready," we hear; "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 the ongoing practice of receiving God in our lives, individually, by responding to the invitation to join the banquet of the Church. *With fear of God, with faith and love, draw near!*

How do we respond to such an invitation? If we did take 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 ("putting off the old nature with its practices, and putting on the new nature," as today's Epistle says) is not easy, 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

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.

Holy Nativity:

Tuesday, December 24:

9 AM – First, Third, and Sixth Royal Hours

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

Holy Theophany (Baptism of the Lord):

Sunday, January 5, 1PM — Blessing of Waters at Moraine State Park!

The priests and parishioners of St. Anthony, St. Andrew, and Sts. Peter and Paul will meet at Lake Arthur in Moraine State Park (exact location to be announced) for a traditional outdoor blessing of the waters. This is an old and beautiful Orthodox tradition, and well worth the effort.

We can have hot tea (with rum!) after the service ...

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... As Orthodox Christians, in preparation for Christmas...

- come to confession "with fear of God, with faith, and love";
- practice generosity, especially towards those most needy;
- forgive and ask forgiveness;
- remember God with joy, and to pray for oneself and others
- 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).