

SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

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SUNDAY AFTER NATIVITY

28 December 2014

TONE 4 — Afterfeast of the Nativity; Holy Righteous Joseph the Betrothed and James the Brother of the Lord; Apostle Nicanor the Deacon (38 A.D.); the 20,000 Martyrs of Nicomedia, including: Glycerius, Zeno, Theophilus, Dorotheus, Mardonius, Migdonius, Indes, Gorgonius, Peter, Euthymius, and the Virgins: Agape, Domna and Theophila (302); Ven. Simeon the Myrrhusher, of Mt. Athos (14th c.).

FIRST ANTIPHON

*I will praise Thee, O Lord, with my whole heart: I will speak of all Thy marvelous works. In the assembly of the upright and in the congregation, the works of the Lord are great. **R.:** Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us! They are sought out according to all His purposes. His work is honorable and glorious, His righteousness endures forever. **(R.:**) Glory... Now and ever... **(R.:**)*

SECOND ANTIPHON

*Blessed is the man that fears the Lord; that delights greatly in His commandments. His seed shall be mighty upon earth; the generation of the upright shall be blessed. **(R.:**) Save, O Son of God Who art risen from the dead, us who sing to Thee, "Alleluia"! Glory and riches shall be in His house, and His righteousness endures forever. **(R.:**) Unto the upright there arises light in the darkness: He is gracious, full of compassion and righteous. **(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 4): Having learned the joyful message of the Resurrection from the angel the women disciples of the Lord cast from them their parental

condemnation. And proudly broke the news to the Disciples, saying: Death hath been spoiled; Christ God is risen, granting the world great mercy.

TROPARION OF THE NATIVITY (Tone 4): Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, hath shone upon the world the light of knowledge. For they that worshipped the stars learned therefrom to worship thee, the Sun of Righteousness. And to know that from the East of the Highest Thou didst come; O Lord, glory to Thee.

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.

KONTAKION OF THE NATIVITY (Tone 3): Today the Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent in essence. The earth offers the cave to the unapproachable One. Angels with shepherds glorify, and Magi journey with a star; for a new Child hath been born for our sakes, the pre-eternal God.

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon: *L God is wonderful among his saints. Bless God in the congregations!*

The Reading is from Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians

(Gal 1:11-19) **Brethren, I would have you know that the gospel which was preached y me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from man, for was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it; and I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my own people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with flesh and blood, nor did I do up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia; and again I returned to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother.**

Saint Paul was *not* one of the twelve disciples of our Lord. In fact, he never even met Jesus during His earthly ministry. Moreover, in the early years of the Church, Paul (then called Saul) did his best to stop the spreading of the faith, preaching against those who called Jesus "Messiah" (in Greek "Christ") and "Lord," and putting all his time and energy into persecuting the Church. When the authorities executed St. Stephen, the first deacon and martyr, Saul was guarding the clothes of those throwing stones!

Although blind, Paul's zeal was genuine. And since God knows the heart of man, and never fails to guide those that search earnestly for His truth, at a certain moment in God's time, something extraordinary happened. In St. Paul's words, God "revealed his Son to him." Paul *did* meet the Lord—on the way to Damascus, he had a vision, an overwhelming encounter with the resurrected Jesus Christ. And it was this meeting that established him as an apostle, and a divinely authorized preacher of the Gospel.

But many were skeptical about the Gospel preached by this man (now baptized "Paul"). They kept insisting that he had not received a commission from Christ—like the other apostles—or from Peter, the leader of the apostles, or from James, the leader of the Mother-Church in Jerusalem. Yet Paul

knew what he had received from Christ: “the gospel which was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ.”

This Sunday, the first after the Nativity, we commemorate the holy Righteous Ones: Joseph the Betrothed, David the King, and James the Brother of the Lord. What do they have in common with us? They show us that, whether “cradle Orthodox” or converts to the faith, we are called, like St. Paul, to allow Christ to be revealed in us, and to gradually learn how to live as His disciples. Nobody ever said it is easy; but we can all take the advice that the same Apostle Paul gave to one of his spiritual sons: *Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am first!* (1 Tim 1:15).

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Gospel according to Saint Matthew

(Matthew 2:13-23) When the wise men had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there till I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” And he rose and took the child and his mother by night, and departed to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, “Out of Egypt have I called my son.” Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men was in a furious rage, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time which he had ascertained from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: “A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they were no more.” But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead.” And he rose and took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus reigned of Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. And he went and dwelt in the city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, “He shall be called a Nazarene.”

Christmas is not a yearly commemoration of some event that happened long time ago, in a distant place. What the Church celebrates at the Feast of the Nativity is the beginning of our own journey with Christ. And in order to know how that looks like, we meditate on the saints of God, those brother and sisters of ours who have learned to live as children of God.

Today we remember Joseph, the man betrothed to the Virgin Mary and entrusted by God with the task of protecting the newborn child and his mother. What the Church has always celebrated in him is his humility and perfect obedience towards God, and his life of selfless service to the neighbor.

Today's Gospel reading shows Joseph journeying to and from Egypt, in obedience to divine guidance. All around there is weeping and loud lamentation, a time and place of ruthless and murderous tyranny; but the righteous Joseph and those under his care, are kept safe. It is as in the verses of Ps. 91:

You who dwell in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shade of the Almighty, say to the LORD, "My refuge and fortress, my God in whom I trust!" He will shelter you with his pinions, and under his wings you may take refuge; his faithfulness is a protecting shield." Though a thousand fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, near you it shall not come. ... Because you have the LORD for your refuge, and have made the Most High your stronghold, no evil shall befall you, no affliction come near your tent."

The Righteous Joseph is, literally, "walking with God": a living icon of what our Christian life should be. May this feast of the Nativity stir up in all of us a desire to do likewise.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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).