

SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

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The 28th Sunday after Pentecost (5 December 2010)

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! (Refrain)

Upright is the Lord our God and there is no unrighteousness in Him (Refrain)

Glory... Now and ever... (Refrain)

SECOND ANTIPHON

The Lord is King, He is clothed with majesty; the Lord is clothed with strength and hath girt Himself! Refrain: Save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead, who sing to Thee, "Alleluia"!

For He established the world which shall not be shaken! (Refrain)

Holiness becometh Thy house, O Lord, unto length of days! (Refrain)

Glory... Now and ever... (Only begotten Son and Word of God ...)

THIRD ANTIPHON

Come let us rejoice in the Lord, let us shout with jubilation unto God our Savior! (Ps. 94:1) Troparion of the Resurrection

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 3: Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad! For the Lord hath done a mighty act with His own arm: He hath trampled down death, and become first born from the dead; He hath delivered us from the depth of Hades, granting the world great mercy!

TROPARION OF SAINT SABBAS THE SANCTIFIED, Tone 8: The barren wilderness thou didst make fertile with the streams of thy tears, and by thy deep sighing thou hast given fruit through thy struggles a hundred-fold. Accordingly, thou hast become a star for the universe, sparkling with miracles. Therefore, O righteous Father Sabbas, intercede with Christ God to save our souls!

TROPARION OF ST. 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.

KONTAKION AT THE PREPARATION FOR THE 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: with the angels and the shepherds, glorify Him Who hath chosen to be seen as a newborn babe: the God Who is before all the ages.

Saints commemorated today: Ven. Sabbas the Sanctified; Martyr Diogenes; Ven. Nektarios of Iagri Kelli and Philotheos of Karyes on Athos; the martyrs from the kellia of Karyes on Athos; Gurios, missionary bishop of Kazan; Venerable Nektarios of Bitolj.

LIVING: We pray for the health and well being of Elias (Peterson), Sula, Dolores (Sipos), Dolores (Bingham), Angelica (Georgia's mother), Diane, Karyn, Rodolphe, Brian, Maria, Marius, the hieromonk Alexander, and the baby Christina.

DEPARTED: Mariana, James, Mary Ann, Joseph, Katherine, Ștefan.

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon:

The saints shall rejoice in glory. Sing to the Lord a new song!

The Reading is from the Epistle to the Galatians
(Galatians 5:22-6:2)

Brethren: The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also follow the Spirit. Let us not be conceited, provoking one another, envious of one another. Brothers, even if a person is caught in some transgression, you who are spiritual should correct that one in a gentle spirit, looking to yourself, so that you also may not be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so you will fulfill the law of Christ.

To be a Christian is to be a disciple of Christ; to be disciple of Christ means, in Saint Paul's language, to be "a new creation"—no longer a descendant of Adam, determined exclusively by the Fall, but one born of Jesus Christ in the font of Baptism. To be a new creation means to be driven by the Holy Spirit: descending in the waters of Baptism (just as, in Genesis, over the waters of creation), descending over the gifts of wine and bread, the Holy Spirit "comes and abides in us" and reshapes our entire being in the image of Christ, the Son of God; the Spirit enables those who believe in Jesus as Lord and God become children of God (John 1:12). Just as dough is transformed by the active presence of yeast, so also do Christians grow and mature through the mysterious presence of the Holy Spirit. In short, the Holy Spirit works out a "spiritual leavening" of the entire person.

If all of this sounds abstract, let us remember that theology is verified in practice. As Saint Paul writes to us today, the real test comes when we examine how we “walk the Spirit.” Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control: this is how being Christian should look like. As Orthodox, if we believe that we enjoy the fullness of the Christian faith and the fullness of grace, we are held to unique standards. Rather than patting ourselves on the back for “having” the true faith—self-conceit is one of the greatest temptations for us!—we must walk the walk: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Our relation with others, including non-Orthodox, must always be governed by “a spirit of gentleness.” It is noteworthy that correcting others, even when we are called to do so, implies some sort of judgment, and therefore always puts us at risk. This is why the Apostle warns: “if someone falls into sin, correct him in a gentle spirit. *And look to yourself: you might be needing forgiveness before the day's out.*”

The spiritual treasure we are entrusted with is not ours. And, as the Apostles states elsewhere, we carry this treasure in earthen vessels. Hence the admonition: *If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit!*

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Gospel according to Saint Luke

(Luke 13:10-17)

He 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

- **HOUSE BLESSINGS:** The blessing of the house is an opportunity to invite God's presence into our homes and families. Given the academic calendar at Duquesne, Fr. Bogdan has been given permission to start house blessings immediately after Christmas. If possible, please schedule your house blessing for December 26, 27, 28, or 29.
- Sundays around 9:30: Psalm singing; Vespers on Saturday is at 6:00 pm.
- **SUNDAY, JANUARY 16:** The members of the Byzantine choir in Pittsburgh will be with us on Sunday, December 16th, so that we can have a glorious Matins (9 AM) followed by Divine Liturgy (10 AM). As discussed, we will invite our fellow Orthodox at Sts Peter and Paul and St Andrew to join us for service and for a meal afterwards.
- **FOOD FOR HUNGRY PEOPLE:** Several parishioners suggested that we should continue to collect non-perishable items (cans, etc), to be donated to the Society of St. Vincent DePaul. These would be distributed directly to the needy persons of Butler on Christmas. Truly, there is no better way of celebrating the Birth of our Lord. Let us continue the collection!



VATICAN SPLENDORS: A JOURNEY THROUGH 2000 YEARS OF FAITH AND ART *Heinz History Center, October 2, 2010 – January 9, 2011*

The exhibit features 170 works of art, many of which have never left the Vatican. See objects dating back to the first century, Michelangelo items, works by Bernini, Giotto, and others.

For tickets and information, call 1-888-582-8422 or visit www.vaticansplendors.com