

SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

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THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST 3 July 2011

Martyrs Hyacinth and Theodota of Caesarea in Cappadocia; Anatolios, patriarch of Constantinople; Venerable-martyr Gerasimos the New of Carpenision; Venerable Joachim; Venerable Nikodemos of Kozhe Lake

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.:) 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! (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! Save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead, 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 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.

KONTAKION FOR ORDINARY SUNDAYS (Tone 4): O undisputed intercessor of Christians, the mediatrix who is unrejected by the Creator, turn not away from the voice of our petitions, though we be sinners. Come to us in time with aid, as we cry unto thee in faith; for thou art good. Hasten to us with intercessions O Theotokos, who dost ever intercede for those who honor thee.

LIVING: We pray for the health and well being of Diane, Abie (Abraham), Sula, Bill, Fran, George (Botsis), Dolores (Sipos), Leatrice (Totin), Josephine, Dolores (Bingham), Angelica, Karyn, Brian, Maria, Marius, Justin, Sara, Miguel.

DEPARTED: Lance, Nancy, Petruța, Peter, Michael, William, Mariana, James, Mary Ann, Joseph, Katherine.

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon:

The Lord is my strength and my song. The Lord has chastened me sorely.

The Reading is from Saint Paul's Letter to the Romans

(Rom 5:1–10)

Brethren: since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us. While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Why, one will hardly die for a righteous man—though perhaps for a good man one will dare even to die. But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we are now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. Not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received our reconciliation.

In trying to explain what Christ was done for humankind, Saint Paul writes to the Christians at Rome that through Christ we are given the possibility of sharing the glory of God. A few lines further, he offers a different explanation: through Christ's blood we are saved from the wrath of God. The lofty idea of "sharing the glory of God"—being transformed, that is, being made holy—seems utterly separate from the frightful notion of "God's wrath" being appeased by the blood of Jesus' sacrifice. How are these two images both true and compatible, and why would the Apostle write in both these ways?

Saint Paul is expressing his Christian faith and theology by drawing on the Holy Scriptures of Israel. That is where we should first look for the meaning of "glory" and "blood," and seek to understand their connection.

Ancient Israel had a sacrificial religion: sacrifices all many kinds (oxen, lambs, birds) were brought to the temple, for a variety of reasons. It is not

that God's wrath needed to be "appeased" by blood of animals; rather, by offering a sacrifice, the giver acknowledged his wrongdoing, and symbolically offered himself to God. The priests who brought the sacrifices and prayers of the people before God did this with a precise understanding: **"This is the thing which the Lord has spoken; do it, so that the glory of the Lord may appear among you"** (Leviticus 9:6). In short, the point of sacrifices and prayers was to be able to receive "the glory of God." But what is this "glory"?

"Glory" is, in Scripture, much more than some vague "honor" given to God. The "glory" is the concrete way in which God manifests himself as a fiery presence to the patriarchs and prophets. Whenever the glory of God manifests itself, the receiver is changed. So, for instance, after his face-to face with God, "like a friend speaks to a friend" (Exod 34), the face of Moses becomes intensely luminous. This is what "glorification" is. However, when one is not properly disposed or prepared to meet God, the receiver experiences the Glory of God as a terrible "wrath of God." So, for instance, the same glory that Moses sees as the burning bush (Exodus 3) sometimes descends in judgment as a destructive fire against slanderers and persecutors; the same glory of God who guides the fugitive Hebrews as a luminous pillar, holds the incoming Egyptian army at bay. This is the "wrath of God."

Let us, then, return to today's Epistle. Saint Paul speaks about the same reality—what living in Christ does to us—in two different ways, both of them soundly rooted in the life of ancient Israel. Through Christ's sacrifice on our behalf we are no longer enemies of God, and, thus, "we are saved from the wrath of God." Being saved from the wrath of God, **"we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God."** Our hope is for the glorification that will encompass soul and body in the renewed world of the universal Resurrection. But that hope is rooted in the joy that we start experiencing here and now!

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Gospel according to Saint Matthew
(Mat 6:22-33)

"The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then, the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! 'No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love

the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.” “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Today’s Gospel is addressed to insiders of the faith. It urges us to adopt the correct perspective on reality, to look at reality with the right “eyes.” This is, indeed, crucial: as the Lord puts it, **if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then, the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!** Nevertheless, the Gospel urges the insiders of the faith to *see clearly* something that is not evident to those outside the faith.

It all starts with the proclamation at the very beginning of Christ’s preaching: *the Kingdom of heaven is at hand!* Even though the full manifestation of the Kingdom of God will occur only with the Second Coming of the Lord, and although we pray “Thy Kingdom come!”, this is *already* a reality-in-progress, and we are *already* citizens of that Kingdom. For Christians, this faith with itself a radically new way of looking at reality.

Fundamental is the insight that God’s presence (this is what “the Kingdom of God” means) pervades all of reality. “God” and “our life” are not separate realms; God is at work in the very midst of our mundane reality, and we are to be His co-workers within the concrete circumstances of our lives—involving Him in our everyday negotiation of time, money, clothes, food, daily practices, family, friends, etc.

When we invite God into our lives (and we do that as we pray: “Heavenly King ... Spirit of truth: *come and dwell in us!*” or “Our Father ... *Thy will be done!*”), all our reality will be rearranged, restructured,

reoriented. It may not be as radical as it was with the Apostles, who abandoned their jobs, left home, eventually left their country to preach the Gospel elsewhere, and finally gave their lives in martyrdom. But a change should happen nevertheless, because, essentially, we are to practice what today's Gospel teaches: **“Strive first for the Kingdom of God, and all these things will be given to you as well!”**

We are not urged to become careless about our daily life, our basic needs, our social interactions and responsibilities: we are still *in this world*, and, in fact, called to make a difference in *this world*, in *this society*, and in *this time*. We are called, however, to live with the lofty perspective that comes from knowing ourselves to be citizen of the Kingdom-to-come: knowing that we are dear to God (**“of more value”** than anything else, says the Gospel) and that God looks at us with a parent's love and care (**“your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things”**); and knowing above all that the sun of the Resurrection has already dawned, and that its full light will soon transfigure and restore this valley of tears to its former glory as the Garden of Eden.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today: memorial service for Mariana and Petruta (Ileana's sister and grandmother).

Next Saturday: Vespers, 6pm, followed by “Intro to Byzantine music”

Saturday, 16 July, 10 AM: “Making Kibbee: Session 2”! If you missed our first “kibbee seminar,” please come to learn from Bill & Anne, Norma, Dollie, and Jane, and to enjoy a couple of hours of fun. We'll eat some of the kibbee afterwards, and leave some for our next-day picnic.

Sunday, 17 July: St. Anthony parish picnic! Location TBA. The Church provides the meat and beer; if you want, bring your favorite side-dish.

24 July: Pan-Orthodox picnic. Following Divine Liturgy at St. Anthony's, anyone interested can join the parishioners of the other two churches at the American Legion in Highfield. Food is catered, tickets can be bought from Georgia.