

SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

www.orthodoxbutler.org

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TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

12 August 2012

Sunday after the Transfiguration; Martyrs Anicetus and Photius of Nicomedia (305-306); Hieromartyr Alexander Bishop of Komana in Cappadocia (3rd c.).

FIRST ANTIPHON

Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, in the city of our God, in His holy mountain. Refrain: Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us!

Thou settest fast the mountains by Thy strength, Thou art girt about with power. Thou coverest Thyself with light as with a garment. (R.:)

The mountains shall rejoice at the presence of the Lord, for He cometh; yea, He cometh to judge the earth. (R.:)

SECOND ANTIPHON

His foundations are in the holy mountains. The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Refrain: O Son of God, Who wast transfigured on Mount Tabor: save us who sing to Thee, Alleluia!

Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. (R.:)

Zion is our mother, a man shall say, and such a man was born in her; and the Most High Himself hath established her. (R.:)

THIRD ANTIPHON

Of Thy mercies, O Lord, will I sing forever!

TROPARION OF THE TRANSFIGURATION (see below)

The heavens shall confess Thy wonders, O Lord, and Thy truth in the congregation of saints. TROPARION

Blessed is the people that knows jubilation. TROPARION

O Lord, in the light of Thy Face shall they walk, and in Thy Name shall they rejoice all the day long. TROPARION

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 1): While the stone was sealed by the Jews, and the soldiers were guarding Thy most pure body, Thou didst arise on the third day, O Savior, granting life to the world. For which cause the heavenly powers cried aloud unto Thee, O Giver of life: "Glory to Thy Resurrection O Christ; glory to Thy Kingdom; glory to Thy Providence, O Thou Who alone art the lover of mankind!"

TROPARION OF THE TRANSFIGURATION (Tone 7): Thou wast transfigured on the mount, O Christ our God, revealing Thy glory to Thy disciples as far as they could bear it. Let Thine everlasting light shine upon us sinners! Through the prayers of the Theotokos, O Giver of Light, glory to Thee!

Glory... TROPARION OF SAINT ANTHONY: 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 TRANSFIGURATION (Tone 7): Thou wast transfigured on the mountain, O Christ God, and thy disciples beheld thy glory as far as they could bear it; so that when they would behold Thee crucified, they would understand that Thy passion was voluntary, and would proclaim to the world that Thou art truly the Radiance of the Father.

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon:

Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us. Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous!

The Reading is from Saint Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians

(1 Cor 4:9-16)

Brethren, God has revealed us, the apostles, last of all, as those appointed to death; for we have become a spectacle to the world—both to angels and to humans. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are glorified, but we are dishonored. Even to this present hour we both hunger and thirst, we are naked, and are buffeted, and are restless; and we labor, working with our own hands. While reviled, we bless; while persecuted, we endure; while blasphemed, we exhort; we have become the filth of the world and the off-scouring of all things, even until now. I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For even though you have a myriad of tutors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for I begat you in Christ Jesus through the Gospel. I urge you, therefore, be imitators of me.

The ministry of the Holy Apostles, as laid out by the Lord, was to bring the Good News to the entire world, and to make disciples of any and all who want to taste the new life in Christ. "Making disciples" is much more than providing information, or organizing disciplined battalions of followers. It means sharing the life of those who are being trained in discipleship, and gradually reshaping them in the image and likeness of a living model.

This is what the followers of the Lord experienced in their three years of following Jesus Christ; this is what they continued to experience even more intensely during the forty days after the Resurrection, when the Lord appeared to His disciples and spoke about the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). The Holy Apostles received the mandate to bring others into this spiritual fellowship with the Risen Lord: to make anyone who is willing into a disciple—a disciple *of Christ!* And Saint Paul writes: **Even if you should have countless guides to Christ, yet you do not have many fathers, for I became your father in Christ Jesus through the Gospel. Therefore, I urge you, be imitators of me.**

But why does Paul urge the Corinthians to imitate *him*? Why not "imitate Christ"? And why does he speak of himself as their *father*?

Let us note, first, that in the same letter, the Apostle writes: **Be imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ** (1 Cor 11:1). Even in today's Epistle, Saint Paul compares "guide *to Christ*" to "father *in Christ*": both "guide" and "father" are explained, specifically, in relation to Christ! It is understood that a "guide to Christ" leads not to Paul, but to Christ. So also with spiritual fatherhood: this much more intimate relation also results in making Paul's disciples into children of Christ.

Christian discipleship today occurs in parishes and monasteries. "Each according to his own gift, one in this manner, and another in that," as the Holy Apostles writes elsewhere (1 Cor 7:7). Even though we have few reliable guides to Christ today, and even fewer fathers in Christ, God will always provide for those who seek him earnestly, and whoever wants to be saved will be given the proper avenue of discipleship. The Lord promised to be us always, unto the end of the ages.

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Gospel according to Saint Matthew

(Mat 17:14-23)

At that time, a man came up to Jesus and kneeling before Him said, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly; for often he falls into the fire, and often into the water. And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him." And Jesus answered, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me!" And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured instantly. Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" Jesus said to them, "Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you. This kind never comes out except by prayer and fasting!" As they were traveling together through Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him, and He will rise on the third day."

As always, we look at today's Gospel not only for its "story"—the miraculous healing of a demon-possessed child—but for what it says about us and our state today. It is noteworthy that the tortured existence of that child, as well as the shocking inability of the Apostles to provide healing (they are themselves puzzled about the incident) are due, the Lord says, to lack of faith. And it is about faith and its transformative power that Christ speaks to his disciples "in private," after the healing. We learn that "nothing is impossible" once we learn to live in faith.

What exactly is "faith," then? Let us remember, first, that today's Gospel text follows immediately after the Transfiguration account. It is there, on Mount Tabor, that three of the disciples have seen Christ in the blazing light of his glory. That "the boy was cured instantly" is not surprising if we remember Who it is that touched him: the Lord of glory, the Light and Life of the world. On Tabor, however, we also have a glimpse of what God intends for the restored humanity of the age to come.

What about us here and now, in the meantime—living as fallen creatures in this fallen world, even as we confess in the Creed, that we "look for the Resurrection and the life of the age to come"? The Gospel proclaims that the Kingdom of God has *already* dawned; we *already* experience a measure of the new reality, in which "God is with us, with His grace and love of mankind" (the priest proclaims this in the prayer following the main meal of the day). Miracles are the "normal" of the Kingdom to come, shining through, even for a single moment, in the fallen world. The key is faith.

Faith is the medium through which a glimpse of the Kingdom of Heaven can be received in our everyday lives. Indeed, it is *faith* that allows us to experience the healing power of Christ (and lack of faith prevents it, as we see with the Lord's disciples today). To prevent us from misunderstanding faith as a search for magical superpowers, today's Gospel reading ends with the truth that undergirds our faith, hope, and love: **"The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him, and He will rise on the third day."** We remember this every time we are called to draw near *with faith* to receive the Body of Christ, so as to taste the power and glory of the Resurrection even here and now.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today: brief meeting of the parish council (all interested persons are welcome to join us) to discuss possibilities of providing a modest but constant help for Ignatius and Amy at seminary.

DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS
Tuesday, 14 August, 6:30pm: Vesperal Liturgy,

Saturday, 18 August): Vespers, 6:30pm.

PARISH PICNIC: next Sunday, 19 August. After Liturgy, we will leave for Abie Abraham's place (142 Hoffmann Lane, Renfrew, PA 16053). If you want to contribute to the menu, please use the sign-up sheet.

Icon Projects: We have two major projects at hand. First, Dollie will soon start working on the large icon of the Mother of God, which will be installed in the holy altar. She wants to enlist the children to help her with some of the work (it is a large surface!). Second, we have some beautiful icons of saints that we will be applying on wood using mod podge; for this we will need to find a Saturday on which several parishioners, young and old, can come together and work. The icons will eventually be adorning both the altar and the upper register of the church walls.

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: Peter and family, Georgia and Scot, Richard (Michaels), Karen (Joanna's mother), Victoria (Frank's mother), Diane, Sula, Fran, Dolores (Bingham), Angelica, Karyn, Ignatius and Amy, Jonathan and Joanna, Andrei and Nyoka.

DEPARTED: Richard, Dolores Patricia (Thompson), Leatrice (Totin), Ed (Joanna's grandfather), Abie, Nicolae (Silviu's father), Joseph (Rose's father), Fred (Dollie's uncle), Bob (Diane's father), Michael, priest James, Gabriel, Lance, Nancy (Dunkle), Eugenia.