

SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

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TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

26 August 2012

— **Tone 3.** Martyrs Adrian and Natalia and 33 companions, of Nicomedia (4th); Ven. Adrian, Abbot of Ondrusov (Valaam monastery—1550).

FIRST ANTIPHON

It is good to give praise unto the Lord, and to chant unto Thy Name, O Most High! **R.:** 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! 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 by death, and become the first-born from the dead. He hath delivered us from the depths of Hades, granting the world great mercy!

TROPARION FOR STS. ADRIAN AND NATALIE (Tone 3): Thou didst deem that faith which bears salvation to be riches never lost or plundered. Thou didst forsake thy fathers' impiety, and thou didst follow thy Master, becoming rich in His divine gifts, O glorious Adrian. With the godly-minded Natalie, who emboldened thee, entreat Christ God, O Martyr, that our souls be saved!

Glory ... 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.

Now and ever ... KONTAKION OF STS. ADRIAN AND NATALIE (Tone 4): O Martyr of Christ, Adrian, thou didst keep in thy heart the words of thy godly and devoted wife Natalie. With her thou didst accept every kind of suffering, and didst obtain the crown of victory!

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon: *Sing praises to our God, sing praises.
Clap your hands, all ye nations!*

*The Reading is from Saint Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians
(1 Cor 15:1-11)*

Brethren, I would remind you of the Gospel that I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, by which you are saved if you hold it fast—otherwise you believe in vain! For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the

Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

In today's Epistle reading, Saint Paul speaks to the Corinthians about **"the Gospel he preached to them."** It is always good to remind ourselves that the Gospel, or "Good News", does not refer primarily to the four biographies of the Lord Jesus Christ, written by Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John. These written documents appeared *later* than the oral apostolic preaching—the "Gospel"—about Jesus Christ. Here is how Saint Paul summarizes the Gospel: **"Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, he was buried and was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures."**

The first thing to note is that the Good News is, essentially, Christ: having tasted the life of fallen humanity even unto death, He has vanquished sin and death; therefore, *in Him* is the new life that God has in store for us, the resurrected life, life free from the consequences of the Fall. This is why we refer to Christ as "our hope" (1 Tim 1:1)—more specifically: Christ in us, the hope of glory (Col 1:27).

This Good News, as the Apostle says *twice* in a sentence, is "according to the Scriptures"! (by "Scriptures" he means the Old Testament, for the New did not yet exist). In other words, the Gospel is the fruit of God's promises to Israel, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to Moses and the prophets. We understand this if we search the Scriptures, which point to Christ (John 5:39), and if we understand the Scriptures in light of His Resurrection (Luke 24:25-27).

Indeed, "salvation comes from the Jews," as the Gospel of John (4:22) forcefully proclaims, it has been graciously extended to the Gentiles, and has now reached even us. We are the latest generation whom the Good News has been delivered, the Gospel by which we are saved *if we hold it fast!* That is why Saint Paul's message applies fully to us, as well: **Brethren, I would remind you of the Gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, by which you are saved if you hold it fast—otherwise you believe in vain!**

To Believe Fruitfully: True faith must not be confined to rational assent, nor to emotional verve, nor to feelings, nor to a casual openness to the glowing visions of faith. And "trying a little" is not enough! We must rather embrace the Gospel in our nous, in our spirit, that deep center of our being, which Saint John of Damascus calls "the purest part of the soul." The Gospel is not mere words, but the Word Himself; it is not understanding, but Incarnate Wisdom; it is not feelings, but conversion. The Prophet David teaches that we may be victorious against whatever seeks "after our soul" and speaks "vain things and craftiness" when we become "like a deaf man" who hopes only in the Lord (see Ps 37:12-15). To be fruitful we will have to cry out repeatedly, over and over, time and again, "Spirit of truth...come and abide in us and cleanse us!" (adapted from "DYNAMIS")

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Gospel according to Saint Matthew

(Mat 19:16-26)

At that time, a man came up to Jesus, saying, "Teacher, what good deed must I do, to have eternal life?" And he said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? One there is who is good! If you want to enter life, keep the commandments." He said to him, "Which?" And Jesus said, "You shall not kill, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The young man said to him, "All these I have observed; what do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions. And Jesus said to his disciples. "Truly, I say to you, it will be hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." When the disciples heard this they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Here is a man who, by any standards of human morality, is a pretty decent person: he does not cheat on his wife, he behaves well with his parents, he does not steal, he does not slander or bring false accusations against others, and he

did and most likely never will kill anyone. We can assume that there many other good things to be reported about him—for one, he is a deeply religious person (his concern here is for “eternal life”); he also shows appropriate respect for teachers of the Law (note how politely he addresses Jesus); and there probably are many vices that he has managed to avoid. It Moreover, in the parallel text, in the Gospel of Mark, he’s acted like that **“since his youth” (Mk 10:20)**, so that the Lord himself, **“looked at him and loved him” (Mk 10:21)**. A decent person, whom we would do well to emulate!

And yet, even while we recite the litany of this man’s qualities, the Gospel seems to sets him forth as an example of *what to avoid*. The word this man receives from Christ comes as a hard blow to his self-esteem: what he has been doing is far from enough, and what he needs to do is impossibly hard for him. A very depressing answer, indeed, because Jesus puts his finger on a raw nerve: this man was very rich (and liked it), and he would have to give everything up. **“When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions.”**

Had the man not been terribly attached to money, but instead sexually promiscuous, the answer would probably been different; perhaps something like “One thing you still lack. Cut out your promiscuity, start living in chastity as of right now, and you will have treasure in heaven.” And the man would have become sad, imagining himself unable to remain faithful to a single woman (chastity in marriage) or faithful to a vow of abstinence (as in monastic chastity). Had he been under the control of vanity, Jesus would have proposed the practice of humility; had he been plagued by anger or violence, the answer would have pointed to *that* problem, and proposed the appropriate spiritual medicine.

In short, this Gospel is not singling out riches as the major impediment to salvation, but speaks about *any sin* that may hold one back from salvation; and, of course, it is not about a particular rich man unwilling to part with his riches, but applies to each and every one of us. In truth, there is no “objective” scale of sins, and no “objective” greatest sin: the greatest sin is always *my* sin. And the word of Christ is not easy to swallow: “it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for *you* to enter the kingdom of God.” When Jesus spoke these words to the rich man, the disciples were positively shocked: **“Who then can be saved?”** Obviously, nobody can! It is, as the Lord states, **“impossible for human beings.”**

Note that, before speaking to the rich man about his salvation, the Lord points to the goodness of God: **“One there is who is good!”**—God, that is. We

should therefore not react like the rich man, who became sad and preferred to leave as soon as he realized that God was not offering him a confirmation of his decent life, but a call to radical change. Note the encouragement: the very impossibility of our salvation and life in God is made possible for us by God himself.

The call of today's Gospel is echoed by our Liturgy, again and again: "let us commit ourselves and all our life to Christ our God ... for You are a good God and You love humankind"! In other words, deny yourself and your sins, entrust yourself to Christ, allow Him to clothe you with His grace, allow Him to make possible that which is impossible. "Salvation belongs to the Lord," says the Psalmist; and God extends his salvation to all who let go of themselves and receive life from the Giver of true life.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today: one year- memorial for Archbishop James Deep, the first pastor of our community (1970-1992), and his wife Khouria Mae.

Reminder: if you want to offer some financial support for Ignatius and Amy, please turn in your pledge cards to Leigh today.

This past week (Sunday, Monday, and Friday) we had our parish picnic, a big clean-up day, and a rummage/bake sale. **MANY THANKS TO ALL THOSE WHO HAVE WORKED HARD TO ORGANIZE AND RUN THESE EVENTS!**

A new year of Sunday School will start with the blessing of the children, parents, and teachers on Sunday, September 16.

Saturday 29 September, 6:30 PM: *Introduction to Orthodoxy!* We will learn about the life of Anthony the Great, as told by St Athanasius of Alexandria. After some Q&A, we will conclude by praying together the Akathist of St Anthony the Great.

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, Jackie (Ed's friend).

DEPARTED: Priest James and khouria Mae, 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, Gabriel, Lance, Nancy (Dunkle), Eugenia (Cristina's godmother).