

# SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

[www.orthodoxbutler.org](http://www.orthodoxbutler.org)

ADDRESS: 400 S. Sixth Avenue, Butler, PA 16001

PASTOR: Rev. Bogdan Gabriel Bucur

CONTACT: 724.287.6983 (church); 412.390.8208 (priest);

E-mail : [frbogdan@orthodoxbutler.org](mailto:frbogdan@orthodoxbutler.org)

## THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

*Sunday Before the Elevation of the Cross.*

*Afterfeast of the Nativity of the Theotokos.*

**11 September 2011**

Martyrs Demetrius, his wife Euanthia, and their son Demetrian, at Skepsis on the Hellespont (1st c.); Martyrs Diodorus, Didymus, and Diomedes, of Laodicea; Martyr Ia and 9,000 Martyrs with her, of Persia (362-364); Ven. Theodora of Alexandria (474-491); St. Euphrosynus the Cook, of Alexandria (9th c.).

LIVING: Diane, Abie (Abraham), Sula, Bill, Norm, Fran, George (Botsis), Dolores (Sipos), Leatrice (Totin), Dolores (Bingham), Angelica, Karyn, Brian, Maria, Marius, Justin, Sara, Miguel, Christine, Eduard.

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

## 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.:) 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 4): Having learned the joyful message of the Resurrection from the angel, the women Disciples 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 FOR THE NATIVITY OF THE THEOLOKOS (Tone 4): Thy nativity, O Theotokos, hath proclaimed joy to the whole universe; for from thee did shine forth the Sun of righteousness, Christ our God! Annulling the curse, and bestowing the blessing, abolishing death and granting us life everlasting.

*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 FOR THE NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS (Tone 4): By thy holy birth-giving, O pure one, Joachim and Anne were delivered from the reproach of barrenness; and Adam and Eve were delivered from the corruption of death; thy people do celebrate it, having been saved from the stain of iniquity, crying unto thee: "The barren one gives birth to the Theotokos, who nourisheth our life!"

## 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 Epistle to the Galatians*

(Gal 6:11-18)

Brethren, see with what large letters I am writing to you, with my own hand. It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that would compel you to be circumcised, and only so that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For even those who receive circumcision do not themselves keep the law; but they desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh. But far be it from me to glory, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision: what counts is to be a new creation! Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule, upon the Israel of God. Henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.

It is clear that Saint Paul is writing here about a matter he views as extremely important. The first line about the "large letters" means something like "I want to emphasize in the bold scrawls of my personal handwriting the immense importance of what I have written." What was the problem? Saint Paul was writing to warn the Galatians against certain Christian leaders who compelled all new converts to the faith to practice circumcision. He warned that such "missionaries" were in fact interested in cultivating their own public image in the Christian community, while at the same time "keeping a low profile" in the larger society, so as to avoid prosecution by the Roman Empire (as long as Christians would be perceived as a type of Judaism, they would not be persecuted, but tolerated, like the Jews).

The false missionaries were not "crazy" to insist on circumcision; it was, to them and to many, a definite mark of religious piety. Today, it would be things like not eating certain foods on certain days, dressing in a certain way, abstaining from this or that, etc. Saint Paul's point is that, ultimately, all these things must be placed in a different perspective: what truly matters is

not that *we* do this or that, or that *we* keep this or that rule of piety; **what matters is that we become a “new creation”**—and this is *God’s* work in us. Indeed, As the Apostle writes elsewhere (2 Cor 4:6), the same God who spoke at creation, *let there be light*—and it was light, now shines in our hearts, drawing us out of darkness and re-creating us into children of the light. “A new creation” means that our Christian life is *God’s* liturgy in us, where we are *co-workers* with God.

## TODAY’S GOSPEL READING

*The Reading is from the Gospel according to Saint John*  
(John 3:13-17)

The Lord said, "No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him."

The Church has selected this text to be read on the Sunday prior to the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross (September 14). We learn that there is only one *access* to God, namely the cross of Jesus Christ, uniting earth and heaven; and that those who place their hope in the Crucified One shall inherit the eternal life of his Resurrection. This is why, as we hear in today’s reading from the Apostle, a Christian is not ashamed or embarrassed that God the Son has accepted death by crucifixion; on the contrary, we “I glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.” The Gospel section ends with a crucial statement that should accompany us in our Christian life: **God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.**

The message preached by our Lord and entrusted for us to live by and to bring to the world is called “the Good News”: the good news about a good, gracious, forgiving, and healing God, who draws near to us, brings His Kingdom into this world, opens up the gates of Paradise, and bids us enter; a

God who makes repentance—turning around to Him—worthwhile and appealing, because He promises not to bear a grudge; a God who helps us to live and die with courage by showing through His own example that death is the first step into the Resurrection. A good God, who has come not to condemn us, but to save us.

Somehow, we must always be reminded that the Good News is truly *good*; otherwise we tend to remake God in the image of our own fears, and disfigure the Gospel into some kind of “grim news” about condemnation, destruction, and punishment. What kind of God would want to bully us into repenting? And what fruits would such a “repentance” bear? God is waiting that we may be convinced of His love and grace: He sent the Son into the world to save us, not to condemn us; whoever believes in Him does not perish, but tastes eternal life!

*Today we mark ten years since the attacks of September 11, 2001. We pray for those who have lost their lives on that day and in the wars since then, and for all the individuals and the families who bear the weight and bitterness of this decade of suffering. As Christians, our call is to be a sign of the Kingdom of God even in this valley of tears; to pray “for those who love us and for those who hate us”; and to avoid the subtle snares of the evil one. This we can only do when God’s grace comes and dwells in us, and cleanses us from all impurity. Therefore, we pray:*

**O Lord our God, Thou who art good and lovest mankind: mercifully regard the ground of our heart, which has been rendered grievously barren by the thorns of hatred, self-love, and countless transgressions; and letting a drop of the grace of Thine all-holy Spirit fall, do Thou richly irrigate it, that our heart may be fruitful and bring forth constant remembrance of Thee; that all evil passions be uprooted from our heart; and that all demonic delusion be put to flight. Thus do Thou cause Thy love to dwell within us, O most compassionate Lord, so that, in accordance with Thy commandment, we may truly love not only our brethren and friends, but also our enemies, that we may do good to those who hate us, and may earnestly strive for their salvation. We humbly pray Thee, the Benefactor of all: hear us swiftly, inasmuch as Thou lovest mankind, and have mercy on us.**

***Lord, have mercy! Lord, have mercy! Lord, have mercy!***

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Saturday, 17 September:** Vespers, 6pm, followed by Intro to Byzantine Chant.

**Donations for the Chalice:** We need to replat our larger chalice, in preparation for our patronal feast of St. Anthony (Jan 17). This is our common cup, to which we are all called to “draw near in fear of God, with faith and love.” As a symbol of that unity and equality, we are collecting no more than 5 dollars per person.

**A new year of Sunday School starts today.** We are blessed to have a group of enthusiastic and highly competent Sunday School teachers: Stephanie, Stacey, Jennifer and Jeaneen. Please keep them and their ministry in your prayers, as they are planting the seeds of the next generation of Orthodox in our area.

### BLESSING OF THE NEW SUNDAY SCHOOL YEAR

*O Lord Jesus Christ, our God Who, when Thou wast made man, in Thy childhood and youth in Nazareth, wast submissive and obedient to Thy Most Pure Mother and Thy holy provider and guardian Joseph, leaving us an image of a pure childhood: do Thou Thyself, O Lover of mankind, enlighten, help, and inflame with Thy love these children; preserve and grow them in the Orthodox faith, that they may increase in wisdom and in fulfilling of Thy commandments, and become heirs of Thy Kingdom. Bless also their parents and families, and grant that they may see their children grow like olive shoots around their table. For Thou art a God mighty in mercy and gracious in strength, and to Thee we send up glory, together with Thy Father who is from everlasting, and Thine all-holy, good, and life-giving Spirit: now and ever, and unto ages of ages, Amen!*

*O Lord Jesus Christ, our God Who didst send out Thine Apostles to make disciples of all nations, to baptize them and teach them Thy new commandment of love; and Who in Thy church hast appointed apostles, and prophets, and teachers: stretch forth Thy hand from Thy holy dwelling-place on high heaven and bless these teachers, strengthening them for this ministry which Thou hast set before them. For Thou, O Lord, hast said, “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God,” and Thou art the illumination of our souls and bodies, O Christ our God, and to Thee we send up glory, together with Your Father who is from everlasting, and Your all-holy, good, and life-giving Spirit: now and ever, and unto ages of ages, Amen!*