

# SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

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## SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

30 September 2012

— **Tone 8.** Hieromartyr Gregory, the Enlightener of Armenia (ca. 335); Martyrs Rhipsime, Gaiana and 35 holy virgins with them, of Armenia (4th c.); Michael, First Metropolitan of Kiev (992).

### 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 8): From the heights Thou didst descend, O compassionate One; and Thou didst submit to Thy three-day Burial, that Thou might deliver us from passion. Thou art our Life and our Resurrection, O Lord, glory to Thee!

APOLYTIKION OF ST. GREGORY THE ILLUMINATOR (Tone 4): By sharing in the ways of the Apostles, thou didst become a successor to their throne. Through the practice of virtue, thou didst find the way to divine contemplation, O inspired one of God; by teaching the word of truth without error, thou didst defend the Faith, even unto the shedding of thy blood. O Hieromartyr Gregory entreat Christ God to save our souls.

*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 (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!

## TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon: *Make your vows to the Lord our God and perform them. God is known in Judah; His Name is great in Israel.*

*The Reading is from the Second Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians*  
(2 Cor 6:16-7:1)

Brethren, we are the temples of the living God; as God said, "I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you, and I will be a

**father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and make holiness perfect in the fear of God.**

Last Sunday, the Epistle's message was encapsulated in Saint Paul's appeal to the Corinthians and to all of us: **I urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain!** As we continue reading, we receive today the following word: **We are the temples of the living God; God said, "I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God!"**

Let us note, first of all, that Saint Paul speaks of "the living God." This is neither some vague "higher being" out there, nor some abstract notion of "God" that provides an explanation for all that we do not understand about ourselves and the world. "The living God" is the God of whom the patriarchs and prophets have testified, the One whom they met and whose power they experienced; the God whose Face the Apostles have seen in the Face of Jesus Christ; the One whom we address as "Father," who adopts us as his beloved children. The religious supermarket of our days offers many types of "gods" and "idols" to bow down to. Yet, the only God worth worshipping, the only God that can touch and heal our lives is the "living God," the God who has come to lived our life and vanquish our death.

Our state is far from ideal: it is a state of servitude, uncleanness, and estrangement. However, God—the living God—cares for his creature, and seeks us out. How does this intimacy with God look like? Scripture provides us with icons that give us a glimpse of this mysterious encounter, which words fail to describe.

One such image is that of a face-to-face encounter, "like a friend speaks to his friend": this is how Moses experiences God on Mount Sinai (Exod 33:11). Another image is that of God "walking" among his people: God moves about in the garden of Eden (Gen 3:8), later in the tent of worship (2 Sam 7:6), in the camp of Israel (Deut 23:15), and, more generally, He is in the midst of chosen people (Lev 26:12). This is also what Saint Paul says about Christians: **I will move among them, and I will be their God.** Finally, there is the image of a temple filled with the luminous presence of God. Just as the temple was designed to be a receptacle of the glory of God, so also are we called to become temples of Christ, sacred places where the very Glory of God is present and from which the light of glory shines out into the world.

In short, then, to be a Christian means to strive to become a temple of God. This involves, of course, an effort on our part. God's voice beckons us: **Come out, be separate, touch nothing unclean ... let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement.** To take one's faith seriously means to engage in an ongoing struggle to separate oneself from whatever is evil, ugly, impure, and contrary to our covenant with God in Christ. This growth in holiness ("to make holiness perfect," as Saint Paul writes) is not a matter of solitary effort, but a cooperation between us and God; essentially, it means making ourselves more and more available to the work of grace in our mind, soul, and body.

Any place that has been consecrated and turned into a worship site must be kept clean and beautiful. It is not different in our case: advancing in holiness calls for repeated consecration of ourselves to God. Let us be encouraged by the words of the Holy Apostle, **We are the temples of the living God!** And: **I urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain.**

## TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

*The Reading is from the Gospel according to Saint Luke*  
(Luke 6:31-36)

The Lord said, "And as you wish that men would do to you, do so to them. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

We are not called to manufacture and squeeze out some of "our" mercy and love towards others. Rather, we are called to share a Gift that we have ourselves in abundance: to pass on and extend the mercy of God which we have received at Baptism and continue to receive every day. So, it is because we have been forgiven that we are able to forgive, and it is because God is merciful to us that we become free and able to extend His mercy to others.

"Mercy": it is hard to find a word more frequently used in our services. If there is anything we ask of God, it surely is mercy. Sometimes we even

repeat “Lord, have mercy!” twelve times or forty times—not that God really needs such constant and insistent reminders, but to make sure that *we* understand how much we are in need of God’s mercy.

Our relationship with God and our relationship with fellow-humans are two sides of the same reality. Scripture speaks plainly. In the Old Testament: **“I desire mercy, not sacrifice!”** (Hosea 6:6); and in the New: **“if you don’t love your brother, whom you see, how can you imagine to love God, whom you don’t see?”** (1 John 4:20) And in today’s Gospel these two dimensions our Christian life are again brought together. To paraphrase the last line of our text: “Be merciful to your fellow-humans, just as God is a merciful Father to you!”

And just how merciful should we be? For Christians, the standard is higher than for others, as the Gospel calls for a measure of mercy that seems, at first, unreasonable: be merciful *like God*, forgive like God forgives, love like God loves. Clearly, this is not easy (to put it mildly). In fact, the Gospel does recognize that most of the things that Christ asks of us are impossible for any human being on earth. However, if the standard is so high for Christians, it is because we ought to have learned that God has come to dwell *among us*, in order to live *in us*, and make the impossible possible.

### ***Remember in your prayers***

LIVING: Ed and family, 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: David (Sipos), Edmund (Ed’s uncle), 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).

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Today:** memorial service for David Sipos (Dollie's son)

**Today:** please make good on your pledges of support for Ignatius and Amy. We are sending them a little help at the end of each month.

**Next Sunday:** choir practice, 9:15!

**Next Sunday:** *stump the priest!*

**QUESTION:** Would it be better to have our *Introduction to Orthodoxy* every 4-6 weeks on Sundays—after Liturgy, maybe after we've had a bite—rather than Saturday?

**Sts Peter and Paul Ukrainian Orthodox Church celebrates its 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

+ **Friday, October 12, at 6:30pm: Great Vespers**, followed by a wine and cheese reception on the 2nd Floor of the Ukrainian Hall.

+ **Saturday October 13, at 9,30: Hierarchical Divine Liturgy**, with Archbishop Antony and Bishop Daniel of the Ukrainian Church, and concelebrated by Fr. Paisius and visiting clergy.

A festive buffet brunch will be held at The Atrium. Appetizers noon to 1pm, followed by a buffet. Due to catering constraints, please send in your reservation and payment by Monday October 1, 2012. Adults \$40, children \$20.00.