

SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

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Sunday, 29 August 2010

TROPARION OF THE RESURRECTION, tone 5: Let us believers praise and worship the Word, co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit, born of the Virgin for our salvation; for he took pleasure in ascending the Cross in the flesh, to suffer death, and to raise the dead by his glorious Resurrection.

TROPARION AT THE BEHEADING OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST, tone 2: The memory of the righteous is celebrated with songs of praise, but the Lord's testimony is sufficient for thee, O Forerunner. Thou wast shown indeed to be the most honorable of the prophets, for in the waters thou didst baptize Him who had been proclaimed. After suffering with joy in behalf of the truth, thou didst proclaim even to those in Hades the God who appeared in the flesh, who taketh away the sin of the world and granteth us great mercy.

TROPARION OF ST. 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 AT THE BEHEADING OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST, tone 5: The glorious beheading of the Forerunner did become an act of divine dispensation; for he did preach to those in hell the coming of the Savior. Let Herodias lament, for she hath entreated lawless murder, loving not the law of God, nor eternal life, but that which is false and temporal.

***Today we commemorate the beheading of the holy glorious
Prophet, Forerunner, and Baptist John***

You may have noticed the “dark” liturgical color today, quite unlike the usual white or golden vestments that priests wear on most Sundays. It is also noteworthy that the calendar lists August 29th as a day of fasting, even though this year it falls on a Sunday, that is, on a celebration of the Resurrection! All of this shows the particular importance given to St. John by the Church. Our Lord himself said about him, “What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist!” — Matthew 11:7-15

We pray for the newly departed **Joe (Sipos)** and **Kay (Thomas)** and for the consolation of their loved ones. Please also pray for the repose of **Ştefan** and for his widow, Leonida (they were visiting from Romania, coming to see their student daughter in Pittsburgh for the first time after eight years; he died suddenly on the day following of arrival).

We pray for the health and well being of **Sula, Dollie (Sipos),** and **Dolores (Bingham),** as well as for **Katina** and **Hieromonk Alexander,** and the baby **Cristina.** (Hieromonk Alexander is an Orthodox monk and professor of Theology—Fr. Bogdan’s former teacher—and he recently had a stroke from which he is now recuperating; Christina Khalil is a three-months baby in Pittsburgh, born with an incurable illness).

TODAY’S APOSTLE READING (Acts 13:25-33)

Prokeimenon: *The righteous shall rejoice in the Lord. Hear my prayer, O God!*

The Reading is from the Acts of the Apostles:

In those days, as John was finishing his course, he said, "What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. No, but after me one is coming, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie." Brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you that fear God, to us has been sent the message of this

salvation. For those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they did not recognize him nor understand the utterances of the prophets which are read every sabbath, fulfilled these by condemning him. Though they could charge him with nothing deserving death, yet they asked Pilate to have him killed. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a tomb. But God raised him from the dead; and for many days he appeared to those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people. And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus.

The Baptist offers an example of humility. As the troparion says, his holiness and significance have been pointed out by the Lord himself. Yet, even while Jesus praises him as “more than a prophet,” John the Baptist insists on his unworthiness when compared to the Lord. “What do you suppose that I am? I am not He; I am not even worthy to untie his sandals!”

Note that we call John not only “Prophet” and “Baptist,” but also “Forerunner”: he preceded Christ, ran before him, prepared his way, and announced to the world that God Himself was visiting mankind to set us free. John the Baptist even announced Christ to those in the abode of the dead (“hades” or “hell”). If you find this a bit strange, read this line from the Troparion: “After suffering with joy in behalf of the truth, thou didst proclaim even to those in Hades the God who appeared in the flesh!”

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING (Mark 6:14-30)

At that time, King Herod heard that Jesus' name had become known. Some said, "John the baptizer has been raised from the dead; that is why these powers are at work in him." But others said, "It is Elijah." And others said, "It is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." But when Herod heard of it he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised." For Herod had sent and seized John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife; because he had married her. For John said to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." And Herodias had a grudge against him, and wanted to kill him. But she could not, for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and kept him safe. When he heard him, he was much perplexed; and yet he heard him gladly. But an

opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and the leading men of Galilee. For when Herodias' daughter came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests; and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will grant it." And he vowed to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom." And she went out, and said to her mother, "What shall I ask?" And she said, "The head of John the baptizer." And she came in immediately with haste to the king, and asked, saying, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." And the king was exceedingly sorry; but because of his oaths and his guests he did not want to break his word to her. And immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard and gave orders to bring his head. He went and beheaded him in the prison, and brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother. When his disciples heard of it, they came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb. The apostles returned to Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught.

The beheading of John the Baptist is a gruesome event. The life of this holy man was gambled away by those in power, and became the object of a frivolous and shameful "transaction." One shudders at the words of Herodias, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." But one shudders especially at the thought that, somehow, we are also involved in this scene: this is *always* so with the Gospels.

Consider king Herod. Of course, he was quite filthy in his morals. Nevertheless, the Gospel has some good things to say about Herod: he regarded Saint John "as a righteous and holy man, and kept him safe"— he protected him from the wrath of his (unlawful) wife, who would have liked this prisoner executed at once. What is more, even though Herod was troubled by the preaching of the prophet, who kept bringing up the situation of his wife, the Gospel says that "he heard him gladly." That is, he would occasionally speak to the imprisoned Baptist, and actually liked hearing him.

By killing the Baptist, Herod silences "the voice speaking in the wilderness," the voice calling to repentance and announcing the Kingdom of God. This is what makes the beheading a terrible and tragic event: by beheading the Baptist, Herod tries to kill his own moral and spiritual conscience. This story is also about us, because silencing the voice of God in us is no less gruesome and terrible than the beheading of John the Baptist.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- We will start singing Psalms around 9:30, before Divine Liturgy. If you enjoy singing and would like to learn, please join Dollie, Steve, and Fr. Bogdan. The more, the merrier!
- Vespers is Saturdays at 6:30 pm.
- From the parish council:
 - (1) we are looking at purchasing and installing an elevator that would make it easier for elderly parishioners to attend the services;
 - (2) we are also considering new carpeting for the church.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- **September 5, 12:30 – 9:00 PM:** St. Elias in New Castle (Fr. Gregory Long's new parish) organizes the "Old-Fashioned Syrian Picnic". 5 dollars/person.
- **September 11, starting 9:00 AM:** St. George in Pittsburgh is hosting Fr. Thomas Hopko, retired professor of Theology at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary. The topic of the lecture and subsequent discussions is *What Happens After We Die?* (See ad in this bulletin). If interested, please see Fr. Bogdan.
- **September 12:**
 - Sunday School starts, led by Stephanie Trbovich. Stephanie and the children will receive Holy Communion first, then go to the Church hall for about 30 minutes. The congregation will finish Liturgy, and the sermon will be at the very end of the service.
 - Pastoral visit from our dean, Fr. John Abdallah from St George Cathedral in Pittsburgh. Let us show hospitality: please bring a dish to share, and join us for the potluck!

Let all that we do be done with love.

ST. GEORGE CATHEDRAL PITTSBURGH

Saturday, September 11, 2010

Fr. Thomas Hopko

(Retired Professor and Dean at St. Vladimir's Theological Seminary)

What Happens After We Die?



9:00 Divine Liturgy;
continental breakfast

10:15 First Presentation

12:30 Lunch

1:15 Second Presentation

4:00 Third Presentation

5:30 Light dinner

6:30 Vespers

Separate program for children
(ages 6-12)

SUGGESTED DONATION:
\$ 10.0

Reservation required.
Tel: 412.681.2988