

SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

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The 32nd Sunday after Pentecost (2 January 2011)

FIRST ANTIPHON

*It is good to give praise unto the Lord, and to chant unto Thy Name, O Most High! **Refrain:** Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us!*

*To proclaim in the morning Thy mercy, and Thy truth by night! **(Refrain)***

*Upright is the Lord our God and there is no unrighteousness in Him **(Refrain)***

*Glory... Now and ever... **(Refrain)***

SECOND ANTIPHON

*The Lord is King, He is clothed with majesty; the Lord is clothed with strength and hath girt Himself! **Refrain:** 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! **(Refrain)***

*Holiness befits Thy house, O Lord, unto length of days! **(Refrain)***

Glory... Now and ever... (Only begotten Son and Word of God ...)

THIRD ANTIPHON

*Come let us rejoice in the Lord, let us shout with jubilation unto God our Savior! (Ps. 94:1) **Troparion of the Resurrection***

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 7): Thou didst shatter death by Thy Cross; Thou didst open Paradise to the thief; Thou didst turn the mourning of the ointment-bearing women into joy, and didst bid Thine Apostles proclaim that Thou hast risen, O Christ, granting the world great mercy!

FOREFEAST OF THEOPHANY (Tone 4): Make ready, O Zebulon, and prepare, O Nephtali! And thou, River Jordan, cease thy flow and receive with joy the Master coming to be baptized! And thou, Adam, rejoice with the first mother, and hide not yourselves as ye did of old in Paradise; for having seen you naked, He appeared to clothe you with the first robe. Christ hath appeared, desiring to renew the whole creation.

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 OF EPIPHANY (Tone 4): Today hath the Lord appeared in the courses of the Jordan, crying to John and saying, Be not dismayed at my baptism; for I have verily come to save Adam the first to be created.

Saints commemorated today: Sylvester of Rome; Cosmas of Constantinople; Hieromartyr Theogenes of Parium; Martyrs Sergios and Theopistos; New-martyr Zorzis; Venerable Theodote and Neilos; Ven. Seraphim of Sarov; Righteous Juliana the Merciful of Lazarevsk.

LIVING: We pray for the health and well being of Sula, Dolores (Sipos), Dolores (Bingham), Angelica (Georgia's mother), Diane, Karyn, Rodolphe, Brian, Maria, Marius, the hieromonk Alexander, and the baby Christina.

DEPARTED: Michael, William, Mariana, James, Mary Ann, Joseph, Katherine.

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon: *O Lord, save your people and bless your inheritance!
To you, O Lord, have I cried, O my God!*

The Reading is from Saint Paul's Epistle to Timothy

(2 Tim 4:5-8) Timothy, my son, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

The reason for selecting this passage for this particular Sunday (the Sunday before Theophany), is found in the last sentence: a heavenly reward awaits those who, like Saint Paul, have loved God's appearing. "God's appearing"? This somewhat strange expression refers to God's incarnation, when He becomes one of us, truly human, truly sharing our experience; it also refers to Christ's public manifestation, at the moment when He begins his ministry—at his baptism in the Jordan River.

But note that the Apostle Paul counts himself among those "who have loved His appearing." And yet, during the Lord's earthly ministry, while He was in Palestine traveling, teaching, healing, and making disciples, Paul never met Him! How, then, does he claim to have "loved His appearing"?

In fact, Paul is speaking the truth: he did meet Jesus after the Crucifixion and Resurrection. His encounter with the risen Jesus Christ, in a blinding light that met him on the road to Damascus, turned his life around. From a persecutor of Christians, he became the most zealous apostle of Christ; from a scholar of Scripture, he became one who understood the Bible not only intellectually, but first and foremost by spiritual illumination.

Today's Apostle reading gives us hope. We, who live two thousand years after the events of the Nativity and Theophany, are no less able than the disciples to meet and love the Lord who has appeared for our salvation. In fact, the reason for our liturgical celebrations is precisely to shape our inner being, so as to make possible a genuine spiritual intimacy with God. Liturgy is not merely "remembering" events, no matter how important, that took

place two thousand years ago. On the contrary: Liturgy makes both past and future present right here and now—because in Liturgy we enter into God’s presence. That is why, in Liturgy, Nativity is something that occurs *today*: as we sing, “*Today* the Virgin gives birth” or “*Today* the Lord is baptized in the Jordan.” Similarly, the reward (the “crown” of which the Apostles speaks) is not only something we are looking forward to in the future, but something which starts here and now.

In Church, beginning with the services, and continuing with our individual lives, we are being trained for this marathon of a Christian life. May we also draw closer to Christ, receive and love His coming among us, so that we also be able to speak with the Apostle: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith!”

TODAY’S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Gospel according to Saint Mark

(Mark 1:1-8): The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way; the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And there went out to him all the country of Judea, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, and had a leather girdle around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

The archangel Gabriel bringing the Good News to the Virgin, the dream of Joseph, the journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, the birth, the visitation of the magi, the flight to Egypt—all these details are found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. By contrast, the Evangelist Mark has nothing of the sort! He starts his account very abruptly (“The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God”) and then moves directly to the Jordan Baptism.

Today is Sunday before Theophany—it is, in other words, a preparation for the celebration of Christ’s Baptism. This is why the Gospel text selected for today speaks precisely about Jesus coming to the Jordan and receiving the baptism administered by St. John.

Surprising as it may be to us, it is a fact that the early Church simply did not attach much importance to the physical birth of the Lord; the Jordan Baptism, by contrast, was viewed as extremely important—and it remains, in the Christian East, the second most important feast of Christ (after Pascha).

The Baptism marks the beginning of Christ’s public ministry. It is called “Theophany” (“manifestation of God”) because it marks the transition from the ministry of prophets, who announce that God *will come*, and God’s own apparition here and now: the One so long awaited has arrived!

The Jordan Baptism is called “Theophany” also because it reveals, first of all, the divinity of Jesus: He is the one greater than the last and greatest of the prophets; the Messiah in whom the fullness of the Holy Spirit abides, the one who will baptize the work with Spirit and fire. The Jordan Baptism is also a revelation of God as Trinity: the Son is baptized, the Spirit descends over the waters, the Father points out His Son.

Theophany marks the sanctification of the entire world. It is not Christ who receives something from being baptized! On the contrary, it is He that sanctifies the water and, through water, the entire world. This is why at the feast of Theophany we bless water and we continue the celebration with the blessing of homes and families. Celebrating the Feast of Theophany should be a priority for all of us, even though it takes some sacrifice of time and energy. Let us begin the new year 2011 under God’s blessing, and open both our hearts and our homes to the presence of the Lord.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

VESPERAL LITURGY FOR THEOPHANY! Wed, 5 January, 6PM

Fr. Bogdan will be in Butler for **house blessings** from today until Wednesday 1/5 in the afternoon (Liturgy for Theophany starts at 6PM).



SUNDAY, JANUARY 16: Celebration of Saint Anthony the Great, our patron saint.

Our fellow Orthodox at Sts Peter & Paul and St. Andrew will be with us for a glorious Matins (9 AM) followed by Divine Liturgy (10 AM). We can probably count on 80-100 persons eating with us after the service, so please bring lots of food! The categories to which you can contribute are as follows:
1. meat; 2. potatoes /rice /pasta; 3. veggies; 4. salad; 5. sweets/ fruit.



LAST DAYS OF THE EXHIBIT!



VATICAN SPLENDORS: A JOURNEY THROUGH 2000 YEARS OF FAITH AND ART *Heinz History Center, October 2, 2010 – January 9, 2011*

The exhibit features 170 works of art, many of which have never left the Vatican. See objects dating back to the first century, Michelangelo items, works by Bernini, Giotto, and others.

For tickets and information, call 1-888-582-8422
or visit www.vaticansplendors.com