

SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

www.orthodoxbutler.org

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

RECTOR: Rev. Bogdan Gabriel Bucur

CONTACT: 412.390.8208; frbogdan@orthodoxbutler.org

Sunday, 3 October 2010

FIRST ANTIPHON

It is good to give praise unto the Lord, and to chant unto Thy Name, O Most High! (Ps. 91:1)

Refrain: Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us!

To proclaim in the morning Thy mercy, and Thy truth by night! (Ps. 91:2)

(Refrain)

Upright is the Lord our God, and there is no unrighteousness in Him! (Ps. 91:3) **(Refrain)**

Glory... Both now... (Refrain)

SECOND ANTIPHON

The Lord is King, He is clothed with majesty; the Lord is clothed with strength and hath girt Himself! (Ps. 92:1)

Refrain: O 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"!

For He established the world which shall not be shaken! (Ps. 92:2) **(Refrain)**

Holiness becometh Thy house, O Lord, unto length of days! (Ps. 92:7)

(Refrain)

Glory... Both now... (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).

AFTER THE LITTLE ENTRANCE

TROPARION OF THE RESURRECTION, Tone 2: When Thou didst submit Thyself unto death, O Thou deathless and immortal one, then Thou didst destroy Hell with Thy godly power; and when Thou didst raise the dead from beneath the earth, all the powers of heaven did cry aloud unto Thee: O Christ, Thou giver of life, glory to Thee!

TROPARION OF SAINT DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE, Tone 4: O, holy hieromartyr Dionysius, having learned goodness and maintaining continence in all things, thou wast clothed with a good conscience, as befits a priest. From the chosen Vessel thou drewest ineffable mysteries; thou hast kept the faith, and completed a course equal to His. Intercede with Christ God that He may save our souls!

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 THE THEOTOKOS, Tone 4: O undisputed intercessor of Christians, the mediatrix unrejected by the Creator: turn not away from the voice of our petitions, although we be sinners. Come to us in time, who cry to thee in faith, with assistance; for thou art good! Hasten to us with intercessions, O Theotokos, who dost ever intercede for those who honor thee.

Today we commemorate Hieromartyr Dionysios the Areopagite, first bishop of Athens, and his disciples, the holy martyrs Eleutherius the Deacon and Rusticus the Presbyter (1st c.); Venerable Hesychius of Mt. Horeb (6th c.); Saint John the Chozebite, Bishop of Caesarea (6th c.); Venerable Dionysius the Recluse of the Kievan Caves (15th c.).

DEPARTED: Mary Ann, Joseph, Katherine, Ștefan, Mary Lou, Henry, Bob, Nick, Dorothy

LIVING: We pray for the health and well being of Sula, Dolores (Sipos), Dolores (Bingham), Mariana, and Karyn; Dale, Diane, Katina, Rodolphe, Brian, Dale, Sandi, Eugenia, Helen, Dustin, Josie, Nicole, Hilda, Nicolai, Rebecca, Judy & Danny, Tina, Johnnie, Dustin, Nathan, Sharon, Nicole, Ryan, Jason, Ned, Julie, Vincent, Olga, Michael, Lucy, Amy, the hieromonk Alexander, and the baby Christina.

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

(2 Corinthians 11:31-33; 12:1-9)

Prokeimenon:

*The Lord is my strength and my song; He has become my salvation.
The Lord has chastened me sorely, but He has not given me over to death.*

The Reading is from the Second Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

Brethren, the God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he who is blessed for ever, knows that I do not lie. At Damascus, the governor under King Aretas guarded the city of Damascus in order to seize me, but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped his hands. I must boast; there is nothing to be gained by it, but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven (whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows). And I know that this man was caught up into Paradise (whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows) and he heard things

that cannot be told, which man may not utter. On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. Though if I wish to boast, I shall not be a fool, for I shall be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me. And to keep me from being too elated by the abundance of revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to harass me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I besought the Lord about this, that it should leave me; but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

In this fragment Saint Paul seems to be affirming two contradictory things: on the one hand, he "boasts" of some extraordinary spiritual experiences—visions, ascensions to heaven—and on the other hand he explains that such experiences are not what a Christian should be hunting for.

The context here is very important: other preachers were carrying out a deceitful mission among the Corinthians, and were denigrating the apostle Paul, claiming that he lacked the necessary spiritual authority because he didn't possess extraordinary spiritual gifts. In reply Saint Paul notes: "I must boast; there is nothing to be gained by it, but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord." He then proceeds to speak of being taken up into the highest heaven and granted visions and mysteries impossible to put in human words. We can see that he feels compelled and is uneasy, because he talks about these experiences in the third person ("I know a man in Christ"), even though he is actually talking about himself. In short, Paul is saying: if that is what you want—a "superpowers competition"—then let me tell you that the things I have received from God dwarf anything you can come up with!

However (and this is the crucial element), Saint Paul also says that such boasting is foolish. Christ did not come to rid us of all weakness, to make us healthy, happy, rich, and famous. A quick look at the apostle suffices: he was in constant danger, often arrested and beaten up, and sometimes escaping narrowly (as we read today: let down in a basket through a window in the wall!); his health was

not the best, he couldn't see well, and his opponents—who claimed to be highly “spiritual” Christians—were mocking him. And yet, it is in Paul's weakness and humility that Christ displayed his power and wisdom.

In fact, this is what the Apostle teaches: faith in Jesus Christ is not about boosting our ego by using religion to better manage and “improve” ourselves, but about leaving aside all excuse and relying, joyfully, on God's mercy.

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

(Luke 6:31-36)

The Reading is from the Gospel according to Saint Luke

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.

“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 as two sides of the same reality. Saint John the Evangelist, whom we commemorated last week, said it plainly: “if you don't love your brother, whom you see, how can you imagine to love God, whom you don't see?” 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!”

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.

We are not called to manufacture our mercy and love towards others, but to pass on and extend the mercy of God that we have received at Baptism and that we continue to receive every day. In short, 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.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Dollie has completed the new icons of the Lord, the Theotokos, and St. John the Baptist for the iconostasis. We are grateful to receive them as an invaluable gift to this community—to the present community and to those in the future—and we ask God, before whose merciful gaze nothing is hidden, to bless and reward her with every good gift from above.
- Sundays around 9:30: Psalm singing. If you enjoy singing and would like to learn, please join Dollie, Steve, and Fr. Bogdan. The more, the merrier!
- Vespers on Saturday is at 6:00 pm.