

SAINT ANTHONY

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

www.orthodoxbutler.org

Sunday, September 12, 2010

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I saw the snares of the devil all over the world, and I said, Who possibly can avoid them? And I heard a voice saying, "Humility!" (St. Anthony the Great)

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 warning that Thou hast risen, O Christ, granting the world great mercy.

TROPARION AT THE NATIVITY OF THE

THEOTOKOS, Tone 4: Thy nativity, O Theotokos, hath proclaimed joy to the whole universe; for from thee did shine forth the Sun of justice, Christ our God, annulling the curse, and bestowing the blessing, abolishing death and granting us life everlasting.

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 NATIVITY OF THE

THEOTOKOS, Tone 4: By thy holy birth-giving, O pure one, Joachim and Anna were delivered from the reproach of barrenness; and Adam and Eve were delivered from the corruption of death; thy people doth celebrate it, having been saved from the stain

of iniquity, crying unto thee: “the barren doth give birth to the Theotokos, who nourisheth our life!”

IN PLACE OF “IT IS TRULY MEET ...,” WE SING:

Verily, O Theotokos, virginity is impossible for a mother, as birth-giving is impossible for virgins. Yet in thee hath the dispensation of both been accomplished. Wherefore, all we families of the earth ceaselessly bless thee!

- **Saints commemorated today:**
hieromartyr Autonomus (3rd c., Italy);
hieromartyr Dositheus of Tbilisi (+1795, Georgia).
- **Today is also the “Leavetaking of the Nativity of the Theotokos” (the last of the eight days of this celebration).** This is why a special *megalynarion* (hymn to the Theotokos) replaces the usual “It is truly meet ...”.
- **Finally, this Sunday precedes the *Elevation of the Cross* (September 14).**

DEPARTED: **Joe (Sipos), Kay (Thomas), Ștefan.** We will serve the 40-day memorial for **Katherine (Thomas).** May God remember her eternally in His Kingdom!

LIVING: We pray for the health and well being of **Sula, Dollie (Sipos), Mariana, and Dolores (Bingham),** as well as for **Katina, Dale Lah, Sr. Maura, Rodolphe, the hieromonk Alexander, and the baby Christina.**

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

(Gal 6:11-18)

Prokeimenon:

The Lord shall give strength to His people!

The Lord shall bless His people with peace!

The Reading is from St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians

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. Remember, from last Sunday’s reading: it is the same God who spoke at creation, *let there be light*, and it was light, who 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

(John 3:13-17)

The Reading is from the Gospel according to Saint John

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). To put it briefly, the Gospel of John makes the following two points: first, there is only one *access* to God, namely the cross of Jesus Christ, uniting earth and heaven; second, 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, "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 to save us, not to condemn 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 has eternal life!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Sunday School starts today. Stephanie and the children will receive Holy Communion first, then go to the Church hall for about 30 minutes. Meanwhile, the congregation will finish the Liturgy, and the sermon will be given at the end of the service.
- Sundays around 9:30, we will be singing Psalms before Divine Liturgy. If you enjoy singing and would like to learn, please join Dollie, Steve, and Fr. Bogdan. The more, the merrier!
- Saturday Vespers is at 6:00 pm (for now!). **We need to find out what the best times are for Saturday Vespers; we can have something at 5pm and another one at 6:30.** Please tell Fr. Bogdan what your preference is!
- 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 considering new carpeting for the church.

"Let all that we do be done with love!"
(1 Corinthians 16:14)