

SAINT LUKE THE EVANGELIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH



JANUARY 17, 2010

THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY OF LUKE

Saint Anthony the Great

The paschal season of the Church is preceded by the season of Great Lent, which is also preceded by its own liturgical preparation. The first sign of the approach of Great Lent comes five Sundays before its beginning. On this Sunday the Gospel reading is about Zacchaeus the tax-collector. It tells how Christ brought salvation to the sinful man, and how his life was changed simply because he “sought to see who Jesus was” (Luke 19:3). The desire and effort to see Jesus begins the entire movement through Lent towards Pascha. It is the first movement of salvation.

Our lenten journey begins with a recognition of our own sinfulness, just as Zacchaeus recognized his. He promised to make restitution by giving half of his wealth to the poor, and by paying to those he had falsely accused four times as much as they had lost. In this, he went beyond the requirements of the Law (Ex. 22:3-12).

The example of Zacchaeus teaches us that we should turn away from our sins, and atone for them. The real proof of our sorrow and repentance is not just a verbal apology, but when we correct ourselves and try to make amends for the consequences of our evil actions.

We are also assured of God’s mercy and compassion by Christ’s words to Zacchaeus, “Today salvation is come to this house” (Luke 19:9). After the Great Doxology at Sunday Matins (when the Tone of the week is Tone 1, 3, 5, 7) we sing the Dismissal Hymn of the Resurrection “Today salvation has come to the world,” which echoes the Lord’s words to Zacchaeus.

Zacchaeus was short, so he climbed a tree in order to see the Lord. All of us have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). We are also short in our spiritual stature, therefore we must climb the ladder of the virtues. In other words, we must prepare for spiritual effort and growth.

Saint Anthony the Great is known as the Father of monasticism, and the long ascetical sermon in The Life of St Anthony by St Athanasius (Sections 16-34), could be called the first monastic Rule.

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AT THE SMALL ENTRANCE WE SING

RESURRECTIONAL APOLYT. MODE VARYS.

By means of Your Cross, O Lord, You abolished death. * To the robber You opened Paradise. * The lamentation of the myrrh-bearing women You transformed, * and You gave Your Apostles the order to proclaim to all * that You had risen, O Christ our God, * and granted the world Your great mercy.

APOLYTIKION OF THE VENERABLE. MODE 4.

Imitating the manners of Elijah the Zealot, and following the straight paths of John the Baptist, O Father Anthony, you colonized the desert, and you supported the Empire by your prayers. Therefore intercede with Christ our God to save our souls.

APOLYTIKION FOR THE CHURCH. MODE 5.

The holy Apostle, the All-hymned Luke, who is acknowledged by the Church of Christ as the recorder of the Acts of the Apostles, and the splendid author of the Gospel of Christ. Let us praise with sacred hymns as a physician, who heals the infirmities of man, and the ailments of nature, who cleanses spiritual wounds, and prays unceasingly for our souls.

KONTAKION. MODE 1.

You sanctified the virginal womb by Your birth, O Lord,* and Symeon's hands You blessed, as it ought to be.* O Christ God, and even now You came and saved us.* Now, give peace to the commonwealth in time of war,* and give power to the Rulers, so loved by You,* the only one who loves humanity.

ΑΝΑΣΤ. ΑΠΟΛΥΤΙΚΙΟΝ. ΗΧΟΣ ΒΑΡΥΣ.

Κατέλυσας τῷ Σταυρῷ σου τὸν θάνατον, κήνέφξας τῷ Ληστῇ τὸν Παράδεισον, τῶν Μυροφόρων τὸν θρῆνον μετέβαλες, καὶ τοῖς σοῖς Ἀποστόλοις κηρύττειν ἐπέταξας, ὅτι ἀνέστης Χριστὲ ὁ Θεός, παρέχων τῷ κόσμῳ τὸ μέγα ἔλεος.

ΑΠΟΛΥΤΙΚΙΟΝ ΤΟΥ ΟΣΙΟΥ. ΗΧΟΣ Δ΄.

Τὸν ζηλωτὴν Ἥλιαν τοῖς τρόποις μιμούμενος, τῷ Βαπτιστῇ εὐθείαις ταῖς τρίβοις ἐπόμενος, Πάτερ Ἀντώνιε, τῆς ἐρήμου γέγονας οἰκιστῆς, καὶ τὴν οἰκουμένην ἐστήριξας εὐχαῖς σου, διὸ πρέσβευε Χριστῷ τῷ Θεῷ, σωθῆναι τὰς ψυχὰς ἡμῶν.

KONTAKION. ΗΧΟΣ Α΄.

Ομήτραν παρθενικὴν ἀγιάσας τῷ τόκῳ σου, καὶ χεῖρας τοῦ Συμεῶν εὐλογήσας ὡς ἔπρεπε, προφθάσας καὶ νῦν ἔσωσας ἡμᾶς Χριστὲ ὁ Θεός. Ἄλλ' εἰρήνευσον ἐν πολέμοις τὸ πολίτευμα, καὶ κραταίωσον Βασιλεῖς οὓς ἠγάπησας, ὁ μόνος φιλόανθρωπος.

THE READINGS OF THE DAY

EPISTLE READING

SAINT PAUL'S

LETTER TO THE HEBREWS 13:17-21

Brethren, obey your leaders and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account. Let them do this joyfully, and not sadly, for that would be of no advantage to you. Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things. I urge you the more earnestly to do this in order that I may be restored to you the sooner. Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do His will, working in you that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

GOSPEL READING

LUKE 19:1-10

At that time, Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. And there was a man named Zacchaios; he was a chief collector, and rich. And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not, on account of the crowd, because he was small of stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaios, make haste and come down; for I must stay at your house today." So he made haste and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it they all murmured, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." And Zacchaios stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have defrauded any one of anything, I restore it fourfold." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost."

“Rightly did the Lord say, ‘My burden is light’. For what sort of weight is it, what sort of toil is it to forgive one’s brother his offences, which are light and of no importance, and to be pardoned for one’s own, and immediately justified? He did not say, ‘Bring me money, or calves, or goats, or fasting, or vigils’, so that you could say, ‘I have none, I cannot’, but he ordered you to bring what is light and easy and immediate, saying, ‘Pardon your brother his offences, and I will pardon yours. You pardon small faults, a few halfpennies, or three pennies, while I give you the ten thousand talents. You only pardon without giving anything, I nevertheless both grant you pardon and give you healing and the Kingdom.”

—SAINT EPHREM THE SYRIAN (306-373)”

ANNOUNCEMENTS

UPCOMING CHURCH SERVICES:

Mon., Jan. 18, Our Fathers among the Saints, Athanasios and Cyril, Orthros / Div. Lit. 8:30am
Saturday, Jan. 23, Great Vespers, 6pm

UPCOMING CLASSES:

Orthodox Catechism, Tuesday, Jan. 19, 6pm
Orthodox Scripture Study: Thursday, Jan. 21, 7pm

DINNER DANCE

Our annual Dinner Dance will be on January 31st. The cost of prepaid tickets is \$25 / adult and \$15 / child for a dinner of Prime Rib and Chicken. Tickets at the door will be \$30 / adult and \$15 / child. *Tickets may be purchased from Georgia Pardalos.* Doors will open for the event at 5:00pm, with dinner at 6pm and dancing to follow. *We also need donations for our silent auction.* Please bring items for the auction to the Church by January 21. If you need a procurement form to give to business owners, please see Georgia Pardalos. This is an important fundraiser for our parish – please plan to attend!

Tables may be reserved for your group with the purchase of pre-paid tickets.

HOUSE BLESSINGS

If you would like to have your home blessed, please see the sign-up sheet in the Narthex.

CHURCH CALENDARS

Church calendars are available to be picked up in the Narthex. The envelopes are labeled – please be sure to take the calendar labeled with your name. If you are not on our mailing list, there are unlabeled calendar – please take a calendar and put your name and address in the notebook next to the calendars.

BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT

John and Jennifer Estes welcomed the arrival of their son Gabriel on January 8. Gabriel and his mother are doing well. We pray that our most merciful Lord grants him many years!

“Do not, brethren, let us lose this moment of our salvation, by playing about and being played about with. Be like a good farmer, working and taking care. My brother, do not make light of the provisions for eternal life. Do not reject fasting, do not desert vigil, do not be despondent about sleeping on the ground, do not abandon psalmody. For these things and things like them escort you to life and joy and gladness and eternal repose. Love silence rather than wicked conversation. Conversations about worldly things separate the mind from God.

—SAINT EPHREM THE SYRIAN (306-373)



On Sunday, February 7th, over 130 million Americans will tune in to the Super Bowl Football Game. There will be parties with abundant food, friendship and fellowship. At the same time, there will be people worrying about staying warm, finding shelter and a warm meal. This fact generated more than 20 years ago the Souper Bowl of Caring Program, a powerful movement that is transforming the Super Bowl weekend into the largest weekend of giving and serving. This year, our church is joining this event.

Philoptochos is organizing a special food collection for the Central Missouri Food Bank. Bring non-perishable food items and place them in the food barrel. They will be picked up on Monday February 8.

The youth of our parish will collect donations from parishioners in soup pots during the Greek Dinner dance and on February 7- the Super Bowl Sunday. Every dollar donated goes to IOCC (International Orthodox Christian Charities) to support their ministries.

Be part of this movement that is sharing God's love with those in need. Please give generously; small efforts can make a huge impact in the fight against hunger and poverty.

SYNAXARION OF THE DAY

Continued from front page...

He was born in Egypt in the village of Coma, near the desert of the Thebaid, in the year 251. His parents were pious Christians of illustrious lineage. Anthony was a serious child and was respectful and obedient to his parents. He loved to attend church services, and he listened to the Holy Scripture so attentively, that he remembered what he heard all his life.

When St Anthony was about twenty years old, he lost his parents, but he was responsible for the care of his younger sister. Going to church about six months later, the youth reflected on how the faithful, in the Acts of the Apostles (4:35), sold their possessions and gave the proceeds to the Apostles for the needy.

Then he entered the church and heard the Gospel passage where Christ speaks to the rich young man: "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come follow Me" (Mt. 19:21). Anthony felt that these words applied to him. Therefore, he sold the property that he received after the death of his parents, then distributed the money to the poor, and left his sister in the care of pious virgins in a convent.

Leaving his parental home, St Anthony began his ascetical life in a hut not far from his village. By working with his hands, he was able to earn his livelihood and also alms for the poor. Sometimes, the holy youth also visited other ascetics living in the area, and from each he sought direction and benefit. He turned to one particular ascetic for guidance in the spiritual life.

In this period of his life St Anthony endured terrible temptations from the devil. The Enemy

of the race of man troubled the young ascetic with thoughts of his former life, doubts about his chosen path, concern for his sister, and he tempted Anthony with lewd thoughts and carnal feelings. But the saint extinguished that fire by meditating on Christ and by thinking of eternal punishment, thereby overcoming the devil.

Realizing that the devil would undoubtedly attack him in another manner, St Anthony prayed and intensified his efforts. Anthony prayed that the Lord would show him the path of salvation. And he was granted a vision. The ascetic beheld a man, who by turns alternately finished a prayer, and then began to work. This was an angel, which the Lord had sent to instruct His chosen one.

St Anthony tried to accustom himself to a stricter way of life. He partook of food only after sunset, he spent all night praying until dawn. Soon he slept only every third day. But the devil would not cease his tricks, and trying to scare the monk, he appeared under the guise of monstrous phantoms. The saint however protected himself with the Life-Creating Cross. Finally the Enemy appeared to him in the guise of a frightful looking black child, and hypocritically declaring himself beaten, he thought he could tempt the saint into vanity and pride. The saint, however, vanquished the Enemy with prayer.

For even greater solitude, St Anthony moved farther away from the village, into a graveyard. He asked a friend to bring him a little bread on designated days, then shut himself in a tomb. Then the devils pounced upon the saint intending to kill him, and inflicted terrible wounds upon him. By the providence of the Lord, Anthony's friend arrived the next day to bring him his food. Seeing him lying on the ground as if dead, he took him back to the village. They thought the saint was dead and prepared for his burial. At midnight, St Anthony re-

gained consciousness and told his friend to carry him back to the tombs.

St Anthony's staunchness was greater than the wiles of the Enemy. Taking the form of ferocious beasts, the devils tried to force the saint to leave that place, but he defeated them by trusting in the Lord. Looking up, the saint saw the roof opening, as it were, and a ray of light coming down toward him. The demons disappeared and he cried out, "Where have You been, O Merciful Jesus? Why didn't You appear from the very beginning to end my pain?"

The Lord replied, "I was here, Anthony, but wanted to see your struggle. Now, since you have not yielded, I shall always help you and make your name known throughout all the world." After this vision St Anthony was healed of his wounds and felt stronger than before. He was then thirty-five years of age.

Having gained spiritual experience in his struggle with the devil, St Anthony considered going into the Thebaid desert to serve the Lord. He asked the Elder (to whom he had turned for guidance at the beginning of his monastic journey) to go into the desert with him. The Elder, while blessing him in the then as yet unheard of exploit of being a hermit, decided not to accompany him because of his age.

St Anthony went into the desert alone. The devil tried to hinder him, by placing a large silver disc in his path, then gold, but the saint ignored it and passed by. He found an abandoned fort on the other side of the river and settled there, barricading the entrance with stones. His faithful friend brought him bread twice a year, and there was water inside the fort.

St Anthony spent twenty years in complete isolation and constant struggle with the demons, and he finally achieved perfect calm. The saint's friends

removed the stones from the entrance , and they went to St Anthony and besought him to take them under his guidance. Soon St Anthony's cell was surrounded by several monasteries, and the saint acted as a father and guide to their inhabitants, giving spiritual instruction to all who came into the desert seeking salvation. He increased the zeal of those who were already monks, and inspired others with a love for the ascetical life. He told them to strive to please the Lord, and not to become faint-hearted in their labors. He also urged them not to fear demonic assaults, but to repel the Enemy by the power of the Life-Creating Cross of the Lord.

In the year 311 there was a fierce persecution against Christians, in the reign of the emperor Maximian. Wishing to suffer with the holy martyrs, St Anthony left the desert and went to Alexandria. He openly ministered to those in prison, he was present at the trial and interrogations of the confessors, and accompanying the martyrs to the place of execution. It pleased the Lord to preserve him, however, for the benefit of Christians.

At the close of the persecution, the saint returned to the desert and continued his exploits. The Lord granted the saint the gift of wonderworking, casting out demons and healing the sick by the power of his prayer. The great crowds of people coming to him disrupted his solitude, and he went off still farther, into the inner desert where he settled atop a high elevation. But the brethren of the monasteries sought him out and asked him to visit their communities.

Another time St Anthony left the desert and arrived in Alexandria to defend the Orthodox Faith against the Manichaeian and Arian heresies. Knowing that the name of St Anthony was venerated by all the Church, the Arians said that he adhered to their heretical teaching. But St Anthony publicly denounced Arianism in front of everyone and in

the presence of the bishop. During his brief stay at Alexandria, he converted a great multitude of pagans to Christ.

People from all walks of life loved the saint and sought his advice. Pagan philosophers once came to Abba Anthony intending to mock him for his lack of education, but by his words he reduced them to silence. Emperor Constantine the Great (May 21) and his sons wrote to St Anthony and asked him for a reply. He praised the emperor for his belief in Christ, and advised him to remember the future judgment, and to know that Christ is the true King.

St Anthony spent eighty-five years in the solitary desert. Shortly before his death, he told the brethren that soon he would be taken from them. He instructed them to preserve the Orthodox Faith in its purity, to avoid any association with heretics, and not to be negligent in their monastic struggles. "Strive to be united first with the Lord, and then with the saints, so that after death they may receive you as familiar friends into the everlasting dwellings."

The saint instructed two of his disciples, who had attended him in the final fifteen years of his life, to bury him in the desert and not in Alexandria. He left one of his monastic mantles to St Athanasius of Alexandria (January 18), and the other to St Serapion of Thmuis (March 21). St Anthony died peacefully in the year 356, at age 105, and he was buried in the desert by his disciples.

From the Writings of St. Ephrem the Syrian
EXHORTATION TO AN ASCETIC

SERMON 10

Translated by Rev. Archimandrite Ephrem Lash

My brother, do not lose heart at the thoughts which attack you; for it is the beginning of the contest. Learn from a rain lake, because when it rains and the blessing of water is collected in the lake, in the beginning the water is troubled; but as time goes on it becomes more limpid. So, beloved, do not lose heart, for it is written, Streams of iniquity troubled me. And in another psalm it says, For my soul has been filled with evils, and my life has drawn near to hell. And so it says, The Lord is my help, and I shall not fear what man will do to me. Therefore whenever an evil thought enters your mind, cry out with tears to the Lord, 'Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner, and pardon me, O lover of mankind. Lord, take to Evil One from us.' For God knows the heart, and he knows the thoughts which come from a bad intention; and he also knows the ones that attack us from the bitter cruelty of the demons. Understand this, that the more you struggle and endure in serving the Lord, so much your mind and thoughts become limpid. For our Lord Jesus Christ has said, Every branch in me which [does not] bear fruit, I prune it, that it may bear more fruit. Only want to be saved; because the Lord loves and co-operates with those who are pressing forward to find salvation. Listen to a parable against base thoughts. The grape, when it is cut from the vine and cast into the press and trampled down and yields its wine, to begin with the wine bubbles up so much as though it were being boiled by a ferocious heat; so that open vats, unable to bear the violence, break under the strain; so it is with human thoughts, whenever they pass over from this vain world and its care to things of heaven. For the demons, unable to bear the zeal, trouble the human mind in varied ways, as they wish to engineer for it

a turbid overthrow; so that <if> they find a ready vessel, that is an unfaithful and doubting soul, they will rend it. For the demons are ravening wolves, who go round the cells of the monks looking for an open door for them, so that when they have got inside they may destroy a soul which obeys them. But if they find the door shut in their faces, they go away extremely disappointed; I am speaking of a soul which is firmly founded on faith.

Do not be a coward then, and do not fear their wickedness; they cannot harm you, who have Christ as your helper. For the Apostle says, For God did not give a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and love and self-discipline. And again <the> Lord said to his disciples, I saw Satan as lightning falling from heaven. See, I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions, and upon every power of the foe, and nothing at all will hurt you. And so, beloved, play the man and be strong in God, for his mercy endures for ever. But if they bring us the memory of our parents according to the flesh, let us say to them, 'It is written he lays up treasure, and does not know for whom he will gather it. And again, The fool and the senseless will perish together and leave their wealth to strangers; so offences are for me, money for another. This is no good for me, it is a great evil! And so we have not been taught to amass treasure on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and thieves dig through and steal. Where your treasure is, there, he says, your heart will be also. Blessed is God who gives us strength against our invisible foes. To him be glory to the ages of ages. Amen.