

DEFENDING HER HONOR AS WELL AS HER FAITH

Countless are the number of believers who suffered persecution and death for the cause of Christ. Among them was **MARTYR LUCIA**, who was born of wealthy and well-known Romans. The family lived in Syracuse, Sicily.

Her father died rather early, and her mother became seriously ill with an issue of blood. This presented somewhat of a dilemma for the young Lucia. But she selflessly took care of her ailing mother, praying as well for her restoration to health. Finally, Lucia took her ill parent to the Sicilian town of Katana, to pray at the tomb of the Martyr Agafia. The sick mother was healed after great petition. The two returned

home, praising God for His mercy and aware that Christianity is the true religion.

Lucia decided then not to marry. Furthermore, she convinced her mother to sell her property and distribute it to the poor. This angered a young man whom she knew and who had wanted to take Lucia in marriage. The suitor denounced her to the governor, and she was promptly arrested for confessing the Christian faith, and brought to trial.

After suffering torments, Lucia steadfastly refused to renounce her faith in Christ, and she was martyred. This valiant woman died by the sword in the year 304. Her relics are said to repose in Venice.

The Orthodox Weekly Bulletin Vestal, Cliffwood, New Jersey Litho in U.S.A.

ABOUT COMMUNION

We are happy that you have joined us today. Indeed, we pray for the "unity of the Faith" for the day when all of Christianity are united as ONE and can share a common Chalice. However, this is not the case as yet. Please note that Holy Communion, the actual Body & Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, is only for Members of the Orthodox Church who have prepared themselves through prayer, fasting, and confession, & arrived before the Gospel reading. However, everyone is welcome to partake of the blessed bread and receive a blessing from the pastor at the dismissal. If you are interested, you may inquire with the pastor how you can become a member.

If you are a guest or otherwise not a regular communicant, please give your baptismal name when receiving.





St. Anthony The Great Antiochian Orthodox Christian Church

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Very Rev. Fr. Elia Shalhoub, Pastor & Dean of South Florida Deanery
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WELCOME TO ST. ANTHONY'S

Where people from around the world come together to serve God and our community.

We are glad you are worshipping with us today! This Church is one community of many in the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. The Church of Antioch belongs to two thousand years of evangelization, teaching, history, and tradition which expresses the continued commitment of its members to the Orthodox Christian faith in the Lord Jesus Christ!

St. Anthony Church is a Pan-Orthodox community, under the omophorion of His Beatitude Patriarch JOHN X within the Self-ruled Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America. If you are a first time visitor, please fill out the guest form located on the literature table. We want you to feel at home in prayer and worship. Please submit your names to the ushers and introduce yourself to Fr. Elia at the end of the service so he may welcome you personally. Following services, please join us for sharing of fellowship, coffee, and food.

DIVINE LITURGY VARIABLES ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2023 TONE 3 / EOTHINON 6

SUNDAY OF FOREFATHERS (ANCESTORS) OF CHRIST

PROPHET DANIEL AND THE THREE HOLY YOUTHS ANANIAS, AZARIAS AND MISHAEL;
DIONYSIOS OF ZAKYNTHOS, THE WONDERWORKER

~ During the Little Entrance, chant the Resurrectional Apolytikion. The Eisodikon (Entrance Hymn) is "O come, let us worship... save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead..." After the Little Entrance, chant these hymns in the following order:

RESURRECTIONAL APOLYTIKION IN TONE THREE

Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad, for the Lord hath done a mighty act with His own arm. He hath trampled down death by death, and become the first-born from the dead. He hath delivered us from the depths of Hades, granting the world the Great Mercy.

APOLYTIKION OF THE FOREFATHERS IN TONE TWO

Thou hast justified by faith the ancient Forefathers, and through them Thou hast gone before and betrothed unto Thyself the Church of the Gentiles. Let the saints, therefore, take pride in glory; for from their seed sprouted forth a noble fruit, and it was she who gave birth to Thee without seed. Wherefore, by their pleadings, O Christ God, save our souls.

APOLYTIKION OF ST. ANTHONY THE GREAT

Thou didst become like the zealous Elijah in his condition, and followed John the Baptist in his upright ways. Becoming a dweller in the wilderness, and an establisher of the universe by thy prayer O Father Anthony. Wherefore intercede thou with Christ our God to save our souls.

KONTAKION OF PREPARATION OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY IN TONE THREE

(**The original melody**)

On this day the Virgin cometh to the cave to give birth to * God the Word ineffably, * Who was before all the

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ADRIANE & TED

Put Aside Conflict

By Abbot Tryphon

The holiday season increases the stress level of many family members. This stress tends to increase conflict, often leading to angry exchanges between people who normally really care about each other. Interaction with acquaintances and family members who are not usually a part of our everyday lives, together with holiday shopping obligations, can lead to increased tension. Husbands and wives can and themselves arguing about petty things, children can become disobedient, and family arguments can overwhelm the peace that should reign during the holy season of the Fast and the upcoming Nativity celebrations. Good friendships can end because of political divides that are fomented by the tension that arises during times like this. Sometimes one little remark from a visiting relative can open old wounds, leading to a family argument. Adult children can and themselves acting like angry teenagers with one critical word from a visiting parent, leading to a meltdown and ruining a family dinner. An old friend can share a differing political view that causes a meltdown, leading to a mini civil war. It is during the Nativity season that we need to be vigilant, guarding our words and keeping our emotions intact. The Nativity season should be a time when we work harder at keeping the peace, guarding our heart, and letting Christ rule our words and thoughts. We must not let the celebration of the birth of our salvation be trampled upon by our ego. We must make sure Christ is glorified in our speech, our actions, and our thoughts. Let us make this season one in which we treat all our family members, friends, and coworkers with extra respect and love. We must let Christ increase in our hearts, while making ourselves decrease.

Pledges and Offerings:

Please do not forget your contributions to the Church. This year, without the Fund raising activities your church will face difficulties in meeting expenses. The approximate monthly expenses are \$8,000.00, without unexpected expenditures. If you have not done so already, please consider an offering.

2024 PLEDGE DRIVE

The Pledge Form for 2024 is available for you, please sign one and turn it in ASAP

**Thank you to the following Parishioners
who already signed their pledge card**

Fr. Elia and Kh. Odette Shalhoub

Adrian & Carrie Matos

Debbie Thieme

Ionica Dragu

John & Joanne Karas

Tristan & Jennifer Riter

Dr. Paul Alex & Bobbi Skaff

Patricia Smith

Susan Perers

Priscilla Spinola

Isaac Vaughn

Alix Hall

Stella White

Bill Jackson

Yuliya Warner

Michealle Carey

Total Pledges for 2023 from 32 pledges was \$93,230

(Our Goal for 2024 is \$100,000.00)

ages. * Dance for joy, O earth, on hearing * the gladsome tidings; * with the Angels and the shepherds now glorify Him * Who is willing to be gazed on * as a young Child Who * before the ages is God.

THE EPISTLE

(For the Holy Forefathers)

Blessed art Thou, O Lord, the God of our Fathers. For Thou art just in all that Thou hast done for us.

The Reading from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Colossians. (3:4-11)

Brethren, when Christ, Who is our life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these, the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience. In these you once walked, when you lived in them. But now put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and foul talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature with its practices and have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator. Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all, and in all.

THE GOSPEL

(For the Holy Forefathers)

The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Luke. (14:16-24)

The Lord spoke this parable: "A man once gave a great banquet, and invited many; and at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for all is now ready.' But, one by one, they all began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it; I pray you, have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them; I pray you, have me excused.' And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So the servant came and reported this to his master. Then the householder in anger said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame.' And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.' For many are called, but few are chosen." ~ *The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom continues as usual.*

ABOUT THE DIVINE LITURGY

The Divine Liturgy expresses the entire Christian faith in a continuous song of praise and prayer addressed to God. It is focused on God, not on us. There is nothing just for amusement or entertainment.

Since much of the service is the same every week, worshippers know it and can participate personally, either by singing along or just by prayerful attention. Worshippers are surrounded by icons (pictures of Christ and the saints), which remind us that we are participating, while on earth, in the worship of all the angels and saints in heaven. The entire service (except for the sermon) is sung. The words are all from Scripture or ancient Christian texts. Please follow the service in the books available in the pews. Weekly changes will appear below and marked with a corresponding letter in the service book.

COME BACK

We hope to see you next week. Each Sunday we celebrate the Resurrection of Christ with our morning Matins service at 8:45am followed by the main Sunday service, Divine Liturgy at 10am. Sunday School for the Children Follows Communion. Fr. Elia would love to speak with you and answer any questions you may have. Please fill out our Guest Form (CONNECTION CARD). There's also a place where you can let us know any specific needs or concerns and we will lift them up in prayer. We welcome everyone who would like to learn more about the Orthodox Christian Faith. Please contact Fr. Elia either by E-Mail (elia_shalhoub@yahoo.com) or on his cell phone (305) 812-4940

Announcements



December 17th
December 24th
December 31st

Epistle Readers
Carrie Matos
Kh. Odette
Alyssa Lieberman



INTRODUCING "O, COME ALL YE FAITHFUL!"

**Join us today after the Liturgy for our
Annual Christmas performance.
Order of St. Ignatius Luncheon will be served by
Amen Organization right after the play.**



NATIVITY SERVICES

Friday December 22nd The Nativity Great Hours at 5:00 PM

Saturday December 23rd

Divine liturgy of St. John Chrysostom at 10:00AM

(We are moving the Sunday Before Nativity to Saturday)

Saturday December 23rd, Great Vespers of the Nativity at 5:30PM

Sunday December 24th, Nativity Service

Matins at 8:45AM, Divine Liturgy at 10:AM

Followed by a Christmas meal together as a family of St. Anthony.

No Service Sunday Evening, Dec., 24th, Monday Morning of Dec., 25th

*There will be no Sunday School lessons December 24 and 31.
But we will still go to class to do something fun.*



2023 Calendars

*They are here with beautiful iconography inside.
Please make a donation of \$5 to Sunday School.*



Thank you to Skewers Restaurant and Flames Restaurant for sponsoring our calendars!

Mark your Calendars (2024)

Feast of St. Anthony the Great Tuesday, January 16

Evening Vigil at 5PM with the service of 5 loaves.

Followed by a Potluck Dinner Celebration.

Annual General Meeting Sunday, January 21 after the Divine Liturgy



Please pray for the healing of Adriana Theodoropoulos, Lori Sorensen, Ethan Packey, Michealle and Tyrone Carey, Beverly Delida, Alix Hall, Nina and Diogo Penas, Beth Manzini, John Archambeau, Alex & Soula.

Silent Night

[Verse 1] Silent night, holy night!

All is calm, all is bright

Round yon Virgin, Mother and Child

Holy Infant so tender and mild

Sleep in heavenly peace

Sleep in heavenly peace

[Verse 2] Silent night, holy night!

Shepherds quake at the sight

Glories stream from heaven afar

Heavenly hosts sing 'Alleluia!

Christ the Savior is born

Christ the Savior is born

[Verse 3] Silent night, holy night!

Son of God, love's pure light

Radiant beams from Thy holy face

With the dawn of redeeming grace

Jesus Lord, at Thy birth

Jesus Lord, at Thy birth

FIFTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

*The candle is **Purple** to signify Repentance.*

The service begins with the lighting
of the first five candles by a member of the family.

FATHER: The fifth candle reminds us of our duty to repent before we can meet the coming Christ.

"Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand."

VERSE: *We light Five Advent candles today, And pray that Jesus take our sins away,
For he showed us his love on the cross, So that our immortal souls would not be lost.*

SCRIPTURE: Preparing the way for the coming of the Messiah through repentance
(St. Mark 1:1-8, 14 and 15)

"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the Prophets: "Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You." "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ' Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.' John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in The Jordan River, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

CAROL: "Silent Night"

PRAYER: Lord, help us make straight the way for You to come to us this Christmas.

Grant us your grace that we may smooth out the ruts of sin and remove the roadblocks of pride.

Give us the second baptism, the baptism of tears, that we may return to You and,
embraced like the Prodigal Son, be restored to full Sonship.

DISCUSSION: Discuss the meaning of repentance. Then let us prepare ourselves with a thorough self-examination and agree on a time to go to confession as a family



Beloved in Christ,

December is Dedicated to the Order of St. Ignatius.

**The 2024 Pledge Form is available now, please fill one ASAP,
so we can plan our 2024 budget.**

DECEMBER 17TH (5TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT)

ADVENT: PREPARING FOR HIS COMING AGAIN

Beloved in Christ,

As we draw near to the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, I would like to offer a meditation on the Feast of the Nativity. The following is an excerpt from an article authored by Bishop John, Auxiliary Bishop of our Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese.

"Christ is Born! Glorify Him! This greeting is unlike other seasonal greetings about being merry (Christmas), glad (tidings), or happy (holidays). (...)In this feast we celebrate our salvation through the good news of our Savior's advent. When we greet each other with the news of Christ's birth, we seize the opportunity to glorify the new born Savior. This greeting carries within it the promise of salvation, and the very meaning of life. We will not escape the secularization of this feast. We will not change the marketing of goods, the office parties and the exchange of gifts. We will not avoid the need to spend money we may not have, eat too much or party ourselves silly. But with a little work to understand God's revealed truth, we can transcend and baptize the now secular images to bring us deeper meaning. (...)Let every twinkling light on every bush and window remind us that Christ is the Light that brings us from darkness into light. Every light can bring us to him who is Light, just like the star that guided the Magi. Every light can remind us of the Christ child who enlightens us with Divine truth. This is the truth that sets us free. He is our light and our resurrection, the light of truth that will guide us from the manger to the empty tomb. This season of Christ's birth is ultimately the season of salvation."

"Today the DIVINE BEING took upon Himself the seal of our humanity, In order for humanity to be decorated by the Seal of DIVINITY." (from the Nativity Sermon of +Saint Issac the Syrian)

May this Nativity Fast be a blessing to you.

In Christ,

Fr. Elia Shalhoub

Very Rev. Fr. Elia Shalhoub, Pastor

TODAY'S FEAST SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17TH 2023
SUNDAY OF THE FOREFATHERS
11TH SUNDAY OF LUKE, 5TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT



On the Sunday that occurs on or immediately after the eleventh of this month, we commemorate Christ's forefathers according to the flesh, both those that came before the Law, and those that lived after the giving of the Law.

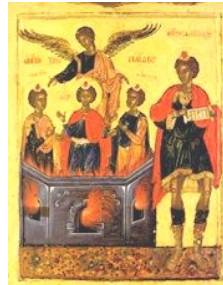
Special commemoration is made of the Patriarch Abraham, to whom the promise was first given, when God said to him, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 22:18). This promise was given some two thousand years before Christ, when Abraham was seventy-five years of age. God called him and commanded him to forsake his country, parents, and kinsmen, and to depart to the land of the Canaanites. When he arrived there, God told him, "I will give this land to thy seed" (Gen. 12:7); for this cause, that land was called the "Promised Land," which later became the country of the Hebrew people, and which is also called Palestine by the historians. There, after the passage of twenty-four years, Abraham received God's law concerning circumcision. In the one hundredth year of his life, when Sarah was in her ninetieth year, they became the parents of Isaac. Having lived 175 years altogether, he reposed in peace, a venerable elder full of days.

DANIEL THE PROPHET & ANANIAS,

AZARIAS, & MISAIL, THE THREE HOLY YOUTHS

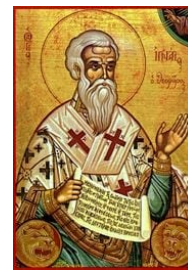
The Prophet Daniel and the Three Children were all descended from the royal tribe of Judah. In the year 599 before Christ, in the reign of Joachim, who was also called Jechonias (I Chron. 3:16, and II Chron. 36:8), while yet children, these righteous ones were led away as captives into Babylon together with the other Jews by Nabuchodonosor. He singled them out from among the other captives to serve him, and renamed them thus: Daniel was named Baltazar; Ananias, Sedrach; Misail, Misach; and Azarias, Abednago. They were reared in the royal court, and taught the wisdom of the Chaldeans; and after the passage of three years, they surpassed all the Chaldean sages (Dan. 1).

Thereafter, Daniel, being still a lad, interpreted that mysterious image seen by Nabuchodonosor in a dream, an image that was composed of different metals, but was shattered and ground to dust by a certain stone which had been hewn out of a mountain without the hand of man. This vision clearly portrayed through the mountain the height of the Virgin's holiness and the power of the Holy Spirit which overshadowed her. Through the image of the Stone, Christ was portrayed, Who was seedlessly born of her, and Who by His coming as the Godman would shatter and destroy all the kingdoms of the world, which were portrayed through the image; and He would raise them that believe in Him into His Heavenly Kingdom, which is eternal and everlasting (ibid. 2:31-45). Thereupon, he signified in prophecy the time of His appearance in the Jordan, the beginning of His preaching of the Gospel, the time of His saving Passion, and the cessation of the worship according to the Mosaic Law, (ibid. 9:14-27). He portrayed most excellently the majestic and dread image of His second coming, presenting by means of words, as with living colours, the fiery throne which shall be set, the Eternal Judge Who shall sit thereon, the river of fire that shall flow forth before Him, the calling to account before the impartial



judgment seat, the opened books of each ones deeds, the thousands upon thousands of them that minister to Him, and the ten thousands of them that stand in His presence (ibid. 7: 9-10). Daniel (whose name means "God is judge") was called "man of desires" by the Angels that appeared (ibid. 9:23), because he courageously disdained every desire of the body, even the very bread that is necessary for nourishment. Furthermore, he received this name because, in his longing for the freedom of those of his tribe, and his desire to know their future condition, he ceased not supplicating God, fasting and bending the knee three times a day. Because of this prayer he was cast into the den of lions, after he had been accused by his enemies as a transgressor of the decree issued through the proclamation of the king, that no one should worship or ask for anything from God or from men for thirty days, but only from the king. But having stopped the mouths of the lions by divine might, and appearing among them as though he were a shepherd of sheep, Daniel showed the impious the might of godliness (ibid. 6:1-23).

As for the Three Children, Ananias ("Yah is gracious"), Misail ("Who is what God is?"), and Azarias ("Yah is keeper"), since they refused to offer adoration to Nabuchodonosor's image, they were cast into the furnace of fire. They were preserved unharmed amidst the flames - even their hair was untouched - by the descent of the Angel of the Lord, that is, the Son of God. Walking about in the furnace, as though in the midst of dew, they sang the universal hymn of praise to God, which is found in the Seventh and Eighth Odes of the Holy Psalter. And coming forth therefrom, without even the smell of the fire on their clothes (Dan. 3), they prefigured in themselves the Virgin's incorrupt giving of birth; for she, on receiving the Fire of the Godhead within her womb, was not burned, but remained virgin, even as she was before giving birth. Therefore the Church celebrates the Three Children and Daniel on this day, on the Sunday of the Forefathers, and on the Sunday before the Nativity of Christ, since they prefigured and proclaimed His Incarnation. Furthermore, they were of the tribe of Judah, wherefrom, Christ sprang forth according to the flesh. The holy Three Children completed their lives full of days; as for the Prophet Daniel, he lived until the reign of Cyrus, King of Persia, whom he also petitioned that his nation be allowed to return to Jerusalem and that the Temple be raised up again, and his request was granted. He reposed in Peace, having lived about eighty-eight years. His prophetic book, which is divided into twelve chapters, is ranked fourth among the greater Prophets.



IGNATIUS THE GOD-BEARER, BISHOP OF ANTIOCH
DECEMBER 20TH

Saint Ignatius was a disciple of Saint John the Theologian, and a successor of the Apostles, and he became the second Bishop of Antioch, after Evodus. He wrote many epistles to the faithful, strengthening them in their confession, and preserving for us the teachings of the holy Apostles. Brought to Rome under Trajan, he was surrendered to lions to be eaten, and so finished the course of martyrdom about the year 107. The remnants of his bones were carefully gathered by the faithful and brought to Antioch. He is called God-bearer, as one who bare God within himself and was aflame in heart with love for Him. Therefore, in his Epistle to the Romans (ch. 4), imploring their love not to attempt to deliver him from his longed-for martyrdom, he said, "I am the wheat of God, and am ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I may be found to be the pure bread of God."