

✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

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St. Gregory the Great Orthodox Church - A Western Rite Mission of the Antiochian Archdiocese

A Homily by St. Ambrose

died 397AD
feast day - December 7

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Here is the Lord, in this manger, in Whom is made known to us the divine secret: that the peoples of the pagan world, now living after the manner of beasts in their stalls, are to be nourished from the abundance of the sacred Food. *The ox knoweth his master, and the ass his master's crib* [Is. 1:3]. The ass therefore, which is the figure and type of the heathen peoples, knoweth the manger of his Lord. And he says accordingly: *The Lord ruleth me and I shall want nothing* [Ps. 22].

Can anyone say that the Lord is made known to us by signs of little import, when the magi come and adore Him, the angels serve him, and the martyrs confess Him: He comes forth from a womb, but He shines like lightning from above; He lies in an earthly resting place, but round about Him is the brightness of heaven. The espoused has brought forth; but a Virgin hath conceived. A wife hath conceived; but a Virgin hath given birth.

There is here another mystery of no small significance, which the holy Matthew makes known, and which the holy Luke believed he might omit, as it was already fully related, believing he had recorded sufficient when he had given testimony of the manger of the Lord. Now to this little Child, Whom you, if you believe not, will consider as an ordinary child, the wise men from the East, following on so long a journey, now come, *and falling down they adored Him*, and call Him King, and profess that He shall rise from the dead; and this they do by offering Him from their treasures, gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

What are these gifts, offered in true faith: gold, as to a King; incense, as to God; myrrh, for the dead. For one is the token of the dignity of a king; the other the symbol of the divine majesty, the third is a service of honor to a Body that is to be buried, which does not destroy the body of the dead, but

preserves it. We also who read and hear these things, let us, Brethren, offer similar gifts, from our treasures. For we have treasures, *in earthen vessels* [II Cor. 4:7]. If you consider that which you are as being, not from thee, but from Christ: how much more ought you not to consider that which you own as being, not yours, but Christ's?



The magi therefore offer Him gifts from their treasures. Do you desire to know how precious was their reward: The Star is seen by them; where Herod is it is not seen; it is seen again where Christ is, and shows them the way. Therefore this Star is the way, and the way is Christ: for in the mystery of the Incarnation Christ is a star. *A Star shall rise out of Jacob, and a man shall rise up from Israel* [Numbers 24:17]. Where then Christ is, the star is. For He Himself is *the bright and morning star*. He shows us Himself therefore, by His own light.

Here is yet another proof. The Magi come by one way, and return by another. For they who had seen Christ, had come to know Christ; and they returned more truly believing than they came. The way is twofold: one that leads to destruction, and the other that leads to the Kingdom. There is the way of sinners, that leads to Herod: this way is Christ by which we return to our country. For here we have no lasting dwelling, as it is written: *My soul hath long been a sojourner* [Ps. 119:6]. Let us turn away from Herod, ruler for a while of an earthly power, that we may come to the everlasting dwelling of our heavenly country.

And not to the Elect alone are these rewards promised, but likewise to all men: *for Christ is all, and in all* [Col. 3:11]. For you observe that it was not by chance, or because of the Chaldees, who were reputed to be skilled in numbers, that Abraham believed in God; it was not by chance that the Magi believed in the birth of the Lord on earth, although they devoted much time to the appeasing of the divine powers by means of magical arts. As I say, not by chance, but that a witness to the true and holy religion, and a model of true fear of the Lord, might be chosen from among hostile peoples.

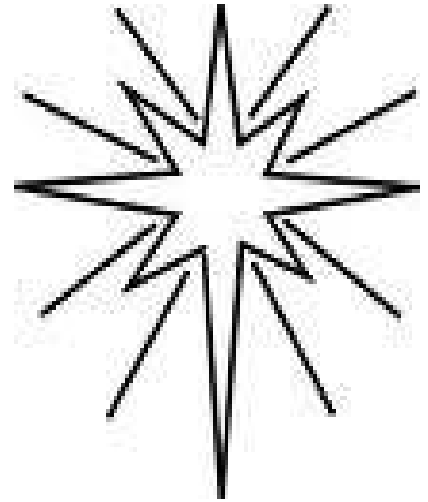
And who are these Magi if not they who, as history tells us, descend from that Balaam by whom it was foretold that, *A Star shall rise out of Jacob*; so that they are no less the heirs of his faith than heirs of his blood. He beheld the Star in spirit; they saw it with their eyes, and believed. They beheld a new star, which had not been seen by a creature of this world. They beheld a new creation, and they sought, not alone on earth, but in heaven, for the friendship of the new Man, according to that which Moses had prophetically declared, for *a Star shall rise out of Jacob and a man shall spring up from Israel* [Exod. 24:17].

And they understood that this was the Star, which meant both God and man; and they adored a Child: nor would they have adored, had they believed He was but a Child. The Magician here saw that his arts were no more; do you not see that your gifts have come? He confesses Someone that is strange to him; do you not recognise the Promised One? He believed against himself; do you not see that you must believe for your own sake?

The Magi come speaking of a King that is born. Herod is troubled and assembles the chief priests and the Scribes, and asks them where Christ should be born. The Magi speak only of a King: Herod inquires for Christ. He confesses therefore that He is a King for Whom he inquires. Then he inquires when it is that Christ should be born, showing that He is foretold: for he cannot be inquired for who was not already foretold. O foolish Jews! Will you not believe that He is now come Whom you see has come? Will you not believe that He is come, Whom you declared was to come?

Bring me word, he says, that I too may come and adore the Child. Herod plots evil, but he does not deny the God Whom he remembers must be adored. Then he orders the Infants to be put to death. To whom but to God is such a sacrifice offered? The Infants, though they understand not, confess the Lord, for Whom they are slaughtered.

These few reflections I have drawn from the Gospel of Matthew, that I may make plain to you, that not even the times of his Infancy were wanting in the signs and wonders of His Divinity. Who with the Father and the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth world without end. Amen.

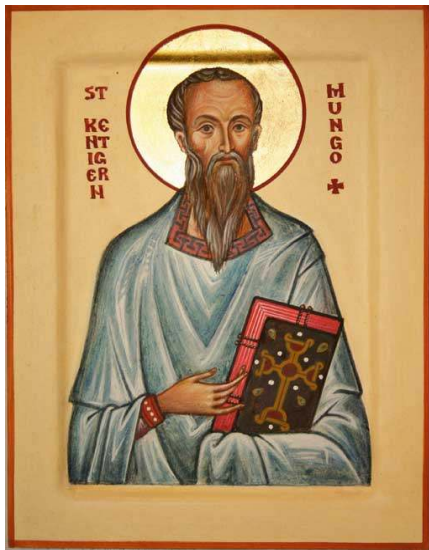


St. Kentigern *Feast Day ~ January 13*

The stories of the saints show us time and time again how God can take the unfortunate and sinful events of our lives and bring about good. The life of St. Kentigern is an example of God's redeeming intervention.

Kentigern's mother, Thenaw, was not married when she became pregnant. Her father, the British prince Lothus, was so angry with her that he banished her from his kingdom - even, according to some legends, pushing her off a cliff in a wagon. By the grace of God, Thenaw survived her father's violent rage and sailed north to Scotland. Here, she enlisted the help of a monk, (St.) Servan (or

Serf), in raising and educating her son. Kentigern was, therefore, brought up in the Irish monastic tradition, living an austere life, with much time spent in prayer and reciting of Psalms. His mentor gave Kentigern the nick-name “Mungo”, which means “dear one”.



At about the age of 25, Kentigern left the monastery of his childhood and began his missionary work. He settled along the river Clyde where he was welcomed by the Christian king. Many were brought to the Christian faith through the teaching of Kentigern and he founded a monastery which attracted many monks. The community became known as “glasgu” or “dear family” and the city of Glasgow grew up around the monastery. Around the year 540, Irish bishops consecrated Kentigern as bishop for the kingdom of Strathclyde.

But the smooth path of Kentigern’s life since his mother entrusted him to St. Servan came to an end around 553 when the people of Strathclyde were incited to reject Christianity and return to their former pagan practices. Kentigern left his monastery and exiled himself to Wales. There he first stayed with St. David and then, bringing good out of the evil of his loss in Scotland, he founded another monastery at Llanelwy. When in 573, the tide had turned in Scotland and Bishop Kentigern was able to return, he left this Welsh monastery under the guidance of one of the holy monks, St. Asaph, by which name it was later called.

Bishop Kentigern first settled in Hoddam and then returned to Glasgow around 581. St. Columba visited him there and, as a sign of monastic friendship, the two exchanged pastoral staves. On January 13, the octave of Epiphany, in the year 603, St. Kentigern gave up this earthly life. He had cooperated with God’s plan for his life. Despite the unfortunate circumstance of his conception, he had been brought up as a faithful servant of God; despite the failure to maintain Christianity in Scotland for a time, he had strengthened the faith in Wales and then returned to Scotland for more missionary work.

We give thanks to God for the example of St. Kentigern and we ask for his prayers on our behalf. Holy Kentigern, pray for us.

Parish News

Thanks to all who helped to make our Christmas celebrations so beautiful: to those who served at the altar and who sang in the choir; to those who decorated, those who brought food to share, and

those who added their voices of praise at the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Christ is born! Glorify Him!

We begin the new year with the celebration of the Circumcision of Our Lord on January 1. Mass will be at 10AM, with Matins at 9:30 and a pot-luck brunch following. The Feast of the Epiphany will be celebrated on the eve - Wednesday, January 5 - at 7:30PM (Vespers at 7:00) with a pot-luck supper afterward.

The season of Epiphany will last through February 26 this year, so there should be time for Fr. Nicholas to visit and bless each home in the parish. Please see him to schedule your house blessing at a convenient time.

Every January, thousands of people from around the country gather in Washington to express to our government leaders the need to protect the most vulnerable of our citizens, the unborn. This year, the March for Life will be held on Monday, January 24. St. Gregory's will host a Mass and breakfast preceding the March. Please plan to join us as we affirm our Orthodox belief that all life is a gift from God.

Congratulations to Ben Green, who has graduated from the University of Maryland with a B.A. in Government and Politics. We bid farewell (again) to Amanda Painter, as she returns to Korea for another year of teaching English as a second language.

We will continue to accept canned and dried foods for the Food for the Hungry collection through Sunday, January 9, at which time the food will be weighed and taken to Martha's Table on 14th St., for use in their soup kitchen for the needy



From the Golden Legend

The Magi entered the little house and found the Child with his mother. They fell to their knees and offered their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Here [St.] Augustine exclaims: "O infancy, to whom the stars are subject! O Infant, great and glorious, over whose swaddling clothes the angels keep watch, to whom the stars do obeisance, before whom kings tremble and seekers of wisdom kneel! O blessed house! O seat of God second only to heaven, lighted not by a lamp but by a star! O heavenly palace wherein dwells not a bejeweled king but a God clothed in flesh, who lies not on soft cushions but in a hard crib, sheltered not by a golden ceiling

but by a roof of thatch blackened by soot yet studded with stars! I am amazed when I see the cloths and perceive the heavens, I am shaken when in the crib I look upon a beggar Child whose glory rises above the planets!”...

St. Jerome, in his commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, says: “Look upon the cradle of Christ and see heaven! You behold the infant crying in his crib, listen at the same time to the angels’ songs of praise. Herod pursues, but the Magi adore, the One whom the Pharisees know not but the star points out. He is baptized by a menial but the voice of a thundering God is heard; he is immersed in the waters but the dove descends, indeed the Holy Spirit as a dove.”

[The 13th century Golden Legend was compiled by Jacobus de Voragine.]

The Theophany

by St. Nikolai of Ochrid



When the Lord Jesus had lived for thirty years from his birth in the flesh, He began His teaching and saving work. He marked this very beginning of the beginning by his Baptism in the Jordan. St. Cyril of Jerusalem says: “the beginning of the world - water; the beginning of the Gospel - the Jordan.” At the Baptism of the Lord in the water, that mystery was revealed to the world that was predicted in the Old Testament and fabled in ancient Egypt and India - the mystery of the Holy Trinity of God. The Father revealed himself to the sense of hearing, the Spirit to the sense of sight and the Son, further beyond these, to the sense of touch. The Father gave his testimony of the Son, the Son was baptized in the waters and the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, hovered over the waters. And when John the Baptist bore witness of Christ and said: “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” [John 1:29], and when he immersed the Lord in the Jordan and baptized Him, there were thus revealed both the mission of Christ in the world and the path of our salvation. That is to say: Christ takes upon Himself the sin of the whole human race. He dies under it (the immersion) and rises again (the coming up out of the water), and we must die to the old, sinful man and rise again, cleansed, renewed and re-born. Here is the Savior and here is the way of salvation. The Feast of the Theophany is also called the Illuminating, for in the Jordan there is given to us an illumining, revealing God to us as Trinity, consubstantial and undivided. That is one thing. And the other is that each of us baptized in the water is illumined by the Father of lights, through the merits of the Son and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>January 2011</h1>						<p>1 The Circumcision of Our Lord and Octave of the Nativity <i>Mass at 10am W</i></p> <p><i>No Vespers today</i></p>
<p>2 Second Sunday after Christmas; Octave Day of St. Stephen; St. Fulgentius, BC, 533</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>W</i></p>	<p>3 Octave Day of St. John, Ap. Ev.; St. Genevieve, V, 512</p>	<p>4 Octave Day of the Holy Innocents, Mm; St. Titus, BC, c. 96</p>	<p>5 Vigil of the Epiphany; St. Telesphorus PM, 136</p> <p><i>Mass at 7:30pm</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>W</i></p>	<p>6 The Epiphany of Our Lord</p>	<p>7 of the Octave of Epiphany; St. Cedd BC, 664</p>	<p>8 of the Octave of Epiphany; St. Lucius & comp., Mm, c. 290; St. Severinus, Ab, 482</p> <p><i>Vespers at 6pm</i></p>
<p>9 First Sunday after the Epiphany</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>W</i></p>	<p>10 of the Octave of Epiphany; St. Paul the First Hermit, C., c. 345</p>	<p>11 of the Octave of Epiphany; St. Hyginus, PM, c. 142; St. Theodosius, Ab, c. 529</p>	<p>12 of the Octave of Epiphany; St. Benedict Biscop, Ab, 690</p>	<p>13 Octave Day of the Epiphany; St. Kentigern, BC, 603</p>	<p>14 St. Hilary, BCD, 367; St. Felix of Nola, PrM, 255; St. Nina, V, 335</p>	<p>15 St. Maurus, Ab, 584</p> <p><i>Vespers at 6pm</i></p>
<p>16 Second Sunday after Epiphany; St. Marcellus, PM, 309, St. Honoratus, BC, 429</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>W</i></p>	<p>17 St. Anthony, Ab, 356</p>	<p>18 St. Prisca, VM, c. 270</p>	<p>19 St. Mark of Ephesus, BC, 1445; St. Marius & comp. Mm, 270</p>	<p>20 Fabian, BM & Sebastian, M, 3rd c.</p>	<p>21 St. Agnes, VM, 304</p>	<p>22 St. Vincent, M, 304; St. Anastasius, M, 628</p> <p><i>Vespers at 6pm</i></p>
<p>23 Third Sunday after Epiphany St. Emerentiana, VM, c. 304; St. John the Almoner, BC, c. 619 G</p>	<p>24 St. Timothy, BM, 97</p> <p><i>March for Life Mass at 9am</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">R</p>	<p>25 Conversion of St. Paul</p>	<p>26 St. Polycarp, BM, 156</p>	<p>27 St. John Chrysostom, BCD, 407</p>	<p>28 The Second Feast of St. Agnes, VM</p>	<p>29</p> <p><i>Vespers at 6pm</i></p>
<p>30 Fourth Sunday after Epiphany; St. Martina, VM, 228; St. Bathildes, QMa, 680 G</p>	<p>31</p>					<p><i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i></p>

Confessions may be made following Vespers, during the Psalms at Matins, and by appointment.

Coffee Hour follows Sunday Liturgy. Sunday School for children is during Coffee Hour