

✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

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

From the Treatise of Saint Athanasius on the Incarnation

*died 373AD
feast day - May 2*

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God knew the limitation of mankind and though the grace of being made in His Image was sufficient to give them knowledge of the word and through Him of the Father, as a safeguard against their neglect of this grace, He provided the works of creation also as means by which the Maker might be known. Nor was this all. Man's neglect of the indwelling grace tends ever to increase; and against this further frailty also God made provision by giving them a law, and by sending prophets, men whom they knew. Thus, if they were tardy in looking up to heaven, they might still gain knowledge of their Maker from those close at hand; for men can learn directly about higher things from other men.

Three ways thus lay open to them, by which they might obtain the knowledge of God. They could look up into the immensity of heaven, and by pondering the harmony of creation come to know its Ruler, the Word of the Father, Whose all-ruling providence makes known the Father to all. Or, if this was beyond them, they could converse with holy men, and through them learn to know God, the Artificer of all things, the Father of Christ, and to recognize the worship of idols as the negation of the truth and full of all impiety. Or else, in the third place, they could cease from lukewarmness and lead a good life merely by knowing the law. For the law was not given only for the Jews, nor was it solely for their sake that God sent the prophets, though it was to the Jews that they were sent and by the Jews that they were persecuted. The law and the prophets were a sacred school of the knowledge of God and the conduct of the spiritual life for the whole world.

So great, indeed, were the goodness and the love of God. Yet men, bowed down by the pleasures of the moment and by the frauds and illusions of the evil spirits, did not lift up their heads towards the truth. So burdened were they with their

wickednesses that they seemed rather to be brute beasts rather than reasonable men, reflecting the very Likeness of the Word.



What was God to do? What else could He possibly do, being God, but renew His Image in mankind, so that through it men might once more come to know Him? And how could this be done save by the coming of the very Image Himself, our Savior Jesus Christ? Men could not have done it, for they are only made after the Image; nor could angels have done it, for they are not the images of God. The Word of God came in His own Person, because it was he alone, the Image of the Father, Who could recreate man made after the Image.

St. John Chrysostom

Feast day ~ January 27

Popularity with many often brings about hatred by some, and truth, spoken forthrightly and bluntly can inspire hatred in those for whom the truth hurts most. St. John Chrysostom, Patriarch of Constantinople at the turn of the 4th to the 5th century, experienced this phenomenon dramatically.

John was born in Antioch around the year 344, little more than 30 years after Emperor Constantine had given Christianity a legal status in the Roman Empire. The young man's education was directed toward a career as a lawyer and he showed remarkable talent as an orator.

John's parents became Christians and, at the age of 23, John also was baptized and the direction of his life was forever changed. Recognizing the seriousness of the commitment required of a Christian, John decided to live as a monk, eventually forming a monastery as he was joined by others. He was beloved by his fellow monks and became an example to all, both in the monastery and in the city of Antioch, for his godly life.

Desiring to become closer to God, John left the monastery and went further into the wilderness to be a hermit. However, illness forced him to return to Antioch for medical care, and there Patriarch Meletios (who had baptized him) tonsured John as a Reader in the Church. Some time later, John was ordained a Deacon and after five years of diaconal service, he felt called to return to his monastery.

Patriarch Meletios traveled to Constantinople to attend the Second Ecumenical Council and while there, reposed in the Lord. His successor in Antioch was Flavianos, who had a dream in which he was told that he should ordain John to the priesthood and bring him back to the city. Taking the dream seriously, Flavianos went to the monastery, where he found that John had had a similar dream. The Patriarch had to console the monks, as they were not happy to lose their beloved John. When the two arrived in the city, crowds of people gathered to rejoice that the now famous monk had come back to them.

John was especially popular for his preaching. His early oratorical skills had been put to good use in explaining the teachings of the Church and in stirring the hearts of the people to greater zeal. He was given the nick-name “Chrysostom”, meaning “golden mouthed”, because of the beauty of his words. These beautiful words were often directed toward those who followed false teachings.

When Nectarios, the Patriarch of Constantinople died near the end of the century, John was elected to succeed him. But the humble priest-monk did not believe himself worthy of so exalted a position and the near-riot that ensued showed that the people of Antioch were certainly not willing to give up their beloved preacher.

So John had to be taken away from Antioch with “cloak and dagger” tactics. An anonymous note was sent to him requesting that he come to a church outside the city to meet with someone who needed his help. When he arrived, a coach was waiting and soldiers placed him in the carriage and whisked him away from Antioch. When they arrived in Constantinople, a huge crowd of people greeted John’s arrival with great joy. John was ordained Patriarch of Constantinople on December 15, 398 and now the most important work that God had for him began.

St. John experienced adulation from most of the Christians of Constantinople and beyond. People flocked to hear him preach and teach and they frequently reacted to his sermons by applauding, a practice which John put a stop to. We are privileged to have many of these sermons in written form for our instruction now. The most famous one is the Paschal sermon which we hear every year at the Easter Vigil.

But many in the capital city of the Empire were still pagans, pseudo-Christianity abounded, and the Arian heresy was growing. The level of morality was very low. The new Patriarch’s sermons, while loved by the faithful Christians, were too



uncomfortable for some. When it was obvious that the pleasure-seeking life of the Empress Eudoxia was the target of condemnation, she began to plot to have the Patriarch removed.

Empress Eudoxia finally succeeded in her efforts to trap St. John or falsely accuse him. The ridiculous accusations ranged from selling the marble from one of the churches to arranging a murder! The Patriarch was sent into exile to the small Armenian village of Comana. There, he was once again afflicted with illness and he died on November 13, 407 and was buried.



But John, the golden-mouthed, was not forgotten by the people and before long, he was regarded as one of the great “Doctors” of the Church, along with Ss. Basil, Gregory the Theologian, and Gregory the Great. The Liturgy which he composed became the standard for the Eastern rite and his writings continue to instruct Christians to this day.

The Christians of Constantinople began to demand that the holy relics of their beloved saint be returned to the city where he served as Patriarch. The Emperor Theodosius the Younger wrote a letter in the name of his mother, Eudoxia, begging the forgiveness of the saint for her wrongs against him. The relics were brought back to the imperial city and on January 27 (the day we celebrate on the Western Rite calendar) in the year 438 were placed in the Church of the Holy Apostles.

However, the relics were then stolen by crusaders in 1204 and eventually taken to Rome where they remained until November 27, 2004. At that time, Pope John Paul, in a gesture of reconciliation and brotherly love, gave the holy relics of the beloved saint to Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and they are now displayed for veneration at St. George’s Church in Constantinople (Istanbul).

May God grant us wisdom to avoid the hatred which comes of jealousy and pride. May we always pray these beautiful words of St. John Chrysostom with heartfelt sincerity: “I believe, O Lord, and I confess that thou art truly the Christ, the Son of the living God, who didst come into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” Holy John, pray for us.

Parish News

Thanks to all who contributed to making our Christmas celebrations so beautiful: those who served at the altar and those who prepared the vestments and vessels, those who helped to

decorate the church building, those who sang and played instruments in praise of the Incarnate Christ, those who shared delicious food, and all who came to pray.

The new year begins with a celebration of our Lord's humanity - His circumcision in obedience to the Law of Moses, a covenant between God and man which has been replaced by Our Lord with Baptism. Since January 1 falls on the Sunday after Christmas this year, we will observe both occasions on this day. A parish brunch at the home of our pastor, Fr. Nicholas, and Kh. Rebecca will follow the service.

Epiphany, the season in which we celebrate the visitation of the Magi to the Christ child, the Baptism of Our Lord by St. John the Forerunner, and the first miracle at the wedding in Cana begins on January 6. We will celebrate the feast day on Thursday evening, January 5, with the Blessing of Water at 7PM, followed by Mass at 7:30 and a pot-luck supper afterward.

The season of Epiphany is also the time when Orthodox homes are blessed by the priest. Please speak to Fr. Nicholas about a convenient time for your home to be blessed and he and Fr. Raphael will schedule the blessings between January 6 and February 4.

Our annual Parish Meeting has been scheduled for Sunday, January 29, following Mass. This is a time when we review our parish activities in the previous year, we discuss the parish budget and elect new members to the Parish Council. It is important that all be present for this parish family meeting.

Again this year, we will prepare for the March for Life by offering a Mass for those who come to participate. We hope to host friends from parishes in Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts. Mass will be at 9AM on Monday, January 23. We will serve breakfast afterward and then go down to the mall for the march. Reverence for life from conception is a basic teaching of our Orthodox faith and we will be joining with people from other faiths who share this belief.



The Blessing of Water at Epiphany

At the Blessing service, the three events which we celebrate in this season are announced in the antiphon for the Magnificat which is repeated at each house blessing:

Now do we celebrate a festival in honor of three days when Christ was made manifest: the day whereon the star led the Wise men to the manger, the day whereon water was turned to wine at the wedding feast; the day whereon Christ was pleased to be baptized of John in the Jordan that he might save us. Alleluia.

A Blessing Delayed



Just as the Orthodox Church reveres life from the conception of a child, the Church also gives reverence to the body throughout life, at the time of death and beyond. We declare in the Nicene Creed every Sunday that we believe in the “resurrection of the body” - not just Christ’s body at the time of His Resurrection, but our own bodies at the end of time. Orthodox Christians are given funerals in the church and are buried respectfully (rather than cremated). The bodies (relics) of saints are venerated and Christian graves are considered hallowed ground.

This past year, the magazine of the Orthodox Church in America published an account of the blessing of the graves of some Orthodox children which was delayed by a hundred years or more. The graves were those of native American children who had been removed from their families in Alaska and sent to a government-sponsored school in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, for “assimilation” into mainstream American life from 1879 to 1918.

Fr. Michael Oleksa, a priest of the OCA Diocese of Alaska, researched this unfortunate and unsuccessful experiment with native American children for his book, *Conflicting Landscapes*, in which he describes the very different approach in the schools founded by the Orthodox Church. He learned that ten of the 186 children buried in this cemetery were Orthodox Christians (bearing the names of saints such as Anastasia and Paraskeva) and that they had not received an Orthodox burial and their graves had never been blessed.

At Fr. Michael’s urging, the priest and people of Holy Apostles OCA mission in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania arranged for this blessing to take place. They had to seek permission to hold a religious ceremony there, as the cemetery is on the grounds of the U. S. War college. But the long-delayed memorial service and blessing finally took place. May the memories of these children be eternal.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>January 2012</h1>						<i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i>
1 The Circumcision of Our Lord and Octave of the Nativity; the Sunday after Christmas <i>Mass at 10am</i> <i>W</i>	2 Octave Day of St. Stephen; St. Fulgentius, BC, 533	3 Octave Day of St. John, Ap. Ev.; St. Genevieve, V, 512	4 Octave Day of the Holy Innocents, Mm; St. Titus, BC, c. 96	5 Vigil of the Epiphany; St. Telesphorus, PM, 136 <i>Blessing of Water at 7; Mass at 7:30pm</i> <i>W</i>	6 The Epiphany of Our Lord	7 of the Octave of Epiphany; St. Cedd, BC, 664 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
8 First Sunday after the Epiphany; St. Lucius & comp., Mm, c. 290; St. Severinus, Ab, 482 <i>W</i>	9	10 of the Octave of Epiphany; St. Paul the First Hermit, C., c. 345	11 of the Octave of Epiphany; St. Hyginus, PM, c. 142; St. Theodosius, Ab, c. 529	12 of the Octave of Epiphany; St. Benedict Biscop, Ab, 690	13 Octave Day of the Epiphany; St. Kentigern, BC, 603	14 St. Hilary, BCD, 367; St. Felix of Nola, PrM, 255; St. Nina, V, 335 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
15 Second Sunday after Epiphany; St. Maurus, Ab, 584 <i>W</i>	16 St. Marcellus, PM, 309, St. Honoratus, BC, 429	17 St. Anthony, Ab, 356	18 St. Prisca, VM, c. 270	19 St. Mark of Ephesus, BC, 1445; St. Marius & comp. Mm, 270	20 Ss. Fabian, BM & Sebastian, M, 3rd c.	21 St. Agnes, VM, 304 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
22 Third Sunday after Epiphany; St. Vincent, M, 304; St. Anastasius, M, 628 <i>G</i>	23 St. Emerentiana, VM, c. 304; St. John the Almoner, BC, c. 619 <i>March for Life - Mass at 9am</i>	24 St. Timothy, BM, 97	25 Conversion of St. Paul	26 St. Polycarp, BM, 156	27 St. John Chrysostom, BCD, 407	28 The Second Feast of St. Agnes, VM <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
29 Fourth Sunday after Epiphany <i>G</i>	30 St. Martina, VM, 228; St. Bathildes, QMa, 680	31	1 St. Ignatius of Antioch, BM, c. 107; St. Bridgid, V, 523 <i>Blessing of Candles & Mass at 7:30pm</i> <i>W</i>	2 Presentation of Our Lord: Candlemas	3 St. Blaise, BM, c. 316; St. Anskar of Hamburg, BC, 865	4 New Martyrs of Russia, 1917 and following; St. Joseph of Aleppo, M, 1686 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>