

✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

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

From a Homily of Saint Leo, Bishop & Doctor

*died c. 461AD
Feast Day ~
11 April*

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Having celebrated in the recent festival the day in which the most pure Virgin gave birth to the Savior of Mankind, the venerable feast of the Epiphany, Dearly Beloved, brings to us a continuation of joy, so that between the kindred mysteries of these linked solemnities, the liveliness of our rejoicing and the fervor of our faith, may not grow cool. For it was in view of the salvation of all men that the infancy of the Mediator between God and Man was revealed to the world while He was detained in the little village. For even though He had chosen the people of Israel, and one family among that people, from which to assume the nature of humanity; yet it was not His will that His Birth be concealed within the obscurity of His Mother's dwelling; He wished rather to become known at once to all men, since He had deigned to be born for all.

And so there appeared in the East, to the three Magi, a star of new splendor, which, being brighter and more beautiful than the other stars, would readily draw to itself the eyes and minds of all beholders, so that it would immediately be seen that a sight so strange had a special meaning. Then He Who set up the sign gave to those who beheld it an understanding of its meaning; and what He gave them to see, He led them to seek, and being sought for He let Himself be found. The three men follow the guide of this heavenly light, and journeying together, with eyes fixed upon the light going before them, they are led by the brightness of His grace to the knowledge of the Truth; they who believed, from human reasoning, that they must seek the newborn King, Whose sign they had seen, in the royal city. But He Who had taken the form of a servant, and had come not to judge but to be judged, chose Bethlehem for His birth, but Jerusalem for His passion.



The Magi then fulfil their desire, and following this very star, they come at length to the child, the Lord Jesus Christ. They adore the Word in our flesh, Wisdom in infancy, Power in weakness, and in true man the Lord of Majesty. And that they may make clear the mystery of their faith and understanding, that which they believe in their heart, they proclaim by their gifts. They offer incense to God, myrrh to man, and gold to a King, with knowledge adoring in unity the human nature and the divine: for what was proper to the persons is not separated from the Godhead.

Therefore, Dearly Beloved, lift up your hearts to the shining grace of the sempiternal Light, and adoring the precious mysteries of man's redemption, give earnest thought to what has been done for you. Love the purity of chastity, because Christ is the Son of virginity. Refrain from carnal desires which war against the soul, as the blessed apostle presiding over us has, as we read, exhorted us in his own words [I Peter 2:11]. In malice be children [I Cor. 14:20], the Lord of glory has subjected Himself to the childhood of mortal man.

Follow in the way of humility, which the Son of God deigned to show his disciples [Matt. 11:29]. Clothe yourself with the strength of patience, in which you shall have the power to possess your souls; since He Who is the Redemption of all men, is also the strength of all men [Luke 21:19]. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are on the earth [Col. 3:2]. Walk in steadfastness along the way of truth and of life, and neither let things of earth ensnare you, for whom the things of heaven are prepared, through Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who with the Father and the Holy spirit liveth and reigneth world without end. Amen.

St. Paul, the First Hermit

Feast Day ~ January 10

There are many reasons why Christians have fled to the desert or a monastery to live an ascetic life. Doing this because your brother-in-law was going to report you to the authorities is not a common one! But that is how the monastic life of St. Paul, the first hermit, began.

Paul was born in Thebes, Egypt, around the year 228. He and his sister were orphaned when he was fifteen years old and they inherited a sizable fortune from their parents. The two had been raised as Christians and Paul was particularly devout. When the Emperor Decius began his persecution of Christians around 250,

Paul was concerned for his and his sister's safety. But his sister's husband threatened to turn Paul in to the authorities, perhaps as a way to wrest Paul's portion of the inheritance from him.

So Paul fled to the nearby desert and found a cave where he could hide out until the political climate was more favorable for Christians to worship in peace and safety. Surprisingly, Paul discovered that camping out in the desert appealed to him and that he felt closer to God away from the tumult and temptations of the world. So he decided to remain in the desert a while longer. There was a spring nearby the cave from which he could have fresh water, and a palm tree growing close to the cave provided fruit for eating. Paul even made clothes from the large leaves of the tree. Here he started on the path to sainthood.

Others may never have known of the existence of St. Paul had not St. Anthony the Great - who was thought to be the first who had gone out into the desert to lead an ascetic life - saw him in a dream and traveled away from his monastery to find this predecessor. When St. Anthony discovered the cave in which St. Paul was praying, he waited a long time to be admitted, but then Paul and Anthony greeted each other and had a long talk in which the details of St. Paul's desert sojourn were told. St. Anthony at this time was 90 years old and St. Paul had lived to the astonishing age of 114! He related how he had survived on the fruit of the tree (literally a "tree of life" for him) for many years until a raven began bringing him bread. St. Anthony observed other animals of the desert being completely tame in the presence of the hermit. St. Paul inquired as to whether the persecutions had ended and St. Anthony was humbled in discovering that he was not the first to lead this life.

At the end of their conversation, St. Paul told St. Anthony that he knew that he was near death and asked him to be responsible for his burial. He also asked that the cloak which had been given by St. Athanasius to St. Anthony be used as his burial shroud. The younger saint agreed and left to go back to his monastery to retrieve the cloak.

When St. Anthony returned, he found St. Paul praying in his cave as before. He waited respectfully for some time before going into the cave, but then discovered that the first hermit had died as he lived - in prayer. St. Anthony kept his promise to bury St. Paul in the cloak of St. Athanasius and it is said that two lions helped to dig the grave. This was in the year 343. This story spread among monastics in the Middle East and thirty years later, St. Jerome wrote the story of St. Paul's life for posterity.



We can learn from St. Paul the Hermit that having to escape from a worldly problem may lead us to discover spiritual treasures. May St. Paul intercede for us as we strive to lead prayerful lives.

Sources: Alban Baker: Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs, and Other Saints; St. Nikolai: Prologue From Ochrid; George Poulos: Orthodox Saints; online article on Wikipedia.

Parish News



We begin the new year with the celebration of the Circumcision of Our Lord. Matins will be at 9:30AM on Wednesday, January 1, and Mass will be at 10:00 followed by a pot-luck brunch and games.

Metropolitan PHILIP, has directed that all parishes in the Archdiocese celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany on Sunday, January 5 (the actual date is January 6) in order that more people will experience one of the most ancient and important feasts of the Church year. In the season of Epiphany, we celebrate the arrival of the gentile Wise Men, which shows that Christ came for all people; and we celebrate the Baptism of Our Lord and his first miracle at a wedding in Cana. We will have the service of the Blessing of the Water in place of Matins at 9:00AM; this is the holy water that will be used for house blessings throughout the season.

As we Follow the Orthodox custom of having the priest bless the homes of parishioners during the season of Epiphany, please speak with Fr. Nicholas or Fr. Raphael to schedule your house blessing soon.

The annual Parish Meeting will be held on Sunday, January 19, at which time new members of the Parish Council will be elected and reports on the various activities of the parish will be given.

The March for Life, the annual gathering in Washington of Christians and others who oppose abortion and support life-affirming legislation by our government. This year's March is on Wednesday, January 22. We will celebrate a Mass at St. Gregory's at 9:30 that morning and provide breakfast for those attending who will participate in the march.

Thanks to Patrick Woolley for his gift to the church of a new Holy water font which he purchased on his visit to Rome.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>January 2014</h1>						
<p><i>Sunday Services:</i> <i>Matins at 9AM,</i> <i>Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i></p>			<p>1 The Circumcision of Our Lord and Octave Day of the Nativity</p> <p><i>Mass at 10am</i> <i>W</i></p>	<p>2 Octave Day of St. Stephen; St. Fulgentius, BC, 533</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><i>Vespers at 6pm</i></p>
<p>5 The Epiphany of Our Lord (observed); The Second Sunday after Christmas</p> <p><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>9 of the Octave of Epiphany</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><i>Vespers at 6pm</i></p>
<p>12 First Sunday after Epiphany; St. Benedict Biscop, Ab, 690</p> <p><i>W</i></p>	<p>13 Octave Day of 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>16 St. Marcellus, PM, 309, St. Honoratus, BC, 429</p>	<p>17 St. Anthony, Ab, 356</p>	<p>18 St. Prisca, VM, c. 270</p> <p><i>Vespers at 6pm</i></p>
<p>19 Second Sunday after Epiphany; St. Mark of Ephesus, BC, 1445</p> <p><i>Annual Parish Meeting</i> <i>W</i></p>	<p>20 Ss. 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>Mass at 9:30am</i> <i>(March for Life)</i></p>	<p>23 St. Emerentiana, VM, c. 304; St. John the Almoner, BC, c. 619</p>	<p>24 St. Timothy, BM, 97</p>	<p>25 Conversion of St. Paul</p> <p><i>Vespers at 6pm</i></p>
<p>26 Third Sunday after Epiphany; St. Polycarp, BM, 156</p> <p><i>G</i></p>	<p>27 St. John Chrysostom, BCD, 407</p>	<p>28 The Second Feast of St. Agnes, VM</p>	<p>29</p>	<p>30 St. Martina, VM, 228; St. Bathildes, QMa, 680</p>	<p>31</p>	

Confessions are heard during the Psalms at Matins, after Vespers, and by appointment.

Coffee Hour follows Sunday Mass. Sunday School during coffee hour.