

✠ 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. Cyril of Alexandria

*died 444AD
feast day - January 28*

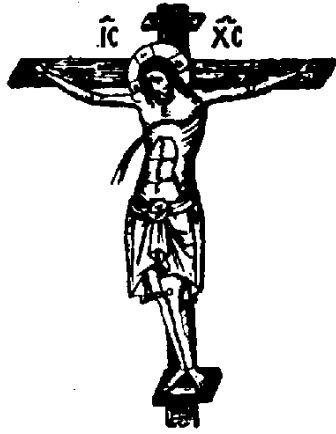
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Behold! This wondrous and most profitable time of our Pasch is now approaching, when, after we have shaken off the oppressive burden of our sins, we shall freely take upon us the saving yoke of the Divine Word come down from heaven; and taught by the mild and salutary words of Emmanuel, we shall no longer labor or be burdened. And coming together in the churches in common joyfulness let us lift up our voices in holy harmony, and give humble thanks to Christ the Savior of all men, who has cleansed us of the ancient stain that clung to us from of old, from our first parent's sin, and let us cry out what was so truly said in times past: *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.* [Gal. 3:13]

Since we were, because of the evil will of the devil, sent forth from Paradise and its joy, and heard because of the just anger of God that sorrowful decree: *Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return* [Gen. 3:19], and since we were caught in the snare of that diabolical tyranny, unhappy that we were, we dared not raise our eyes to heaven for mercy. Where was the way of salvation for those who longed for it? What means of pardon was there for those who had broken the command of the Lord? There was only the clemency of God: the mercy and compassion that belong to that unseen and unutterable majesty.

So therefore He sent His Son as our Savior and Redeemer, who alone had power to free mankind from the hands of the devil. And with infinite kindness and goodness the Only-Begotten Son of the Father, equal to Him in power and majesty, Co-Eternal with Him who had begotten Him, Creator and Artificer of heaven and earth, of angels and of men, took upon Himself our likeness, made in all things as we are, sin alone excepted, that through Himself He might redeem us all, and bring us to God the Father freed from all defilement and stain.



For this purpose, He suffered hunger, and fasted for a certain time, that He might be for us the beginning of our salvation, and the model of a blameless life. So let us also make fasting the prelude of our holy celebrations. And should we keep ourselves pure and chaste, steadfastly adhering to a way of life that pleases God, we shall as not unprofitable servants hear in due time these words: *Well done, thou good and faithful servant.* [Matt. 25:23]

It is required of us therefore that our life should be good in all ways, that fasting is but added to our own clear and joyful virtue, the sure means of immortality, the worthy pledge of the kingdom of heaven, and the strong and unshakeable foundation of eternal life...And so with confidence and without fear we then shall stand before the Tribunal of Christ, clothed in shining garments, and cry out to Him, *Behold we come to thee; for thou art the Lord our God.* [Jer. 3:22]

My God, My God, Look Upon Me

by Fr. Patrick Reardon

The following is reprinted, with permission, from Christ in the Psalms, published by Conciliar Press. Psalm 21 (in the Septuagint), which is Psalm 22 in our Psalter (based on the Hebrew numbering), is heard numerous times during Holy Week in addition to its appointed time on the 4th day of each month at Vespers in the English Office. Verses from it make up the Introit for Palm Sunday and the Tract on that day is comprised of more verses. On Maundy Thursday at the stripping of the Altar, the entire psalm is sung with verse 19 as an antiphon: "They part my garments among them, and upon my vesture they cast lots." At the distribution of the reserved Sacrament on Good Friday, the psalm is sung again and in the Passion Gospels on both Palm Sunday and Good Friday, we hear the story that is prophesied in this psalm.

Of all the psalms Psalm 21 (Hebrew 22) is *par excellence* the canticle of the Lord's suffering and death. In Matthew and Mark, Jesus is described as praying the opening line of this psalm as He hangs on the Cross: "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" [Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34]. In Luke, on the other hand, the last recorded words of Jesus on the Cross are a line from Psalm 30 (Hebrew 31): "Into your hands I commit My spirit" [23:46]. From a juxtaposition of these two texts there arose in Christian sentiment the popular story that Jesus, while he hung on the Cross, silently recited all the lines of the Psalter that lie between these two verses.

Whatever is to be said of that story, there is no doubt about the importance of Psalm 21 [22] in reference to the Lord's suffering and death. Not only did Jesus pray this psalm's opening line on his gibbet of pain; other lines of it are also interpreted by the Church, even by the evangelists themselves, as prophetic references to details in the drama of Holy Friday.

Consider, for instance, this verse of Psalm 21 [22]: "All who gazed at Me derided Me. With their lips they spoke and wagged their heads: 'He hoped on the Lord. Let Him deliver him. Let him save him, since He approves of him.'" [In our translation: *All they that see me laugh me to scorn; they shoot out their lips, and shake their heads, saying, He trusted in the Lord, that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, if he will have him.*]

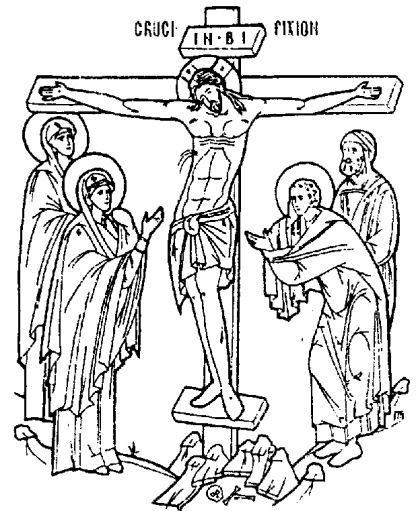
The Gospels likewise tell of the soldiers dividing the garments of Jesus at the time of his Crucifixion. St. John's description of this event is worth considering at length, because he actually quotes our psalm verbatim as a fulfilled prophecy:

Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also His tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece. They said therefore among themselves, "let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be," that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says: 'They divided My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots'. [19:23, 24]

Moreover, if Holy Church thinks of the Lord himself as praying this psalm on the Cross, such an interpretation is amply justified by a later verse that says: "Like a potsherd has my strength been scorched, and my tongue cleaved to my palate." [*My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my gums.*] Hardly can the Church read this line without calling to mind the Lord who said from the Cross: "I thirst" [John 19:28]

And as she thinks of the nails supporting the Lord's body on the tree of redemption, the Church recognizes the voice that speaks yet another line of our psalm: "They have pierced my hands and feet; they have numbered all my bones."

In addition, according to St. John, at the foot of the Cross stood the Mother of the Lord, a loyal disciple to the last, her soul transfixed by the sword that aged Simeon prophesied in the temple when she first presented the Child to God. To her the Lord himself now makes reference in this psalm. Speaking of that consecration, Jesus says to his heavenly Father of his earthly mother, "You were He that drew me from the womb, ever my hope from my mother's breasts. To you



was I handed over from the womb. From the belly of my mother, You are my God.” [But thou art he that took me out of my mother’s womb; thou wast my hope, when I hanged yet upon my mother’s breasts. I have been left unto thee ever since I was born; thou art my God even from my mother’s womb.]



Outside of the Gospels, the New Testament’s most vivid references to the Lord’s Passion are arguably those in Hebrews, which speaks of the Lord’s sharing our flesh and blood so that “through death he might destroy him who had the power of death” [2:14] Quoting Psalm 21 [22] in this context of the Passion, this author tells us that Jesus “is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying ‘I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.’” [2:11, 12]

Finally, just as each of the Lord’s three predictions of the Passion ends with a prediction of the Resurrection (cf. Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:34), this psalm of the Passion appropriately finishes with the voice of victory and the growth of the Church: “My spirit lives for Him; my seed will serve Him. The coming generation shall be herald for the Lord, declaring His righteousness to a people yet unborn, whom the Lord created.” [My seed shall serve him; they shall be counted unto the Lord for a generation. They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, whom the Lord hath made.]

Ss. Soter and Caius, Bishops & Martyrs *Feast Day ~ April 22*

Those who do genealogical research in an effort to learn more about their family heritage know that there is often not much information about their ancestors. A birth certificate, record of baptism, register of marriage, and a death notice are often all that can be learned about numerous souls whose lives brought about the unique genetic make-up of the researcher, as well as contributing to the collective beliefs, talents, and interests of his family.

The saints of the Church are our spiritual ancestors and our Christian family tree is a mighty tree with numerous branches, buds, and flowers. But, as with our biological families, there are many saints whose lives were not recorded in detail or passed down for future generations. For them, it is often a martyr’s courageous death or a particularly zealous act of charity which won them the designation of “saint” with their names remembered on the Church’s calendar.

On April 22, we mark the heavenly birthdays of two saints about which we know very little. Saints Soter and Caius were both popes of Rome and both are given the martyr's designation.

St. Soter was elected pope in 173 on the death of his predecessor, St. Anicetus. Eusebius, in his ecclesiastical history, tells us the little we know of this holy bishop. We are told that he strongly opposed the heresy of the Montanists, a rigorist apocalyptic sect which condemned the practices of Orthodox Christianity. He is described as being like a father to all under his pastoral care, especially those who were persecuted for their faith. In his concern for the faithful throughout the whole Church, he wrote a letter to the Christians in Corinth to encourage them in their trials. There is no extant copy of this letter, but the letter of thanks from St. Dionysius of Corinth does exist, and in it we are told that Pope Soter's letter was read in the Corinthian church on Sundays, along with the letter of St. Clement. St. Soter may not have been put to death for his faith, but was given the title "martyr" for his struggles during a time of persecution.



St. Caius also received the designation of martyr a century later. He became pope in the year 283 during a peaceful time for the Church, but soon after, another fierce persecution began under Diocletian (who may have been a relative of his). Pope Caius was encouraged to hide himself from the authorities so that he could continue ministering to the Christians who were in great danger. He helped St. Sebastian and others like him to face torture and execution with steadfast faith. St. Caius fell asleep in the Lord and was buried on April 22, on which day we venerate his memory with that of St. Soter.



Even though history has not provided us with extensive details about the lives and witness of these two saints, we know that they - with a multitude of others - contributed to building up the Church of Christ in a crucial time. Because they strove for holiness through love and concern for others and by maintaining Orthodox beliefs, they helped to build upon the foundation laid by Christ and his Apostles which we have inherited.

We give thanks to God for our spiritual ancestors and ask that St. Soter and St. Caius pray for us.

Parish News

We give thanks for the tonsuring of Karl Tsuji as a Reader by Bishop THOMAS when he made his visitation to St. Patrick's Church in Warrenton, Virginia, on March 19. The first of the minor orders of the Church, a Reader is one who is faithful

and devout and who can take responsibility for leading the Office in the absence of a Priest or Deacon. Karl has taken the name Simon, with the Apostle Simon the Zealot as his patron saint.



*Christ is risen!
Indeed He is risen!*

*Al Massiah qam!
Haqqan qam!*

*Christos aneste!
Alithos aneste!*

*Khristos voskrese!
Vo istinnu voskrese!*

We continue to collect items for making health kits for the relief work of International Orthodox Christian Charities in Japan following the earthquake and tsunami.

On Friday evenings, April 1, 8, and 15, we will continue our Lenten suppers, followed by a class on the Catholic Epistles, and ending with Stations of the Cross and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Catechism classes continue on alternate Sundays, following Coffee Hour.

In preparation for our Paschal celebrations, please arrange with Fr. Nicholas to make your confession after Vespers, during the Psalms at Matins, before the Vigil at Pascha, or by appointment.

Holy Week Services

Palm Sunday, April 17 - *Matins at 9AM, the Blessing of Palms, Procession and Solemn High Mass with the Passion according to St. Matthew at 9:30AM.*

Monday, April 18 - *Vespers at 7PM and Mass with the Passion according to St. Mark at 7:30PM.*

Tuesday, April 19 - *Vespers at 7PM and Mass with the Passion according to St. Luke at 7:30PM.*

Wednesday, April 20 - *Vespers at 7PM and Mass with the Blessing of Oils and Unction at 7:30PM.*

Maundy Thursday, April 21 - *Mass with the Foot Washing, Procession to the Altar of Repose and Stripping of the Altar at 7:30PM; Tenebrae following Mass.*

Good Friday, April 22 - *Liturgy with the Passion according to St. John, Veneration of the Cross, Solemn Collects and Mass of the Pre-sanctified at 12 Noon.*

Holy Saturday, April 23 - *Confessions 7:30-8:30PM; Paschal Vigil with the lighting of the Paschal Fire and Blessing of the Paschal Candle, reading of the Prophecies, Litany of the Saints, Blessing of the font and the first Mass and Lauds of Easter at 9PM; Paschal Feast following Liturgy.*

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>April 2011</h1>						
<i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i>					1 St. Melito of Sardis, BC, 177 <i>Lenten Supper & Stations of the Cross at 6:30pm</i>	2 St. Mary of Egypt, Penitent <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
3 Fourth Sunday in Lent; St. Sixtus I, PM, 127 <i>V</i>	4 St. Isidore of Seville, BCD, 636	5	6 St. Notker Balbulus, C, 912	7 St. Tikhon of Moscow, BC, Patron of the Western Rite, 1925	8 <i>Lenten Supper & Stations of the Cross at 6:30pm</i>	9 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
10 Passion Sunday <i>V</i>	11 St. Leo the Great, PCD, 461	12	13 St. Hermenegild M, 583	14 St. Justin, M, 167; Ss. Tiburtius, Valerian & Maximus, Mm, 3 rd c.	15 Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary <i>Lenten Supper & Stations of the Cross at 6:30pm</i>	16 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
17 Palm Sunday; St. Anicetus, PM, 168 <i>V</i>	18 Monday in Holy Week <i>Mass at 7:30pm V</i>	19 Tuesday in Holy Week; St. Alphege of Canterbury, BM, 1012 <i>Mass at 7:30pm V</i>	20 Wednesday in Holy Week <i>Mass at 7:30pm W</i>	21 Maundy Thursday <i>Mass at 7:30pm W</i>	22 Good Friday (omit Ss. Soter, 174 & Caius, 296, Bb, Mm) <i>Liturgy at Noon B</i>	23 Holy Saturday <i>Mass at 9pm V / W</i>
24 Pascha (omit St. Mellitus, BC, 624) <i>W</i>	25 Monday in the Octave of Easter	26 Tuesday in the Octave of Easter (omit Ss. Cletus, 89 & Marcellinus, 304, BbMm)	27 Wednesday in the Octave of Easter	28 Thursday in the Octave of Easter; St. Vitalis of Milan, M, 3 rd c.	29 Friday in the Octave of Easter	30 Saturday in the Octave of Easter <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>

Confessions are heard during the Psalms at Matins, following Vespers, or by appointment.

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