

✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

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

A Reading from a homily of St. John Chrysostom, Bishop, Confessor & Doctor

*died. 407AD
feast day - 27 January*

Inside:

*St. John the Wonderworker.2
A Reflection on Beauty... 4
Parish News..... 5
Feasts of Our Lady..... 6
On the Example of the
Theotokos..... 7
Calendar. insert*

Since the Lord had said many things concerning the dangers that awaited Him, and had spoken of his passion and death, and of the putting to death of his disciples, and had told them of the many severe trials that would come upon them in this life, and were now close at hand, and told them also of the many good things laid up for their hope and expectation: such as that they who lose their life shall find it, and that He shall come in the glory of the Father and give us our reward; and since He also wished to show them what that glory would be like in which He would appear, that they might see it with their own eyes and understand it as far as was possible to them, He shows it to them in this present life, and He shows it also so that they might not continue to grieve over their own death, and over the Lord's death, especially Peter, who particularly was fearful.

And what does He do? He revealed His kingdom to them; but not however the kingdom of darkness. Why was this? Had they been different, grosser men, the other would certainly have been necessary; but since they were tried and worthy men He now strengthens them with this vision of his Glory. And this was not the sole reason for what He did; but it was the most becoming to Him. Yet He does not pass over the other kingdom; for He frequently brings the realities of hell before their eyes, as when he brought before them the picture of Lazarus, and when He reminded them of the man who had extorted the hundred pence, and also of the man who was clothed in filthy garments, and of many others.

Taking with Him his chief Disciples he leads them up into a high mountain apart. And he was transfigured before them. And His face did shine as the sun, and his garments became white as snow. And behold there appeared to them Moses and Elias, talking with Him...



And why did He bring Moses and Elias before them? That they might learn He had power over life and death; and that He has power equally over those in heaven and those on earth. And so he brings before them the one who had died, and one that had not yet died... [and] that He might show them the glory of the Cross, and bring comfort to Peter and the others who went in fear of His Passion, and raise their courage...

He brought These men before them for this reason also. He wished them to imitate their courage of soul, and their steadfastness in leading their people; and so that they might be gentle as Moses, and possessed of the zeal of Elias, and as devoted as both were...

No one was ever more blessed than the Apostles, and especially those three who were thought worthy of being overshadowed by the cloud together with the Lord. But if we will it, we also shall see Christ, not as they saw Him upon the mountain, but in yet greater glory: for not in this way will He come at the end of the world. For then, for His Disciples, He tempered the revelation of His glory to the measure they could endure to see. But in the last days He will come in the true glory of the Father; and not alone will he be accompanied by Moses and Elias, but by the whole host of heaven, by the Archangels, the Cherubim, and by an infinite multitude of every degree. And not with a cloud about His Head, but clothed with the heavens.

St. John the Wonderworker

Feast Day ~ July 2

Michael, the son of Boris and Glafira Maximovitch, who was born in 1896 (in a village in what is now Ukraine), had several reasons to live a life of bitterness and sorrow. The first reason was ill health. Michael was sickly from birth, suffering from digestive difficulties. But the limits that poor health made on the normal childhood activities for the boy were offset by his intense interest in religious matters. It was obvious from an early age that God was calling this boy to a special purpose.

After graduating from military school in 1914, Michael studied at the Kharkiv Imperial University, receiving a law degree in 1918 as the Bolshevik revolution tore his country apart. The Maximovitch family were minor aristocrats and were, therefore, in great personal danger during these times. Once again, the young man was given a reason for bitterness and sorrow. But God was calling him to a different life, so when the family fled to

Yugoslavia, Michael enrolled in the University of Belgrade to study theology.

After his graduation, Michael was tonsured (in 1926) as a monk by Metropolitan Anthony, who became the first bishop of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, as those Orthodox Christians who had fled from the persecutions during the Russian Revolution were known. Ordinations as hierodeacon and hieromonk followed that same year and then ordination to the priesthood as Fr. John. He began teaching in a Serbian high school and because of his knowledge of Greek, Fr. John also served the Liturgy for Greek and Macedonian exiles living in Belgrade. This was the beginning of his concern for many different cultural expressions of the Orthodox faith.

In May of 1934, John Maximovitch was consecrated Bishop and was assigned to the diocese of Shanghai and, after twelve years there, he was made Archbishop. During this time, John was untiring in his pastoral duties, building churches, hospitals and orphanages, caring for the sick, giving foremost attention to the services and prayers of the Church. His humility was apparent in the austerities of his life (often walking barefoot even in cold weather) and his shunning of worldly comforts.

When the Communists came to power in China after World War II, Archbishop John was once again faced with danger and exile. He led 5,000 of his community out of Shanghai in 1949, to the Philippine island of Tubabao where the refugees found shelter. The Archbishop traveled to Washington DC to make an appeal for the exiled Christians to enter the U.S. While in Washington, the future saint established the church which became the ROCOR Cathedral of St. John the Baptist.

John was sent to be the new Archbishop of San Francisco in 1962. Here he found great disunity among the Orthodox Christians and there was much opposition to his efforts at healing the dissension. Eventually, however, peace was established and a beautiful new cathedral, dedicated to Mary, the Joy of All Who Sorrow was built. The servant of God, John, fell asleep in the Lord on July 2, 1966 while accompanying a tour of the Kursk-Root icon of the Mother of God in Seattle. His relics are buried in a crypt chapel of the Cathedral in San Francisco.

These basic historical facts of the life of a dedicated churchman who served during difficult times and in many different places are enough to cause us to consider him a saint. But in addition to these facts, there are numerous stories of St. John's miracles of foreknowledge, of levitating while praying or celebrating the



Divine Liturgy, of exhibiting an aura of “divine light” - these are all characteristics associated with the holiest of the Church’s saints.

Those of us who worship according to the Western Rite have additional reasons to be thankful for the life and witness of St. John. Perhaps because of his broad international experiences, the Archbishop was very supportive of efforts to present the Orthodox faith in many different cultural forms. He welcomed the Gallican Liturgy of the Western Rite Orthodox Christians when he was in Paris and he encouraged devotion to Western saints, particularly during his time in San Francisco.

God did indeed have a plan for raising John Michael Maximovitch from the life of sorrow and bitterness which he could justifiably have led to one of joy in service to him instead. May God, in his mercy, grant us to rise above our physical and external limitations to joyful service, and may St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco pray for us.

A Reflection on Beauty as Prayer

*by Sister Mary of the Orthodox Monastery of the Transfiguration in Ellwood City, PA
From the journal, “Life Transfigured”, Volume 43, #1, used by permission of Mother Magdalene*



How often we hear as monastics that our life is our prayer and that we are to strive to pray without ceasing. These ideas can be very difficult to understand and even more difficult to put into practice. On our pilgrimage to Ukraine, visiting monasteries in a part of the world with a history that is rich in ascetical practices, I began to think about prayer in a way I had never before considered. I reflected about beauty - the place not of *ascetical* practices but *aesthetical* practices in monastic life and prayer.

In Ukraine, beauty was everywhere...We witnessed pastoral scenes of rich farmland, dotted with picturesque villages, colorful gardens, and numerous churches with blue or gold domes. We visited famous monasteries started by monks dwelling in caves, laboring in asceticism and enduring unfathomable hardships through fasting and unceasing prayer. While these places of Christian pilgrimage - especially the Kievan Caves Lavra and the Pochaev Monastery - are certainly known for their holiness, they are also recognized the world over for their magnificent art and architecture.

The experience of being in these holy monasteries can be almost numbing - too much to take in and process all at once. Even though I take great pleasure in looking at artistic creations, I found

myself wanting to close my eyes to block it out. I thought I should just focus on what I assumed to be the most important aspect of these monasteries: trying to feel something in the presence of the relics of the saints, the wonderworking icons, and holy objects. But reminding myself that the Fathers of the Church warn us not to seek such spiritual experiences, I opened my eyes to take in as much as I could. This was, after all, a once in a lifetime journey.

In the Pochaev Monastery, surrounded by ancient icons, soaring arches, intricate gilding and decorative painting, I realized that beauty is not just an aesthetically pleasing end-product of an artist's arrangement of visual elements. I began to see beauty as the result of an on-going process, an interaction between God and man, the synergy between the Creator and the human co-creator. I saw a continual process of our heavenly Father giving to us, our receiving His gift and offering it back. This is not limited to the artist and God, but is open to all those coming into the presence of such physical beauty to also enter into this synergy with Him. The church building itself as well as all it contains can actively pull people into this meeting with God, bringing us into an awareness of His presence...

Back home in my monastery with time and thousands of miles separating me from our [pilgrimage], I am just now beginning to really see some of what God had to show me in Ukraine. Looking through photos and reflecting on all the people, places, and experiences of the pilgrimage, I am gradually seeing everything in a new light.

The monasteries that hosted us, though perhaps not as renowned as Pochaev, were no less beautiful or grace-filled. The sisters there, in sharing their own creations with us - beaded eggs, embroidery, monastic dresses, their gardens, music - were inviting us through tangible, physical beauty, to open our eyes to the presence of God in their lives and enter into this communion of love with Him.

This receiving from God and creating beauty for Him and offering it back truly is prayer - and it can be a continual prayer. Our lives can begin to be unceasing prayer - a constant awareness of God - if we can learn to see the reflection of the glory of God in all of the beauty that surrounds us, wherever He has called us to be.



Parish News

In continuity with the practice established by the Apostles, the Orthodox Church is a conciliar body. In the month of July, our



Antiochian Archdiocese will continue this practice in two meetings. First, the Parish Life Conference for the Eastern Region will be held June 29-July 3. This annual conference is an opportunity for us to pray and study together, to honor the spiritual growth of our children, and to hear about the work of the church in our area. If you have never attended a Parish Life Conference, you should make every effort to attend some of this year's meeting, held at the Renaissance Harborplace Hotel in Baltimore. We will celebrate Vespers according to the Western Rite on Friday, July 1, with representatives from our parish among the clergy, acolytes, and choir singers.

The second meeting this month will be the semi-annual Archdiocesan Convention, held this year in Chicago July 25-31. Clergy and delegates from all the parishes in the archdiocese will gather to report on the work of our church in this country and Canada and this year, to make nominations for two new bishops. Please pray for the work of our Church as it meets in council.

In the month of August, we will celebrate two great feasts of the Church with extra liturgies: the Feast of the Transfiguration, August 6, with Mass on that Saturday at 10AM (followed by a pot-luck brunch), and the feast of the Assumption (Dormition) of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Monday, August 15. The Mass will be celebrated at 7:30PM with a pot-luck supper following. These are two important feasts of the Church year and all are encouraged to be present for the Liturgies.

Vespers services will continue on Saturdays at 6PM through July, will not be held in the month of August, but will resume on Saturday, September 3. Please remember to speak with Fr. Nicholas before you and your family go away for a summer vacation. He can help you find a parish to visit wherever you go, and we will pray for you at St. Gregory's as you travel.

Feasts of Our Lady

The two feast days honoring the blessed Virgin Mary which we celebrate in the summer months are the Visitation (July 2) and the Dormition (August 15).

In relating the story of the Visitation, St. Luke tells of the meeting of the pregnant Mary with her older pregnant cousin, Elizabeth, and how the baby John leaped in his mother's womb at the presence of the unborn Jesus. Icons of this event showing the babies in the wombs of the two mothers are often used to illustrate the Orthodox reverence for the life of children before birth. The

words of the beautiful canticle, the Magnificat, are from the account of this event, and the greeting of Elizabeth is part of the “Hail Mary”. The Visitation was late in being established as a liturgical feast day, having its origin with the Franciscans in the 13th century, and there have been many different dates for the celebration in different times and places. It was not until the 19th century that it began to appear on the liturgical calendar in the East (in the Russian Orthodox Church).



The Feast of the Dormition (or Assumption) of the Blessed Virgin Mary is not based on an event recorded in the Bible but on stories which were part of the oral tradition of the Church in early days. The feast day may have originated following the Council of Ephesus (431) in which Mary was named Theotokos or God-bearer in response to the Nestorian controversy. Mary is believed to have been taken bodily into Heaven following her natural earthly death. The icons for this feast show Christ receiving the body of His blessed mother, with the Apostles standing around her tomb. This tomb - which was empty when, according to the Legend, St. Thomas arrived to bid farewell to Christ’s mother - can still be seen in Jerusalem. The feast is universally celebrated on August 15.

On the Example of the Theotokos

by St. Nikolai of Ochrid

Oh, how much there is for every one of the faithful to learn from the life of the Virgin Mother of God! Let us consider here only two things. She had the habit of going frequently to Golgotha, to the Mount of Olives, the Garden of Gethsemane and Bethlehem, and to other places to which her Son had given special meaning. In all these places, and especially on Golgotha, she prayed to God on her knees. She thus gave the first example and impetus to the faithful of the practice of visiting the holy places out of love towards Him who, by the presence of His suffering and glory, made them holy and famous. Secondly, we see how she, in prayer for her swift departure from this life, prayed that her soul, at its parting from the body, might not see the punishment of darkness and its terrors and, shielded from the overshadowing of darkness, might not encounter the power of Satan...If she who bore the Harrier of hell and herself had a tremendous power over demons could thus pray, what then of us? In her great humility, she commended herself to God, not trusting to her own works. So much the less should we trust in our own works, and so much the more should we commend ourselves to God’s hands, beseeching His mercy most especially in that moment of the soul’s parting from the body.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>July 2011</h1>					1 Octave Day of St. John the Baptist; of the Octave of Ss. Peter & Paul <i>PLC Vespers</i>	2 Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary; St. John Maximovitch BC, 1966 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
3 Third Sunday after Pentecost; of the Octave of Ss. Peter & Paul; St. Leo II, PC, 683 G	4 of the Octave of Ss. Peter & Paul <i>(Independence Day)</i>	5 of the Octave of Ss. Peter & Paul	6 Octave Day of Ss. Peter & Paul	7 Ss. Cyril & Methodius, Bb CC, 9th c.; St. Palladius, BC, c. 450	8 St. Kilian of Wurzburg, BM, 689	9 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
10 Fourth Sunday after Pentecost; Seven Holy Brothers, Mm, c. 165; St. Joseph of Damascus, 1860 G	11 Solemnity of St. Benedict, Ab, c. 540; St. Pius I, PM, c. 154	12 Ss. Nabor & Felix, Mm, 303	13 St. Anacletus, PM, 1st c.	14	15 St. Vladimir of Kiev, KC, 1015; St. Henry, C, 1024	16 Our Lady of Einsiedeln <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
17 Fifth Sunday after Pentecost; St. Alexis, C, 5th c. G	18 St. Sergius, Ab, 1392; Ss. Symphorosa & her Seven Sons, Mm, c. 138	19 St. Seraphim of Sarov, PrC, 1833	20 St. Elias the Prophet, 9th c. BC; St. Margaret of Antioch, VM, 304	21 St. Praxedis of Rome, V, 2nd c.	22 St. Mary Magdalene, Penitent Ma, 1st c.	23 St. John Cassian, Ab, 433; St. Appollinaris, BM, 1st c.; St. Liborius, BC, 397 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
24 Sixth Sunday after Pentecost; St. Christina, VM; St. Romanus & David, Mm, 1015 G	25 St. James the Greater, Apostle, 44; St. Christopher, C, 251 <i>Archdiocesan Convention begins</i>	26 Ss. Joachim & Anne, Parents of the BVM, 1st c.; St. Jacob Netsvetov, PrC, 1864	27 St. Panteleimon, c. 305	28 Ss. Nazarius, Celsus Mm, St. Victor, PM & Innocent, PC, 5th c.; St. Samson of Dol, BC, c. 565	29 St. Martha of Bethany, V, 1st c.; Ss. Felix II, P, Simplicius & comp. Mm, 4th c., St. Olaf of Norway, KM, 1030	30 Ss. Abdon & Sennen, Mm, c. 303 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
31 Seventh Sunday after Pentecost; St. Germanus of Auxerre, BC, 448 G						<i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i>

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>August 2011</h1>						
<i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i>	1 St. Peter's Chains; Holy Maccabees, Mm, c. 160 BC; St. Ethelwold, BC, 984	2 St. Stephen I, PM, 257	3 Finding of St. Stephen the Protomartyr, 415; St. Nicodemus, M, 1 st . c.	4	5 Our Lady of the Snows (Dedication of St. Mary Major, 435); St. Oswald, KM, 642	6 Transfiguration of Our Lord; Ss. Sixtus II PM, Felicissimus, 285 <i>Mass at 10am W No Vespers today</i>
7 Holy Name of Jesus; Eighth Sunday after Pentecost; St. Donatus of Arezzo, BM, 362 <i>W</i>	8 Ss. Cyriacus, Largus & Smaragdus, Mm, 304	9 Vigil of St. Laurence; St. Romanus, M, 258	10 St. Lawrence, Deacon M, 258	11 Ss. Tiburtius & Susanna, Mm, 3 rd c.; St. Philomena, VM, c. 304	12	13 St. Maximus the Confessor, CD, 662; Ss. Hippolytus & comp., Mm, 235 <i>No Vespers today</i>
14 Ninth Sunday after Pentecost; St. Eusebius, PrC, c. 300 <i>G</i>	15 Assumption (Dormition) of the Blessed Virgin Mary <i>Mass at 7:30pm</i> <i>W</i>	16 of the Octave of the Assumption	17 of the Octave of the Assumption; Octave Day of St. Laurence	18 St. Helena, Mother of St. Constantine, 330; of the Octave of the Assumption; St. Agapitus, M, 272	19 of the Octave of the Assumption; St. Constantine the Great, Emperor, C, 337	20 of the Octave of the Assumption <i>No Vespers today</i>
21 Tenth Sunday after Pentecost; comm. of the Octave of the Assumption <i>G</i>	22 Octave Day Assumption; Ss. Timothy, M, Hippolytus, BM & Symphorian, M, 3 rd c.	23 Vigil of St. Bartholomew	24 St. Bartholomew, Apostle, 1 st c.	25 St. Hilda, V, 680	26 St. Zephyrinus, PM, 219	27 St. Caesarius of Arles, BC, 542 <i>No Vespers today</i>
28 Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost; St. Augustine of Hippo, BCD, 430; St. Moses the Black, C, 405 <i>G</i>	29 Beheading of St. John the Baptist; St. Sabina, M, c. 125	30 Ss. Felix & Ad-auctus, Mm, 304; St. Fiacre the Hermit, C, 670	31 St. Aidan of Lindisfarne, BC, 651			

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

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