

✠ 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*

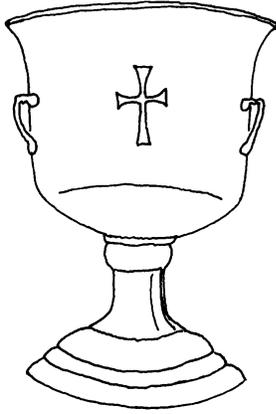
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Nicodemus could think of Christ only as human. And therefore he greeted Christ as a Prophet, for on this wise he was fain to account for Christ's power of working miracles. What then saith Christ? He saith: Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. That is to say: If thou partake not of the Spirit from the Laver of Regeneration, thou canst not make a right estimate of me, for the estimate which thou hast made is not spiritual, but carnal. It is impossible, saith Christ, for one not so born to see the kingdom of God; and by this word he would show that we need other than natural sight if we would perceive what Christ is. Having heard this, Nicodemus saith: how can a man be born again when he is old? And thus do heretics continue in their heresy, saying: how was Christ begotten? And thus do they attempt to comprehend Infinite Being within the limitations of their own reasoning.

Can a man, saith Nicodemus, enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Seest thou how, when a man committeth spiritual things to his own reasonings, he speaketh ridiculously? Nicodemus hath but just now heard of spiritual generation in Baptism, yet he perceiveth it not as a spiritual matter, but interpreteth the words of Christ in a gross physical sense. Of such Paul said: the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit. Yet in all this Nicodemus evidently preserved his reverence for Christ, even though he was astonished in mind. Let us therefore think reverently. We have heard that the Father begat the Son; let us believe, and let us not ask, how?

Except, saith Christ, a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Yet even this, Nicodemus did not understand. Nothing is worse than to commit spiritual things unto argument. This is why we are called The Faithful, namely, because we do leave human



reasonings below as we ascend the heights of the Faith. At the first creation, God made man in his own image, but in the new creation God actually uniteth man to himself. Therefore, let us believe what God hath said [when he that baptizeth speaketh for God, in the Name of God, saying: the servant of God is baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;] and let us answer, yea, verily, amen.

For the power of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, fulfilleth these things; through the grace and loving-kindness of the same our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom with the same Father, and the same Spirit, be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

St. Margaret of Scotland

Feast Day ~ June 10

Most of the earliest saints of the Church are venerated for their great courage amidst persecution and their martyrdom for the faith. After Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, the designation of saint was given to holy men and women whose sanctity was shown in additional ways - through missionary endeavors (St. Patrick, Ss. Cyril and Methodius); through the ascetic monastic life (St. Anthony, St. Benedict); through pastoral leadership in the Church (St. Gregory, St. John Chrysostom). We ask for the prayers of these saints in their various categories as we sing the Litany of Saints: “All ye holy Angels and Archangels...Apostles and Evangelists...Martyrs...Bishops and Confessors...Monks and Hermits...Virgins and Widows”).

But some have been called saints whose holiness was manifested in the ordinary events of daily life which we all experience: their relations with their husbands or wives; the teaching of their children; their acts of charity to those in need. St. Margaret of Scotland is one who endeavored toward sanctification in the challenges which were presented to her in daily life.

St. Margaret is one of the few saints on our Orthodox Western Rite calendar of saints who lived beyond the arbitrary date - 1054 - for the break between the Orthodox East and the Roman Catholic West. We know that most Christians were unaware of this break in communion until many years later.

While St. Margaret's holiness was evident in everyday life, many of the circumstances of her life were not at all “ordinary”. Born (in c. 1045) into the English royal family (the

niece of Edward the Confessor, the last Anglo-Saxon king of England, and sister to Edward Atheling, a possible successor to the throne), Margaret spent her early life in exile. The political turmoil in England, with the Scandinavians who had been invading for centuries vying with the Normans for dominance in the country, made it unsafe for any with her family connections to remain alive. She was born in Hungary (Pannonia) where her father and uncle had been sent for safety. When she was about twelve years of age, the family returned to England but in 1066, with the Norman invasion, were forced to flee once more, this time to Scotland.

All this while, the young Margaret sought security in devotion to Christ and his Church. She always prayed fervently and took seriously the Christian duty to be charitable. King Malcomb III of Scotland, a widower, was much taken by the young lady. In addition to her mature and pious demeanor, she was also beautiful and intelligent and had a civilizing effect on one who had been noted mainly for his frequent battles. Margaret and Malcomb were married in 1070, she was named Queen of Scotland, and thus began many years of her positive influence in that country.

Having been the recipient of the Anglo-Saxon Christian heritage from her family, a heritage which had been strong since the work of St. Augustine of Canterbury (d. 604), Margaret had also been influenced in early life by the religious zeal at the Hungarian court. The Magyars had been evangelized first by Greek monks and then by German missionaries. By the time of King (later St.) Stephen of Hungary at the beginning of the 11th century, Christianity was well established and thriving. The young Margaret was no doubt influenced by the emphasis here on the observance of the Church's fasts and the prominence of monasteries.

When she became Queen, Margaret exerted her influence in these same areas. By her example, she promoted the strict observance of the fasts and festivals of the Church and she encouraged the building of churches, pilgrim hostels and monasteries. She was instrumental in reviving the great monastery of Iona which had suffered in the Viking invasions, and she founded the church of Dunfermline as a sort of national cathedral with provision for royal burials.

Queen Margaret was never so attached to the worldly possessions of a monarch that she could not be charitable. She gave away much of her wealth to those in great need and she daily fed poor people and orphans at her table before dining herself.



The king and queen were blessed with eight children, two of whom (Alexander and David) became kings of Scotland; their daughter Matilda married Henry I of England and their son (Ethelred) became abbot of a monastery. St. Margaret took seriously her responsibility to raise her children in the fear of the Lord and taught them, through her words but primarily her example, what the Christian life should be like.

St. Margaret was ill when her husband and son Edward were killed in battle in 1093, and she died a short time later. She was buried in the Church of Dunfermline next to her husband (but her relics were lost at the time of the Scottish Protestant reformation). The story of St. Margaret's life was written by Theodoric, a monk of Durham who had been her confessor. Within 150 years, Queen Margaret was recognized as St. Margaret for her pious example of Christian living.

And so, despite the extraordinary political circumstances of this royal woman's life, we can see that her true holiness was shown in the way she carried out the normal duties of everyday life. We venerate her for her love of God, her attention to prayer and service in the Church, her generosity to the poor, her Christian teaching of her children, and the example of Christian love and charity she gave to her husband. May we follow in her footsteps. Holy Margaret, pray for us.

Ceaseless Prayer

by Fr. Anthony M. Coniaris

Excerpted from Discovering God Through the Daily Practice of His Presence



The Church Fathers place great emphasis on ceaseless prayer. They call on us “to remember God always,” “to flee forgetfulness,” “to watch and pray ceaselessly,” “to pray without ceasing in one's heart.” They challenge us to be as constantly present to God as He is constantly present to us. They call us to constant discipline, watchfulness, nepsis, readiness and asceticism. The key word is discipline: to discipline oneself to be in God's presence “always.” For there is a lack of spiritual discipline in our lives. Speaking on this word “always,” Clement of Alexandria wrote (c. 200):

If the presence of some good man always molds for the better one who converses with him, owing to the respect and reverence which he inspires, with much more reason to be shut up in certain definite places, so that He could never be apart from God whether by day or by night. Accordingly all our life is a festival. Being persuaded that God is everywhere present on all

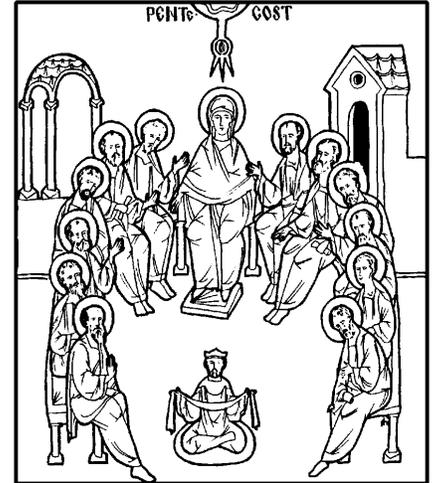
sides, we praise Him as we till the ground, we sing hymns as we sail the sea...

The “always” refers not only to God's presence to us but also to the uninterrupted striving and continual watchfulness and prayer on our part: to our being fully and completely present to Him. When this relationship of always being present to God is realized, life becomes a constant “festival” or “feast” with God.

To pray without ceasing, then, is to maintain a constant awareness of the presence of God within us. Instead of dedicating parts of our day to God, we dedicate the whole day to Him. We meditate while we travel to work. While on the job, we offer up our efforts to His glory. We keep God's love in our heart, in our relations with others, asking forgiveness when we offend and granting forgiveness when we are offended. We let God be our partner in all we do at all times...

It may happen to any of us at any moment, in the twinkling of an eye. All that seems to separate us from God can vanish, leaving us naked before Him, as if nothing but He and I existed. That is a contact with God that nobody can avoid; we are just a heartbeat away from it; it will happen one day, sooner or later to all of us. Since the result of that contact will be either eternal bliss or horror, heaven or hell, the main business of life becomes to learn to love the Presence of God, to practice it daily, to rehearse it, so that we may learn not only to be comfortable in it, but to enjoy it. We must train ourselves to start enjoying the Presence of God now since we are destined to spend eternity in it. We must remember that heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people.

C. S. Lewis tells of a busload of people from hell who decided to take a one-day tour of heaven to see what it was like. After they got there, they discovered they could hardly stand it. Completely bored, they could hardly wait to leave to get back to hell. Just as heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people, so hell is a prepared place for a prepared people. A person who has lived in hell all his life on earth, would feel most uncomfortable to be exposed to the presence of God in heaven. In fact, such exposure would be hell. We need to begin now to practice the presence of God and to feel comfortable in that presence before which we shall spend all eternity.



Parish News

Thanks to all who made our goodbye celebration for Maria Roeber on May 22 a wonderful occasion. Special thanks to Dave Caldwell for providing the grill and being the chief cook.

You can view Maria's OCMC commissioning service on her Facebook page. We will continue to pray for her as she begins her mission work in Tanzania.



Thanks to Subdeacon Jerry Chiles for his diligent work in keeping our garden so beautiful and for planting flowers around the tree in front of our building.

We end our 40-day celebration of Our Resurrected Lord's presence on the earth with a Mass for Ascension Day on the Eve, Wednesday, June 1, at 7:30PM. As is our custom, Vespers will be sung at 7PM and a pot-luck supper will follow the Liturgy.

We celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, Sunday, June 12. At that service, we will hear the story of the first Pentecost, when the Apostles were able to speak in many tongues, by repeating this story in as many languages as are represented in our parish.

Sunday, June 19 is the Feast of the Holy Trinity, when we celebrate the great mystery of One God in three Persons - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Feast of Corpus Christi, an annual observance of Christ's institution of the Sacrament of Holy Communion outside the more sorrowful aspect of Holy Week, occurs on the Thursday following Trinity Sunday. We will observe this feast on the Sunday within its octave, June 16.

We are all invited to join our sister parish of St. John the Baptist in Lewistown, Maryland, for the celebration of their patronal festival, the Nativity of St. John the Baptist. Mass will be held on Friday, June 24, at 7:30pm, Bishop THOMAS presiding.

Our Eastern Region Parish Life Conference will begin on June 29, the Feast of Ss. Peter and Paul, the patron saints of the Patriarchate of Antioch, and will end on July 3. Hosted this year by St. Mary's parish in Hunt Valley, the conference will be held in Baltimore. We will be offering Western Rite Vespers on Friday, July 1. Please see Fr. Nicholas if you are able to attend any or all of the conference.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>June 2011</h1>						
<i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i>	<i>Coffee Hour follows Sunday Liturgy.</i>		1 Vigil of the Ascension <i>Mass at 7:30pm W</i>	2 Ascension Day; (omit Ss. Marcellinus, Peter and Erasmus, Mm, 304)	3 of the Octave of Ascension; St. Kevin of Glendalough, Ab, c. 618	4 of the Octave of Ascension; St. Petroc, C, 564 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
5 Sunday after the Ascension; St. Boniface, BM, 754 <i>W</i>	6 of the Octave of Ascension	7 of the Octave of Ascension	8 of the Octave of Ascension	9 Octave Day of the Ascension; St. Columba of Iona, Ab, 597; Ss Primus & Felician, Mm	10 St. Margaret of Scotland, QW, 1092	11 Vigil of Pentecost; St. Barnabas, Apostle, 1st c. <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
12 Pentecost <i>R</i>	13 Monday in the Octave of Pentecost	14 Tuesday in the Octave of Pentecost; St. Basil the Great, BCD, 379	15 Ember Wednesday in the Octave of Pentecost; Ss. Vitus, Modestus & Crescentia, Mm, c. 303	16 Thursday in the Octave of Pentecost	17 Ember Friday in the Octave of Pentecost	18 Ember Saturday in the Octave of Pentecost; St. Ephrem the Syrian, DnCD, 373 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
19 Trinity Sunday; First Sunday after Pentecost; Ss. Gervase & Protase, Mm, 2nd. C <i>W</i>	20 St. Silvester, PM, 538; Translation of St. Edward, KM, 980	21	22 St. Alban Protomartyr of England, 209; St. Paulinus, BC, 431	23 Corpus Christi; St. Etheldreda, QV, 679	24 Nativity of St. John the Baptist; of the Octave of Corpus Christi <i>Mass in Lewistown 7:30 pm</i>	25 of the Octave of Corpus Christi; of the Octave of St. John the baptist <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
26 Sunday in the Octave of Corpus Christi; Second Sunday after Pentecost; Ss. John & Paul, Mm, c. 362 <i>W</i>	27 of the Octave of Corpus Christi; of the Octave of St. John Baptist	28 St. Irenaeus of Lyons, BM, 202; of the Octave of Corpus Christi; of the Octave of St. John Baptist	29 Ss. Peter & Paul, Apostles, Patrons of the Patriarchate of Antioch, 1st c.	30 St. Paul, Ap., 1st c.; Octave Day of Corpus Christi; of the Octave of St. John	<i>Parish Life conference in Baltimore: June 29th - July 3rd</i>	<i>Confessions are heard following Vespers, during the Psalms at Matins, and by appointment.</i>