

# ✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

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

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## *A Homily by St. Leo the Great*

*died 461AD  
feast day - April 11*

As we are beginning this sacred season, dedicated to the purification of the soul, let us be careful to fulfil the Apostolic command that we *cleanse ourselves from all defilement of the flesh and of the spirit* [II Cor. 7:11], so that restraining the conflict that exists between the one and the other substance, the soul, which in the Providence of God is meant to be the ruler of the body, may regain the dignity of its rightful authority, so that, giving offence to no man, we may not incur the contumely of evil-mongers. With just contempt shall we be tormented by those who have no faith, and from our wickedness evil tongues will draw weapons to wound religion, if the way of life of those who fast be not in accord with what is needed in true self denial. For the sum total of our fasting does not consist in merely abstaining from food. In vain do we deny our body food if we do not withhold our heart from iniquity, and restrain our lips that they speak no evil.

We must then so moderate our rightful use of food that our other desires may be subject to the same rule. For this is also a time for gentleness and patience, a time of peace and serenity, in which having put away all stains of evil doing we strive after steadfastness in what is good. Now is the time when generous Christian souls forgive offences, pay no heed to insults, and wipe out the memory of past injuries. Now let the Christian soul exercise itself in the armor of justice, on the right hand and on the left, so that amid honor and dishonor, evil report and good, the praise of men will not make proud the virtue that is well rooted, the conscience that has peace, nor dishonor cast it down. The moderation of those who worship God is not melancholy, but blameless.

Neither should we now hear sound of discord coming from those to whom the consolations of holy joy are never wanting. And when you are engaged in works of mercy, do not fear a lessening of your own earthly possessions. Christian

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poverty is ever right; for that which it possesses is greater than that which it does not possess. Neither should he fear to work on in poverty to whom it has been given to possess all things in the Lord of all things.

**T**hey therefore who desire to do good works let them not fear that they shall be without the means; since even for giving two farthings, the generosity of the poor widow of the Gospel was glorified [Luke 21:2]; and even the free gift of a cup of cold water shall not be without its reward [Matt. 10:42]. By their desires we shall know the measure of the good will of the just; and he that has a heart ever open to pity will never lack means to help those in need.

## *On God's Almighty Word*

by St. Nicholai of Ochrid

**A**nd God said, "Let there be light", and there was light; until God spoke the word there was no light. Neither could anyone conceive of the nature of light until God spoke and light came to be. In the same way, when God spoke, the water and the dry land came into being, and the starry vault, the plants and the animals, and finally man. Until God spoke, there was nothing of all this, neither could anyone except God know what might exist. By the power of his word, God created all that was created in heaven and on earth. Whatever God wished to be and called into being, that had to be, and it was impossible for it not to be, because the word of God is irresistible and creative. The creation of the world is a great miracle wrought by the divine word.

**H**aving created all things, God also established by his word the order and manner of existence of all things and their behavior and relationship one with another. And this order and manner of existence which God has established is a great miracle of the divine word.

**B**ut, as well as this order and manner of existence among created things, visible and comprehensible to us, there is an order and manner of existence unseen and incomprehensible. From this invisible and incomprehensible order and manner of existence, which is a mystery hidden in the Holy Trinity, there have occurred and continue to occur, phenomena which people call miracles. One such phenomenon was the conception of our Lord Jesus Christ in the womb of the most holy Virgin Mary, who had not known a man. This seems to be an interruption of the visible and comprehensible order and manner of existence, but it is not at all a strange event for

the invisible and incomprehensible world. This birth is indeed a great wonder; perhaps no greater wonder has ever been revealed to us mortals. But the entire created world is itself a miracle, and the entire visible and comprehensible order of things is a miracle, and just as this miracle came to be by the word of God, so in the same fashion the Lord took human form in a virgin's womb. Both the one and the other took place by the power of the word of God. Therefore the wondrous Gabriel replied to the Virgin's question (a question asked by all generations, "How can this be?"): "with God nothing that He says shall be impossible."



**O** Lord God, our Creator, eternal and ever-existent Worker of wonders, give light to our minds that we may no longer doubt but rather believe, and direct our tongues no longer to question Thee but to praise Thee. To thee be glory and praise for ever. Amen.

## *St. Patrick, Apostle of Ireland* *Feast Day ~ March 17*

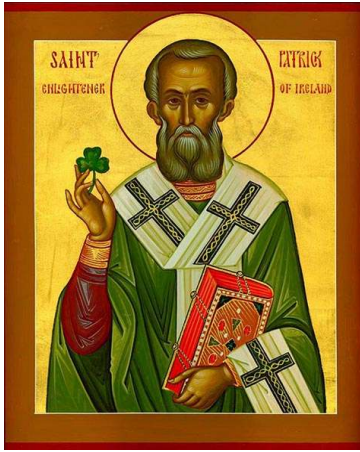
**H**as there ever been another saint so enmeshed in folklore, popular tradition, and ethnic pride as St. Patrick? And is it possible to peel away the layers of shamrocks, snake-herding and green beer to get a glimpse of the truly remarkable missionary to the people of Ireland?

**L**et us look at the writings of Patrick himself. In his *Confessio*, Patrick reveals that he was the son (probably born around 390) of the deacon Calpornius, the grandson of the priest Potitus, and that his family were landowners in Roman Britain.

**W**hen he was almost 16 years old, Patricius (as he was called by his family) was captured by slavers who carried him away to Ireland, beyond the boundaries of Roman civilization. There, in an area (probably in County Mayo) that he called the 'Forest of Foclut', the young slave was made to tend sheep and pigs for his master. He suffered from working long hours all alone in harsh weather, but during the six lonely years of his enslavement, Patrick became a man - spiritually as well as physically. He confesses that, as a child, he had not paid much attention to the Christian faith of his family. But now - with long hours to contemplate the great questions of life,

My faith grew and my spirit was stirred, and as a result I would say up to one hundred prayers in one day and almost as many by night...and I would wake to pray before dawn in all weather,

snow, frost and rain; and I felt no harm... as I now realize, it was because the Spirit was fervent within me. [from the *Confessio*, as quoted in Peter Brown's *The Rise of Western Christendom*]



At age 22, Patrick found the will and a way to escape his captors. He managed to sail on a ship to Gaul where he spent some time before making his way back to Britain to rejoin his family. Although they begged him to stay close to home and never again risk being taken from them, the young man had a dramatic dream which changed the course of his life again.

In the dream, a man named Victoricus came to him with many letters in his hands. These, he said, represented the “voice of the Irish”, who called upon the “holy boy” to come and walk among them again. Patrick accepted this dream as a call from God.

After some years of preparation (probably in Gaul) and consecration as a bishop, Patrick once again sailed for Ireland - this time as a free man intent on converting the Irish people to Christianity.

There is historical evidence of the existence of some Christian communities in Ireland before St. Patrick's mission. Prosper of Aquitaine wrote in 431 that Pope Celestine had consecrated Palladius to be sent as the first bishop for “the Irish believers in Christ.” Certainly, the Irish had established trade relations with Gaul and Britain and beyond. And it is even possible that the Christians whom Palladius was sent to serve included slaves like Patrick had been. But there is no record of Bishop Palladius and St. Patrick meeting or that their work coincided in any way and there is no further record of Palladius' ministry.

Patrick established himself around Armagh, near the High King and the story of his lighting the Paschal fire in defiance of King Laoghaire (which led to the conversion of the Druid Ercc), while legendary, may very well be historically accurate. Many thousands of conversions followed through the years of Patrick's missionary efforts.

As a former slave, St. Patrick was careful to teach and preach to all levels of society. He wrote a letter to the British warlord, Coroticus, protesting his practice of capturing Irish slaves and demanding the return of the Christians. (Patrick's protest went unheeded).

Bishop Patrick made practical decisions to help draw clear boundaries between Christianity and the Irish pagan religion. At his first Synod, some of the canons which were enacted included forbidding the clergy to wear the immodest kilt or to wear their hair long and flowing like Irish chieftains, and forbidding Christians to swear an oath before a Druid.

As is evident in his *Confessio*, St. Patrick was motivated in his mission by the Holy Spirit. He was truly an apostle for Christ.

Patrick's originality was that no one within western Christianity had thought such thoughts as these before, had ever previously been possessed by such convictions. As far as our evidence goes, he was the first person in Christian history to take the scriptural injunctions literally; to grasp that teaching all nations meant teaching even barbarians who lived beyond the frontiers of the Roman empire. [pg 86, Richard Fletcher's *The Barbarian Conversion*]

It is no wonder that the Irish are proud of their inheritance from St. Patrick, the tireless missionary who brought their pagan nation into the fold of Christianity. All Christians can look to St. Patrick for his evangelistic example and we ask for his prayers in our efforts to bring Christianity to our increasingly pagan nation.

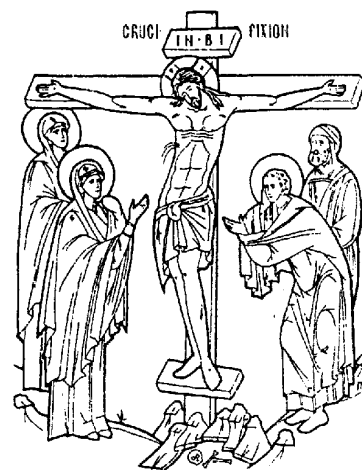
[Sources: Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*; David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*; Richard Fletcher, *The Barbarian Conversion: From Paganism to Christianity*; Kenneth Hylson-Smith, *Christianity in England from Roman Times to the Reformation*; Edward Sellner, *Wisdom of the Celtic Saints*]

## Parish News

In the month of March, we will observe several holy days beginning with Ash Wednesday, March 9 (the first day of Lent in the Western calendar), when we will have the blessing and imposition of ashes at the beginning of Mass. The following Sunday, March 13, we will join with our fellow Orthodox Christians from all jurisdictions for Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers at Ss. Peter & Paul Church in Potomac, MD, at 5:00PM.

Our patronal feast day, St. Gregory's day, will be celebrated on Saturday, March 12, with Mass at 10:00AM followed by a pot-luck brunch. Then on Thursday, March 24, the Eve of the Annunciation, we will celebrate that great feast with 7:30 Mass and pot-luck supper. We are also invited to celebrate their patronal festival with St. Patrick's parish in Warrenton, VA, on Thursday, March 17 at 7:30PM. Bishop THOMAS will preside at that service.

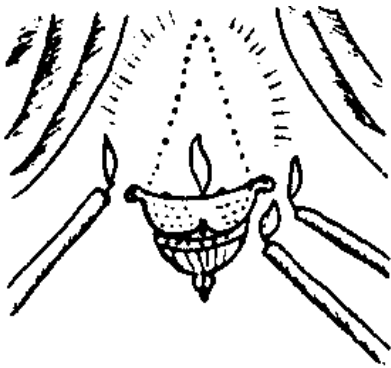
Because of these extra services, we will have a Lenten supper and Stations of the Cross on one Friday only this month - on March 18 at 6:30 pm. The bread-making class with Subdeacon Jerome has been rescheduled for Saturday, March 26, beginning at 12:00 noon.



At our annual Parish meeting at the end of January, Catherine Garcia and Patrick Woolley were elected as new members of the Parish Council.

We bid farewell to Keivan Shahrokhi - Reader Kevin - as he moves to Miami for a new position. We give thanks for his many contributions to the life of St. Gregory's parish. He will be greatly missed.

## *O Gladsome Light*



The oldest known non-scriptural Christian hymn is the *Phos Hilaron*, which was first mentioned in the *Apostolic Constitutions* (late 3<sup>rd</sup>-early 4<sup>th</sup> century) as a hymn to be sung at the lighting of the lamps at evening. St. Basil the Great (d. 379) spoke of the singing of the *Phos hilaron* as an already established custom.

Definitive authorship of this beautiful hymn has not been established, but it is sometimes attributed to St. Athenogenes, an elderly bishop martyred under Diocletian, who is said to have sung it on his way to martyrdom and to have given a written copy to his disciples.

The *Phos Hilaron* may have been written to accompany a ceremony of the Church in Jerusalem. A perpetually burning candle was kept at the tomb of Christ and it was brought out of the tomb at evening as a sign of Christ's Resurrection.

The *Phos Hilaron* has been a set part of the service of Vespers in the Eastern Rite throughout the centuries and has also been used in the services of Roman Catholic, Anglican and Lutheran churches. English translations were made by John Keble, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Robert Bridges.

Many composers have been inspired to set the words of the *Phos Hilaron* to music, and at St. Gregory's, we make use of several translations and musical settings at our Vespers services. The *St. Ambrose Hymnal* provides two versions: "Hail, Gladdening Light" (translation by John Keble, music by John Stainer) and "O Gladsome Light" (translation by Robert Bridges, music by Claude Goudimel). As the Christians in Jerusalem did, we sing this hymn in joyful thanksgiving for Christ who is the Light of the world.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>March 2011</h1>						
<p><i>Sunday Services:</i> <i>Matins at 9AM,</i> <i>Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i></p>		<p><b>1</b> St. David of Wales, BC, 544</p>	<p><b>2</b> St. Chad, BC, 672</p>	<p><b>3</b></p>	<p><b>4</b></p>	<p><b>5</b> St. Lucius, PM, 254</p> <p><i>Vespers at 6pm</i></p>
<p><b>6</b></p> <p>Quinquagesima Ss. Perpetua &amp; Felicitas, Mm, 203</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>V</i></p>	<p><b>7</b></p>	<p><b>8</b></p>	<p><b>9</b> Ash Wednesday; (omit St. Gregory of Nyssa, BCD, 394)</p> <p><i>Mass at 7:30pm</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>V</i></p>	<p><b>10</b> Forty Martyrs of Sebaste, Mm, 320</p>	<p><b>11</b> St. Sophronius of Jerusalem, BC, c. 369</p>	<p><b>12</b> St. Gregory the Great, BCD, 604</p> <p><i>Mass at 10am W</i></p> <p><i>Vespers at 6pm</i></p>
<p><b>13</b> First Sunday in Lent</p> <p><i>5:00 Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>V</i></p>	<p><b>14</b></p>	<p><b>15</b></p>	<p><b>16</b> Ember Wednesday</p>	<p><b>17</b> St. Patrick, BC, 461 <i>Mass in Warrenton 7:30</i></p>	<p><b>18</b> Ember Friday; St. Cyril of Jerusalem, BCD, 386 <i>Lenten Supper &amp; Stations of the Cross at 6:30pm</i></p>	<p><b>19</b> St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin; 1<sup>st</sup> c.; Ember Saturday</p> <p><i>Vespers at 6pm</i></p>
<p><b>20</b> Second Sunday in Lent; St. Cuthbert, BC, 687</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>V</i></p>	<p><b>21</b> Repose of St. Benedict, c. 550</p>	<p><b>22</b></p>	<p><b>23</b></p>	<p><b>24</b> St. Gabriel the Archangel</p> <p><i>Mass at 7:30pm W</i></p>	<p><b>25</b> The Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary</p>	<p><b>26</b></p> <p>12:00 Bread making class</p> <p><i>Vespers at 6pm</i></p>
<p><b>27</b> Third Sunday in Lent; St. John of Damascus, CD, c. 760</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>V</i></p>	<p><b>28</b></p>	<p><b>29</b></p>	<p><b>30</b> St. John of the Ladder, Ab, 649</p>	<p><b>31</b> St. Innocent of Alaska, BC, 1879</p>	<p><b>1</b> St. Melito of Sardis, BC, 177</p>	<p><b>2</b></p>

*Confessions may be made after Vespers, during the Psalms at Matins, and by appointment.*

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