

✠ 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. Ceasarius of Arles, Bishop & Confessor

*died. 542AD
feast day - 27 August*

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I beg you, dearly beloved, to consider more carefully why we are Christians and bear the Cross of Christ on our forehead. We ought to know that it is not enough for us that we have received the name of Christian, if we do not perform the works of a Christian. As the Lord Himself said in the gospel “What does it profit you to call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ when you do not practice the things that I say?” [Luke 6:46] If you say a thousand times that you are a Christian and continually sign yourself with the Cross of Christ but do not give alms according to your means, your title of Christian can profit you not at all. The sign of Christ and His Cross are a great thing, and for this reason something great and precious should be signified by so precious a mark. Now, of what advantage is it to make a seal with a gold ring, when you store up rotten chaff interiorly? What is the good of putting the sign of Christ on our forehead and lips, when within we hide sins and offenses in our soul?

When a man who is guilty of bad thoughts, words, or actions refuses to amend his life, but signs himself, his sin is not lessened but increased. When many men go out to commit theft or adultery, if they strike their foot they sign themselves, but they do not withdraw from their evil deed. The miserable men do not know that they are shutting in demons, rather than excluding them. If a man endeavors with God’s help to reject sins and vices, always to think and do what is right, he justly puts the sign of the Cross on his lips, for he tries to do things which merit the sign of Christ.

It is written that “the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power” [I Cor. 4:20], and again: “faith without works is dead.” [James 2:26] Therefore, in order that we may bear the name Christian as a remedy, not unto judgement, let us turn over to good works while the remedies are still within our power.



In order that with God's help you may be able to do this, keep peace yourself and recall to harmony those who are at variance. Avoid falsehood, dread perjury as perpetual death, do not bear false witness or commit theft. Give alms to the poor according to your means... Remember the Creed and the Lord's Prayer yourself, and teach it to your children... Do you yourself live in such a way that, if your children want to imitate you, they will not burn with you in the fire but together with you obtain eternal rewards.

Go to church every Sunday and when you come to church, pray for your sins... One who has been proud should be humble; one who was an adulterer should be chaste. If a man used to commit theft or attack the property of another, he should begin to give to the poor out of his own earthly substance. One who was envious should be kind; the irascible, patient. If a man has committed an injury he should seek pardon at once, and likewise immediately forgive one from whom he has suffered an injury.

As soon as some infirmity overtakes him, a sick man should receive the body and Blood of Christ... See to it, brethren, that a man hastens to the church in infirmity, and he will merit to receive both bodily health and the remission of his sins.

May He deign to grant this, who, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

Saints Cosmas and Damian

Feast Day ~ September 27

At every Mass, we hear a recitation of the names of the holy martyrs of the early church who intercede for us: *Linus, Cletus, Clement, Sixtus, Cornelius, Cyprian, Lawrence, Chrysogonus, John and Paul, Cosmas and Damian, and of all thy saints, through whose prayers grant that in all things we may be guarded by the help of thy protection.* Many in this list suffered martyrdom through their service as bishops of the Church, but Cosmas and Damian showed their piety through their profession as physicians.

Born in Cilicia (in modern-day Turkey), the twin brothers practiced their healing art in the town of Aegea. They evidently had no need of financial reward for their work, so they never accepted fees, earning them the title "un-mercenaries". This generosity allowed them to treat many more people than would otherwise have been possible - people from all levels of society,

who were in need of diagnosis and medicine or treatment. The brothers not only offered medical help, but they also told their patients about our Lord Jesus Christ and so showed forth His love that many were converted to Christianity through their example. This, of course, led to fame for the doctors.

With Diocletian as Emperor, Christians did not seek fame. When the Emperor's severe persecutions of Christians began, the governor of Cilicia arrested prominent Christian citizens like Cosmas and Damian. The brothers refused to disavow their faith in Christ and so were sentenced first to torture. They were hung on crosses, stoned, and shot with arrows, but still they maintained the truth of Christianity. Finally, in the year 303, the physicians were beheaded, along with their three younger brothers, Anthimus, Leontius, and Euprepus.

The bodies of the twin brothers were taken to Cyrus (in Syria) for burial where a church was built in their honor. The story of their great faith spread to far-flung Christian communities where other churches were built - Jerusalem, Egypt, Mesopotamia. Theodoret, the Bishop of Cyrus in the fifth century wrote accounts of the division and distribution of the saints' relics. In Constantinople, the Emperor Justinian I (526-530) built a church for some of their relics after he was cured of an illness through their intercession. Pope Felix IV of Rome dedicated a church for their relics, and there are dedications to the saints in many other parts of the world. Miracles of healing have occurred through their relics as they did in their lifetimes through their work. Saints Cosmas and Damian are the patron saints of physicians and other related medical fields (pharmacists, dentists, veterinarians).



As has frequently happened with saints from the early period of the Church, there are several similar stories of twin brother physicians, resulting in the veneration of three sets of Saints Cosmas and Damian! All contain the same basic story: physicians who received no payment for their services, with two of the sets persecuted and martyred, but the third dying peacefully in their sleep. Each of these stories places the saints in different parts of the world: Cilicia, Mesopotamia, Rome. There is no doubt that there were twin brothers named Cosmas and Damian, who worked as physicians and who glorified God faithfully.

In this age of highly-developed but extremely expensive medical care, in this time of medical missionaries but also Medicare fraud, in a day when the medical field is used for both healing and killing, we especially need the prayers of Ss. Cosmas and Damian. May we, through their intercessions, find healing of body and soul.

A Monastery Pilgrimage

by Paul Higgins



My Godfather and I recently went on a pilgrimage to venerate the relics of St. John Maximovitch (in San Francisco) and to visit two monasteries in the northern half of California. We first arrived in the Bay area and went to the ROCOR cathedral to venerate St. John's incorrupt relics, and then visited the orphanage that he operated (and lived in) during his life, which had been transformed into a monastery. A monk that we spoke to mentioned the frequent appearances of St. John in the house, particularly during prayer and services - this happened so often that its miraculous nature had long since become thoroughly normal for the monks who stayed there. We then drove through northern California to the St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, a monastery in Platina founded by Fr. Seraphim Rose and located on a mountain which can only be reached via winding, narrow cliffside dirt road (without a guardrail, of course). Be sure to not miss the turn for the monastery, as we did, or you will need to make an extremely precarious 9-point turn, as we also did! Though we were sadly only able to visit for a few hours, we did manage to attend Vespers and speak with hieromonk Damascene Christensen, whose books helped to convert me to Orthodoxy (back in 2002); a truly wonderful man, who (as it turned out) was leaving in a couple days to do missionary work in China.

Finally we arrived at the monastery of St. John of San Francisco, founded relatively recently and located roughly 100 miles east of Platina. His Beatitude Metropolitan Jonah [of the Orthodox Church in America] was the abbot prior to his elevation, and the new abbot, Fr. Meletus, is a worthy successor to the task of overseeing roughly 15 monks - young postulants for the most part, with a handful of older tonsured monks and hieromonks (priest-monks). The life of the monastery is, as one might expect, centered around church services; there are extremely loud bells in the morning for matins (and liturgy, depending on the day), and also throughout the day. Monastery services start earlier and are usually considerably longer than typical parish services; some last for well over three hours, which can be somewhat daunting at first, but I've always found that (after one or two days of adjustment) the length is ideal for truly immersing yourself in the service.

The monastery serves two meals each day - without meat, as monks keep that aspect of the fast at all times - which are taken in silence, while one of the monks reads passages from the Fathers aloud. Between services, pilgrims usually help the monks with

their work (there is always work to be done!), but this is also a good time for receiving spiritual counsel, or for prayer and reading, which are far easier without distractions - thankfully monasteries are truly quiet, and blissfully free of television and noise pollution. Another blessing of visiting monasteries is meeting fellow pilgrims; over the course of the years I've met Orthodox from all over the world, some of whom I still stay in touch with. In this case, we were especially fortunate that St. John's happened to have the nicest guest house I've ever stayed in (some more austere monasteries lack proper beds or air conditioning) and we were able to meet many fellow pilgrims.

I had traveled to monasteries before, and yet I was still surprised by how quickly I re-entered the wholly "other" world of monastic life, which is truly different from the world; this sense of a clear transition has never failed to amaze me. It would be difficult to exaggerate how important these trips have been for me; years ago, when I was inquiring into Orthodoxy, I had read hundreds of articles and books about the faith, and had been convinced by many of the arguments, but found that all of the reading that I had done faded into insignificance upon traveling to monasteries and meeting truly holy men and women, to really see the love of Christ in the sanctity of those who are transformed by constant devotion to prayer, anticipating the heavenly kingdom and living the angelic life. If we examine the history of the Church, most Orthodox (particularly in Byzantium and Russia) have constantly traveled to monasteries, and parish life was deeply intertwined with - and nourished by - the life of the monastery. This constant interchange is more difficult for us now, especially in America (which only has 50 or so Orthodox monasteries), yet from anywhere in the country - including DC! - there is always at least one monastery within a few hours' drive.



[Editor's note: Monasteries within driving distance of Washington include Holy Cross (ROCOR, men's monastery) in Wayne, WV; Holy Transfiguration (OCA, women's monastery) in Ellwood City, PA. An Antiochian monastery is being established at Antiochian Village in Ligioner, PA. A group of nuns from Greece is in the process of establishing a house in the DC area. Christ the Savior Monastery in Hamilton, Ontario is a Western Rite (ROCOR) monastery. Our own Sister Margarete Roeber, who returned for a visit on August 28th, is a novice at Holy Assumption Monastery in Calistoga, CA. For more information on these and other monasteries, please see Fr. Nicholas. Please go to: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/valea/sets/72157627431811696/> to see Paul's pictures from his pilgrimage.

Parish News

St. Gregory's has now survived our first earthquake and Hurricane - all in the same week! Although there was some damage in our neighborhood, we are grateful that our building suffered no ill effect from either rare event.



We welcome into the fold of the Orthodox Church the newly illumined handmaid of God Michele Green. Michele was chrismated on August 21, and has taken the name of Mary, with the Theotokos as her patron saint.

After a summer of church conferences (see the report following) and greeting visitors and old friends, we begin the month of September with the first of many holy days. On Saturday, September 3, Liturgy at 10:00AM will celebrate the consecration of our patron, St. Gregory the Great, as the Bishop of Rome in the year 590. We resume Saturday Vespers at 6PM the same day.

Other weekday celebrations this month will be on Wednesday, September 7 (Eve of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary), Tuesday, September 13 (Eve of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross), and Wednesday, September 28 (Eve of the feast of St. Michael the Archangel). In addition, a one-year anniversary Requiem Mass will be offered on Saturday morning, September 24, at 9:30AM for the repose of the soul of Bryan Puterbaugh. Those in attendance may go to the cemetery in Falls Church, VA, for a brief grave side service following the Mass.

Parish Council chairman, David Caldwell, has reported that the Council has authorized several projects for the improvement of our building which should be completed by the end of this month. New entrance doors for the front (at street level and lower level) have been installed, and the rear patio and stairwell are being paved with slate tiles. These projects should greatly enhance the beauty and function of our church building. A parish work day has been scheduled for Saturday, September 10. There will be tasks for every level of expertise so all volunteers will be welcomed!

Summer Conferences

The Parish Life Conference of our Eastern Dioceses (New York and Washington and the diocese of Charleston) met in Baltimore in early July. For the fourth year, the four Western Rite parishes led a Western Rite Vespers service and for the first time

Metropolitan PHILIP presided. We are very grateful for the encouragement and support which His Eminence gives to the Western Rite parishes of the Archdiocese. While our Bible Bowl Team (Candace Archer, Paul Higgins, Karl Tsuji) did not win (yet!), they did well on the questions from the Gospel of Matthew.

At the Archdiocesan Convention in Chicago later in July, delegates from parishes in the U.S. and Canada met with the primary task of nominating new bishops. Our local Synod of Bishops then elected the new bishops. The three men - Archimandrite John Abdullah, Archimandrite Anthony Michaels and Archimandrite Nicholas Ozone will be consecrated by the Patriarch sometime this fall. This process of carrying on the work of the Church was done in council, as it has been done since the Council of Jerusalem in the first century.

Family Camp

by Jennifer Caldwell

The Caldwell family attended Family Camp at Antiochian Village, our Archdiocesan conference center in Ligonier, Pennsylvania the last weekend in August. An enjoyable time was had by all! Highlights included archery, canoeing, making flowers and wallets out of duct tape, AV ball, sleeping in bunk beds, a night hike, a campfire, socializing with the other families, and wonderful church services, including supplication services to St. Artemius and St. Raphael (at his grave site).

Nathan reveled in playing sports games for hours with other boys his age. Ben was delighted by the endless buffet at all meals. He also won the most tokens at the “carnival” and chose an icon of St. Artemius as his prize. Sarah loved having lots of new little friends to pal around with and cried when it was time to go home, and Abby was amazed to discover that Bishop THOMAS is different from Thomas the Tank Engine. (We were blessed to have Sayedna there for the weekend). We look forward to attending again next year!

[Editor’s note: Antiochian Village is a wonderful resource of our Archdiocese. There is a beautiful chapel, hotel-style rooms, good meals in the dining hall, and camping facilities. Summer camp (and even a winter camp weekend) is offered for children and teens and conferences, such as the annual Sacred Music Institute, the St. Stephen’s Course House of Studies, and the Diocesan Clergy Retreat are held there. The annual St. Tekla Pilgrimage will take place at the Village September 23 - 25.]



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>September 2011</h1>						
<i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i>				1 St. Giles, Ab, 708; Twelve Holy Brothers, Mm, c. 303	2 St. Stephen of Hungary, KC, 1038	3 Consecration of St. Gregory the Great, 590 <i>Mass at 10am W</i> <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
4 Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost; St. Gorazde of Prague, BM, 1942 <i>G</i>	5	6	7 St. Cloud, C, 560; St. Sergius I, PC, 701 <i>Mass at 7:30pm W</i>	8 Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary; St. Hadrian of Nicomedia, M, 304	9 St. Gorgonius of Nicomedia, M, 303	10 Parish Work Day <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
11 Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost; Ss. Protus & Hyacinth, Mm, c. 257; St. Paphnutius, BC, 4th C <i>G</i>	12	13 <i>Mass at 7:30pm W</i>	14 Exaltation of the Holy Cross	15 St. Nico-medes, M, 4 th c.	16 Ss. Cornelius, PM, 254 & Cyprian, BM 258, ; Ss. Euphemia & comp. Mm, c. 303; St. Ninian, BC, c.	17 St. Lambert, BM, 705 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
18 Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost <i>G</i>	19 St. Theodore of Canterbury, BC, 690; Ss. Januarius & comp., Mm,	20 Vigil of St. Matthew; Ss. Eustace & comp., Mm, c. 118	21 St. Matthew, Evangelist & Apostle, 1st c.; Ember Wednesday	22 St. Maurice & Companions, Mm, 3rd c.; St. Lioba of Mainz, V, 781	23 St. Thecla of Iconium, VM, 1st c.; St. Linus, PM, c. 80; Ember Friday	24 Requiem at 9:30AM Conception St. John Baptist; Ember Saturday; SS. Juvenaly, 1796 & Peter the Aleut, MM <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
25 Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost <i>G</i>	26 Ss. Cyprian, BM & Justina, VM, c. 303	27 Ss. Cosmas & Damian, Mm, c. 303	28 St. Wenceslas, M, 938 <i>Mass at 7:30pm W</i>	29 Dedication of St. Michael the Archangel	30 St. Jerome, PrCD, 420; St. Gregory the Illuminator, BC, c. 323	1 St. Remigius, BC, c. 530 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>

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

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