

✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

March, 2012 - Volume XVII, Issue 3

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

From a sermon of Saint Peter Chrysologus

*died 450AD
feast day - December 2*

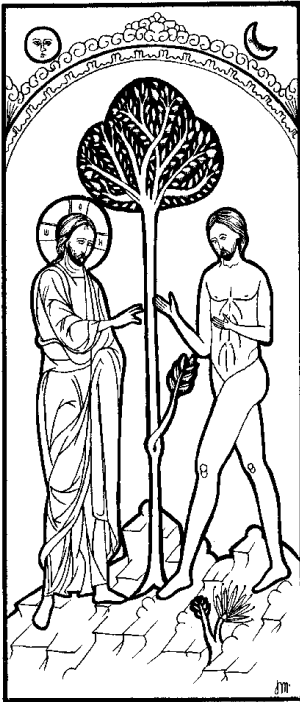
Inside:

<i>St. Gregory of Nyssa.</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Parish News.</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>The Feast of the Annunciation.</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Calendar.</i>	<i>7</i>

When the Apostle says *be not conformed to this world*, he is correcting the manner of the life of the world, disapproving its practices, passing judgment on its mode of life, denouncing its inclinations, and condemning its luxury. He is warding off all the pomp of worldly vanities, putting them to flight, striving to keep them out of Christian minds. Yet, in this way he is forcibly reminding us, in an abridged manner, of what he stated more at length at the beginning of this Epistle [Romans], where he gives this picture of the figure of the world in its vices: Being filled with all iniquity, malice, immorality, avarice, wickedness; being full of envy, murder, contention, deceit, malignity; being whisperers, detractors, hateful to God, irreverent, proud, haughty, plotters of evil; disobedient to parents, foolish, dissolute, without affection, without mercy. Although they have known the ordinance of God, they have not understood that those who practice such things are deserving of death. And not only do they do these things, but they applaud others doing them.

Brethren, you have heard what the form of the world is - where through the disorder of crimes the whole appearance of things has been made hideous; where through a sinful marriage the whole figure of the world has become loose-jointed; where the very image of the Creator has been ruined by the diseases of sins; where man is buried under vices; where crimes of a corrupted body abound; where a man is the sepulcher of his true self; where in man is discerned not a true man but a corpse. This, therefore, is the form or pattern of the world to which the Apostle forbids us to be conformed. Rather, he transforms us to the form of God. He calls us back to likeness to Christ. He allures us towards the whole pattern of our Creator, with the words: *But be transformed in the newness of your minds.*

That is, cast away the pattern of this world, and be renewed in your minds through Christ. Discard the unshapeliness of the antiquated form, and make your nature one remodeled upon that of your Savior, that the newness of your minds may shine forth in your deeds, and the man of heaven may walk the earth with a heavenly deportment.



Let it now become clear how the Apostle draws up the pattern of the new man: *For just as in one body we have many members, yet all the members have not the same function, so we, the many, are one body in Christ, but severally members one of another...* He is struggling and taking care that the body, to which he assigns a heavenly function, may through the harmony and co-operation of the members hold fast its life which is characteristic of heaven and its practices of holiness. He wants neither the foot to interfere through perverse conceit in the functions of the eye, nor the eye in those of the foot. Rather, he desires the holy members to be content with the gifts conferred by the Giver. He wishes all the members to regard what any one member has done as their own. For, no member which has the honor of being part of the whole body can be of less importance. Hence, the Apostle portrays the functions by means of the members, and the members by means of the functions:

He who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhorting; he who gives, in simplicity; he who presides, with carefulness; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be without pretense. Hate what is evil, hold to what is good, anticipating one another with honor, being kind to one another. Be not slothful in zeal; be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord rejoicing in hope. Be patient in tribulation, persevering in prayer. Share the remembrances of the saints, practicing hospitality. Bless, and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep. Provide good things not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of men. Be not wise in your own conceits. To no man render evil for evil. If it be possible, as far as in you lies, be at peace with all men. Do not avenge yourselves, but give place to the wrath. If thy enemy is hungry, give him food; if he is thirsty, give him drink. Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Brethren, the Apostle revealed above the vice-laden members. Now, he has shown us the virtuous members. He wants the body meant for heaven to be strong with such great virtues, and robust with such sinews, that it can easily prostrate the wards of the world and overcome the Devil's assaults.

St. Gregory of Nyssa

Feast Day ~ March 9

It is wonderful to see how, in so many families, physical characteristics are shared by members of the family. The mother's blue eyes are reflected in each of her children; the father's red hair has been inherited by several of his offspring; and a prominent nose appears in all the family photographs from the great-grandparents to the latest baby. Our genetic inheritance helps to make us who we are.

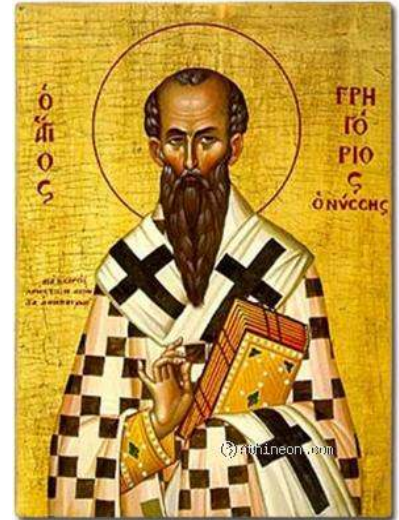
How much more wonderful, however, is the spiritual inheritance of families whose devotion to Christ has been passed from generation to generation. St. Gregory of Nyssa belonged to such a family and was one of many in this family who became saints of the Church.

Born around the year 335, Gregory was brought up in the Christian faith with help from his grandmother (who is known to us as St. Macrina the Elder), his mother Emily, father Basil (the Elder), and nine brothers and sisters. Among his siblings, his brother Basil (the Great) and sister Macrina (the Younger) are venerated as saints as well as the youngest brother, Peter, who became Bishop of Sebaste. Conversations at dinner in the family home must have been lively theological discussions!

Like the other members of his noble family, Gregory received an excellent education (largely through the home-schooling of family members) and excelled in his studies. He married Theosevia, an equally devout young woman and pursued a career as a lecturer. At some point he was ordained priest and when Theosevia died unexpectedly, Gregory began to devote more of his energies to defending Orthodox Christianity against the threat of Arianism.

In the year 372, Gregory's brother Basil (who was Metropolitan of Caesarea), ordained Gregory to be the Bishop of the Cappadocian city of Nyssa. Because of his opposition to the Arians' attempts to declare that Christ was not God but a man created by God the Father, Bishop Gregory was frequently involved in conflict. His Arian enemies, aided by the Arian Emperor Valens, were able to falsely accuse him of things such as embezzlement of church funds and he was twice sent into exile. Each time, he was able to be reinstated and to continue his tireless efforts to preserve Orthodoxy.

When St. Basil died in 379, Gregory was deeply grieved at the loss of his brother and spiritual companion. Bishop Gregory preached his brother's funeral sermon and finished a series of



sermons which St. Basil had been working on at the time of his death. At the death of their sister, Macrina, the following year, Gregory wrote about the life of this dear member of his family.



In addition to participating in several local synods and traveling to Antioch, Bostra (Arabia) and Jerusalem to help settle disputes, Gregory was instrumental in helping to complete the final section of the Nicene Creed relating to the Holy Spirit added at the Council of Constantinople (the Second Ecumenical Council) in 381.

St. Gregory's teachings on the Holy Trinity and the infinite nature of God have had a lasting effect on Christian theology. He and his brother, St. Basil, and their friend, St. Gregory Nazianzus, are considered the three great "doctors" of the Church in defining these concepts for the Church through the ages. St. Gregory also contributed much to our understanding of the necessity for theosis, or constant striving to be more like God.

St. Gregory himself, having begun life with a great spiritual heritage from his family, and having spent his life striving for perfection, fell asleep in the Lord at an advanced age around the year 395. We pray that God will give us the will and wisdom to share our faith with others in our families, as we share our genetic heritage. May St. Gregory of Nyssa intercede for us.

The Feast of the Annunciation

One of the great events of Christian history, the Annunciation marks the point at which our salvation - known before time and prophesied through centuries - became reality in the announcement of the Angel Gabriel and the conception of our Savior by the Blessed Virgin Mary. From the earliest days of the Church, the story of this event has been held of highest importance.

As with all the important events in the life of Our Lord and his Church, a liturgical feast day was desired to mark this event. In determining a time to celebrate the Annunciation, the Fathers of the Church considered several things. The Biblical story reports some very specific details: when the Angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, her cousin Elizabeth was in her 6th month of pregnancy, a pregnancy which had begun after her husband, Zechariah, served as a priest in the Temple. Zechariah's "turn" in the priestly rotation is identified as at the Feast of Tabernacles near the Autumn equinox in late September. Thus Mary's conception could be dated at six months from the date of this festival and the conception of Elizabeth.

The Biblical accounts show the Crucifixion to have taken place at the time of the Passover, near the Spring equinox, with a standard date of March 25 observed rather than an exact astrological date. It was commonly believed that a person's death would occur on the same date as his life had begun, thus that our Lord's life began with his conception on March 25. Documents from the 3rd and 4th century refer to this idea. Although in some places (Milan, parts of Spain) the Annunciation was observed prior to Christmas (in Advent) for many years, the date of March 25 eventually became universally accepted.

An established liturgical celebration for the Annunciation appeared in the Sacramentary of Pope Gelasius (496) and in that of Pope Gregory the Great (604). In the 7th century, a Synod of Toledo (656) and the Trullan Synod (692) both referred to the feast day as being celebrated in the whole Church. Interestingly, the calendar which was established in 525 and which computed time from the birth of Christ (*anno Domini*) gave March 25 as the beginning of the new year, and this was maintained in England and other parts of the world for many centuries.

The Church's celebration of the conceptions of our Lord and St. John the Baptist are the clearest indications of our Christian understanding of the beginnings of life. Life is a gift from God and that gift begins with conception, never to be violated or "terminated" by man in his sinful self-centeredness.

In his work on *The Liturgical Year*, the nineteenth-century Roman Catholic liturgical historian and abbot of Solemnes, Dom Prosper Guéranger wrote about the Feast of the Annunciation:

This is a great day, not only to man, but even for God Himself; for it is the anniversary of the most solemn event that time has ever witnessed. On that day, the divine Word, by whom the Father created the world, was made flesh in the womb of a virgin, and dwelt among us. We must spend it in joy. Whilst we adore the Son of God who humbled Himself by thus becoming Man, let us give thanks to the Father, who so loved the world, as to give His only-begotten Son; let us give thanks to the Holy Ghost, whose almighty power achieves the great mystery. We are in the very midst of Lent, and yet the ineffable joys of Christmas are upon us: our Emmanuel is conceived on this day, and nine months hence, will be born in Bethlehem, and the angels will invite us to come and honour the sweet Babe.

Sources; online articles from *The Catholic Encyclopedia* and *Wikipedia*; *The Liturgical Year: Lent* by Abbot Guéranger; *The Origins of the Liturgical Year* by Thomas Talley.



Parish News



Having begun our Lenten observances on Ash Wednesday, February 29, we will spend the month of March concentrating on the disciplines of this season: fasting, prayer, penitence, almsgiving. As is our custom at St. Gregory's, we will set aside Friday evenings for Lenten suppers, classes and Stations of the Cross and Benediction. These will begin on Friday, March 9 at 6:30PM.

On the First Sunday of Lent, March 4, we will join with other Orthodox Christians for Vespers for the "Sunday of Orthodoxy" when we celebrate the return of the icons following the iconoclastic controversy. There are about 30 Orthodox parishes in the Washington area representing most of the ethnic jurisdictions, and this is a wonderful opportunity for us to affirm our common Orthodox faith. The service will be at St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Cathedral on Wisconsin Avenue at 5:30PM.

The Feast of the Annunciation falls on Sunday this year, but in the Western tradition, the feast is transferred to the next day. Our celebration will be on Monday, March 26. Vespers will be at 7PM, the Liturgy at 7:30 and a pot-luck supper will follow.

The Archdiocesan "Food for the Hungry" program coin boxes are available for your collection during Lent. The money collected is distributed by the Archdiocese to help alleviate poverty. Our Advent/Christmas/Epiphany collection resulted in 134 pounds of canned and dry food which we donated to Martha's Table.

His Grace, Bishop THOMAS, will make a visitation to St. Patrick's in Warrenton for the eve of St. Patrick's Day, March 16th. Please speak with Fr. Nicholas concerning the details if you are interested in attending the liturgy

Parish Council News

At its meeting on February 12, the Parish Council elected the following officers: David Caldwell, chairman; Catherine Garcia, vice-chairman; Patrick Woolley, secretary. Karl Tsuji was again appointed treasurer. Other Council members include Brian Green, Jimmy Lang, and Paul Higgins.

There are several standing committees for the parish, such as the building committee for issues regarding our facility; education for Sunday School; hospitality for coffee hours, dinners and other social functions. David will be soliciting help with these committees in the next month and would appreciate volunteers.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>March 2012</h1>						
<i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i>				1 St. David of Wales, BC, 544	2 St. Chad, BC, 672	3 St. Lucis, BM, 254 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
4 First Sunday in Lent <i>V</i>	5	6 Ss. Perpetua & Felicitas, Mm, 203	7 Ember Wednesday	8	9 Ember Friday; St. Gregory of Nyssa, BCD, 394 <i>Lenten Supper & Stations of the Cross at 6:30pm</i>	10 Ember Saturday; Forty Martyrs of Sebaste, Mm, 320 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
11 Second Sunday in Lent; St. Sophronius of Jerusalem, BC, c. 369 <i>V</i>	12 St. Gregory the Great, BCD, 604	13	14	15	16 <i>Lenten Supper & Stations of the Cross at 6:30pm</i>	17 St. Patrick, BC, 461 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
18 Third Sunday in Lent; St. Cyril of Jerusalem, BCD, 386 <i>V</i>	19 St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin; 1 st c.	20 St. Cuthbert, BC, 687	21 Repose of St. Benedict, c. 550	22	23 <i>Lenten Supper & Stations of the Cross at 6:30pm</i>	24 St. Gabriel the Archangel <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
25 Fourth Sunday in Lent <i>V</i>	26 The Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary (transferred) <i>Mass at 7:30pm</i> <i>W</i>	27 St. John of Damascus, CD, c. 760	28	29	30 St. John of the Ladder, Ab, 649 <i>Lenten Supper & Stations of the Cross at 6:30pm</i>	31 St. Innocent of Alaska, BC, 1879 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>

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

Coffee Hour follows Sunday Liturgy.