

✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

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

From a treatise of Saint Cyril of Jerusalem

*died 386AD
feast day - March 18*

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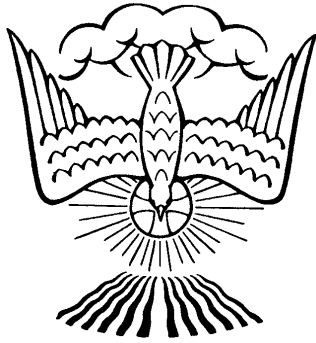
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On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive. John 7:37, 38

This is a new kind of water, living, welling up, welling up for those who are worthy. Why did he call the grace of the Spirit water? Because all things depend on water. Water produces herbs and living things. Water comes down from heaven as rain: water always comes down in the same form, yet its effects are manifold - thus it takes one form in the palm-tree and another in the vine; it is in all things and takes all forms, though it is uniform and always remains itself. For the rain does not change, coming down now as one thing and now as another, but it adapts itself to the nature of the things which receive it and it becomes what is appropriate to each.

Similarly with the Holy Spirit. He is one and of one nature and indivisible, but he apportions his grace as he wills to each one. When the dry tree is watered it brings forth shoots. So too the soul in sin: when through penance it is made worthy of the grace of the Holy Spirit, it bears the fruits of justice. Though the Spirit is one in nature, yet by the will of God and in the name of Christ he brings about multiple effects of virtue.

He uses the tongue of one man for wisdom, he illumines the soul of another by prophecy, to another he imparts the power of driving out devils, to another the gift of interpreting the sacred scriptures; he strengthens the self-control of one man, teaches another the nature of alms-giving, another to fast and mortify himself, another to despise the things of the body; he prepares another man for martyrdom. He acts differently in different men while himself remaining unchanged, as it is written: *the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all...one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as he wills.* [I Cor. 12:7, 11]



His approach is gentle, his presence fragrant, his yoke very light; Rays of light and knowledge shine forth before him as he comes. He comes with the heart of a true protector; he comes to save, to heal, to teach, to admonish, to strengthen, to console, to enlighten the mind, first of the man who receives him, then through him the minds of others also.

As a man previously in darkness, suddenly seeing the sun, receives his sight and sees clearly what he did not see before, so the man deemed worthy of the Holy Spirit is enlightened in soul and sees beyond the power of human sight what he did not know before.

St. Etheldreda

Feast Day ~ June 23

One of the most popular saints of 7th century Anglo-Saxon England was St. Etheldreda, who spent her entire life going against the ways of the world.

Given the name Æthelthryth (popularly called Ethedreda and sometimes Audrey) by her parents (Anna, the king of East Anglia, and his wife Hereswyda), the girl was taught Christian precepts in childhood. She and her elder sister, Sexburga, and her younger sister, Withburga - both of whom also became saints of the Church - were faithful in attendance at the services of the Church, in their private prayers and in studying God's word.

Etheldreda grew to desire nothing more than to remain a virgin and devote her life to a more intense version of her childhood religious practices. But she was a princess and even in this far-flung corner of the civilized world, the kingdom expected its princesses to dress finely, to entertain lavishly, and to contract politically advantageous marriages.

Etheldreda's early love of lace collars and necklaces would later become a source of regret and repentance. Conquering that influence of the world around her, the girl continued to insist on her desire to be a monastic. But after her sister, Sexburga, had been given in marriage to the King of Kent, a marriage which brought with it important political ties was made for Etheldreda to Tondberht, a prince of another tribe in the area. As a marriage gift from the groom, Etheldreda was given the Isle of Ely. Still insisting on her desire to lead a celibate life, Etheldreda was able to convince her new husband that they should continue to live as virgins. After only three years of marriage, Tondberht died and his

widow retired to Ely to finally pursue a quiet life of prayer away from the demands of court life.

But the young princess was still an important prize in the ever-changing political world around her. Her relatives insisted on another expedient marriage, this time to Ecgrith, the heir to the throne of Northumbria, who was at the time a young teenager.

Once again, Etheldreda told her betrothed about the vow she had made to remain a virgin and he agreed to honor that vow. While this may seem highly unusual to us in the 21st century, many of the Fathers of the Church have written about the value of such a life if it is agreed to by both husband and wife. Etheldreda had as her spiritual advisor Bishop (St.) Wilfrid and he gave his blessing for the couple's decision.

As Ecgrith reached manhood, however, and succeeded his father as King, he changed his mind about the kind of life his wife wanted to live. He realized that he needed to produce an heir and have a family around him to support him in his rule of the kingdom. His efforts to bribe Bishop Wilfrid to counsel Etheldreda to break her vow were unsuccessful. When he attempted to force his wife to meet his demands, she fled to Ely and Bishop Wilfrid tonsured her as a nun. He released Ecgrith from the marital vows and he later remarried.

Finally free to devote her life entirely to prayer and contemplation, Etheldreda first served as a novice at a monastery in Coldingham where her aunt Ebbe was the abbess. In 673, she founded a double monastery at Ely and served as its first Abbess. She restored an old church which had been destroyed by the pagan king of Mercia. Here the nun could spend her days as she had always desired - in silence, in prayer, in austerities which included wearing only rough woolen clothes and eating only one meal a day. This was the path by which she sought sanctification.

After seven years, Abbess Etheldreda developed a tumor on her neck (which she interpreted as a sign that she had not fully repented of her earlier sin of vanity in wearing fine jewelry) and she passed to the next life on June 23 in the year 679. She was buried, as she had requested, in a wooden box.

Etheldreda's sister, Sexburga, had meanwhile been widowed after years of marriage to her royal husband and raising four children. While she was queen, she had founded a monastery to which she retired upon her husband's death. When her sister died, Sexburga then moved to Ely and succeeded her as abbess there. Seventeen years after Etheldreda's death, Sexburga had her tomb opened in order to translate her relics to a stone sarcophagus in a place of



greater honor. Bishop Wilfrid and the physician who had attended Etheldreda in her last illness were present, and all were amazed to find not only that her body was incorrupt and all the clothing intact, but that the tumor was completely healed and her neck returned to its normal size.



St. Etheldreda's shrine became a place of pilgrimage for many. Although her monastery was destroyed during the Danish invasions, it was rebuilt in 970 as a monastery for monks only and the shrine remained a place for veneration. The saint's shrine was stripped in the twelfth century to pay a fine which the then bishop had incurred and there were several more translations of the relics before Ely Cathedral, built over the original site, was consecrated in 1252. It was not until the destruction at the time of the Protestant Reformation that the centuries of veneration came to an end. However, through the mercy of God, some of the relics had been taken to a London chapel used by the bishops of Ely which was then turned over to the Spanish ambassadors to England, allowing these relics to escape destruction. Through the centuries, miracles were reported in association with veneration of the saint's relics.

St. Etheldreda's life of holiness was accomplished through her determination to go against the ways of the world around her, to remain a virgin and dedicate her body, as well as her soul, to Christ. May she intercede for monastics and others who lead a celibate life and for all of us as we struggle to overcome the temptations and distractions of the world.

Two Paths to Holiness

We often complain that the secular world around us is obsessed with sex. But we should never think that sex is just a "secular" subject. The Church has much to say about it and we should look to Holy Scripture and the writings of the Fathers and theologians for a more balanced and healthy understanding of sex from a Christian standpoint. The Church has provided us with two paths to holiness which involve two different approaches to sex.

For two thousand years, the Church has placed a very high value on the condition of life practiced by those who maintain their bodies in a virginal state and abstain from the pleasures of the flesh. As we read in the epistles of St. Paul in Holy Scripture, this was first due to the expectation that Christ would return soon after his Ascension to usher in the Kingdom of Heaven. It was thought that Christians needed to put all their energy and attention into preparing for the Kingdom and should not be caught up in the usual

concerns of everyday life. St. Paul reminded Christians that their “bodies are members of Christ” and “the temple of the Holy Spirit” [I Cor. 6: 15, 19].

Gradually, as Christians came to realize that Christ’s return would not happen immediately, and as the persecutions ended and martyrdom was no longer required of some, monasticism became a new form of martyrdom - the sacrifice of the “normal” life of one who would marry and have a family and be involved in worldly pursuits. Monasticism required a promise of virginity, of charity and of intense prayer. The lists of saints in all ages of the Church are filled with the names of monastics who lived celibate lives.

Those who pursue the monastic life have removed themselves from the world so that their sole attention can be on heavenly things. Days spent in worship, prayer, study of Scriptures and the Fathers, work for the good of the community, and charity for those in need are days which bring one closer to the Kingdom of Heaven.

In his Epistles, St. Paul admits that there are many, however, who feel the natural impulse to join with another in marriage and its physical and spiritual comforts, so he urges those Christians to become husband and wife. Scripture also shows us the value which Christ himself placed on marriage by performing his first miracle at the wedding of a family friend. Our Lord set a high standard of sexual fidelity for those who are married by saying that “whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” [Matt. 5:28]

There are many married saints who have striven for *theosis* in the midst of managing a household, raising children, working at a job, and paying bills. A famous example of an entire family whose holiness produced many saints is that of grandmother Macrina (the Elder), whose son Basil (the Elder), his wife, Emmelia and their five children (among whom were Macrina the Younger, St. Basil the Younger and St. Gregory of Nyssa) are all venerated as saints. St. Innocent, who traveled 2200 miles to Alaska with his family in order to be a missionary to the native inhabitants, is an extreme example of one who - while raising a family, engaging in carpentry and organ and clock building to make money, teaching and preaching, and celebrating the Sacraments - became a saint of God.

St. Augustine (354-430) wrote treatises in which he compared the Christian approach to marriage and sex to that of the pagans of his day. He declared that in Christian marriage, God made holy what was lustful outside of marriage. He who had fathered a child out of wedlock in his youth believed that the primary purpose for



marriage was the procreation of children - children who would be raised in the Church and who would pass the faith on to the next generation.



St. John Chrysostom (347-407), emphasized the mutual work of Christian living for married people. In giving advice to bridegrooms, he said: “Say to her, ‘Our time here is brief and fleeting, but if we are pleasing to God, we can exchange this life for the Kingdom to come. Then we will be perfectly one both with Christ and each other, and our pleasure will know no bounds. I value your love above all things, and nothing would be so bitter or painful to me as our being at odds with each other. Even if I lose everything, any affliction is tolerable if you will be true to me.’” He gave similar advice to brides.

The Christian philosopher Tertullian, writing about marriage in the 3rd century, said: “How can we describe the happiness of marriage, which has been raised from the common level of lust by church blessing? In these unions the Church approves, the Eucharist confirms, the blessing seals, while the angels recognize what the Father ratifies.”

Those who are married are to strive for holiness above all in their union, in the way they treat each other and their children, in the way they help each other become better persons. So marriage is also a path to holiness blessed by God and his Church.

But what of those who have not chosen the monastic life but who have been unable to find a suitable partner for marriage? They are in greater need of the encouragement and prayers of the Church family - for strength to maintain chastity in a world which does not value chastity, to help meet others who may also be hoping for a Christian marriage, and for establishing healthy friendships within the Church.

Whether our path to holiness is through marriage or in celibacy, all Christians should pray constantly for the intercessions of the saints as we seek to know and follow God’s will for our lives.

Suggested reading: On Marriage and Family Life by St. John Chrysostom,; Marriage as a Path to Holiness by David and Mary Ford; What the Church Fathers Say About...edited by George W. Grube; How do I Choose the right Partner for Life? by Fr. Deacon Stephen Holley; Married Saints of the Church by, Monk Moses.

Parish News

The month of June is a month of important feast days in the Church year. We begin on June 3 with the celebration of the great feast of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was given by God to the Apostles, enabling them to carry on Christ's work in the world. As is our custom at St. Gregory's, we will read the story of this event - describing how the Apostles were able, through the Holy Spirit, to preach in the languages of those around them - in as many languages as are represented in the parish. This year, we will hear this story in about a dozen different languages.

The Feast of the Holy Trinity, when we give thanks for the revelation of one God as three Persons - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - will be celebrated on Sunday, June 10. The Feast of Corpus Christi, on which we celebrate the institution of the Sacrament of Holy Communion, will be observed on the Sunday within its octave, June 17. Sunday, June 24, is the Feast of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist when we celebrate God's work in the Forerunner of Our Lord. The Feast of Ss. Peter & Paul, the patrons of the Patriarchate of Antioch, will be celebrated with Liturgy at 7:30 pm on Thursday, June 28. Vespers will be sung at 7PM and a pot-luck supper will follow the Mass.

The Parish Council has called for a work day on Saturday, June 16, beginning at 10AM. There are a number of tasks around the church building which need to be done and everyone is encouraged to come and help with these.

Congratulations to Candace Archer, who has received a Bachelor of Science degree in biology from the University of Maryland.

We look forward to a visit from Sister Margarete on the weekend of July 1, after she attends a choir workshop at St. Vladimir's Seminary in Crestwood, NY. Her father, Deacon Gregory Roeber, will also be with us and speak about his recently published book: *Changing Churches: An Orthodox, Catholic, and Lutheran Theological Conversation* (Eerdmans, 2012). This would be a good time to invite Lutheran friends who may be curious about Orthodoxy.

Thanks to Subdeacon Jerome for taking care of the parish garden - weeding, mulching, watering, planting, mowing - all things that have made it so beautiful and healthy. (Since God has provided more warm sun and rain than usual for this time of year, we may have lilies blooming on Pentecost instead of the usual blooms at Dormition.)



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>June 2012</h1>						
<i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i>					1	2 Vigil of Pentecost; Ss. Marcellinus, Peter and Erasmus, Mm, 304 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
3 Pentecost (omit St. Kevin of Glendalough, Ab, c. 618) <i>R</i>	4 Monday in the Octave of Pentecost; St. Petroc, C, 564	5 Tuesday in the Octave of Pentecost; St. Boniface, BM, 754	6 Ember Wednesday in the Octave of Pentecost;	7 Thursday in the Octave of Pentecost	8 Ember Friday in the Octave of Pentecost	9 St. Columba of Iona, Ab, 597; Ember Saturday in the Octave of Pentecost <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
10 Trinity Sunday; First Sunday after Pentecost; St. Margaret of Scotland, QW, 1092 <i>W</i>	11 St. Barnabas, Apostle, 1st c.	12 Ss. Basilides, late 3 rd c., Cyrinus, Nabor & Nazarius, c. 303, Mm	13	14 Corpus Christi; St. Basil the Great, BCD, 379	15 of the Octave of Corpus Christi; Ss. Vitus, Modestus & Crescentia, Mm, c. 303	16 of the Octave of Corpus Christi 10AM Parish Work Day <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
17 Sunday in the Octave of Corpus Christi; Second Sunday after Pentecost <i>W</i>	18 St. Ephrem the Syrian, DnCD, 373; of the Octave of Corpus Christi	19 of the Octave of Corpus Christi; Ss. Gervase & Protase, Mm, 2nd. C	20 of the Octave of Corpus Christi; St. Silverius, PM, 538 Translation of St. Edward, KM, 980	21 Octave Day of Corpus Christi	22 St. Alban, Proto-martyr of England, 209; St. Paulinus, BC, 431	23 Vigil of St. John the Baptist; St. Etheldreda, QV, 679 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
24 Nativity of St. John the Baptist; Third Sunday after Pentecost <i>W</i>	25 of the Octave of St. John the Baptist	26 Ss. John & Paul, Mm, c. 362; of the Octave of St. John the Baptist	27 of the Octave of St. John the Baptist	28 St. Irenaeus of Lyons, BM, 202; of the Octave of St. John Baptist <i>Mass at 7:30pm</i>	29 Ss. Peter & Paul, Apostles, Patrons of the Patriarchate of Antioch, 1st c.	30 St. Paul, Ap., 1st c.; of the Octave of St. John the Baptist <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>

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

Coffee Hour follows Sunday Liturgy.

