

✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

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

From a homily of St. Augustine of Hippo

died 430AD

Feast Day ~ August 28

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We have listened to the words of Our Lord Jesus Christ who tells of the Sower who sowed good seed in his field. While men slept an enemy came and oversowed it with tares. While the tares were yet green they were not detected, but when the fruit of the good seed began to appear, then the tares revealed themselves. The master's servants were angry, seeing the weed standing thick amid the true grain, and they desired to uproot it at once, but were not permitted. But it was said to them, *suffer both to grow until the harvest*. The Lord Christ also explained this parable saying that He was the Sower of the good Seed, that the devil was the enemy, the sower of tares, the harvest was the end of time and His field the world.

But hear what He says: *In the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers: gather up first the cockle, and bind it into bundles to burn, but the wheat gather ye into my barn*. Why hasten thee, zealous servants, he says? See you not that the tares stand in the midst of the good growth, and you wish to uproot the bad? Remain quiet, it is not yet the time of harvest. Let it come, and let it reveal to you the true wheat. Why need you be angry? Why are you impatient that the bad should now be mixed with the good? They may be among you in the field, but in My barn they shall not be with you...

Today I speak to the tares; but the sheep of the flock are themselves the tares. O unworthy Christians! You that fill the Church and at the same time torment it by the wickedness of your lives. Correct your ways before the time of the harvest! Be not like those who said: *I have sinned, and what harm hath befallen me?* [Ecclus. 4] God has not lost His power but He requires of you repentance. This I say to the wicked, who are likewise Christians; this I say to the tares. For they are yet standing in the field: and it may be that they who today are

tares may tomorrow become good wheat. And now I address myself to the wheat.

·THE SOWER OF GOOD SEEDS·



O you Christians whose lives are worthy. You weep, few amid the multitude: you mourn, few among the many. But the winter will pass, and the summer will come, and lo! It will be harvest time. The Angels will come, who can divide the one from the other, and they will not err. We at this time are like to the servants, of whom it is written: *Wilt thou that we go and gather it up?* For we are anxious that, if it were possible, nothing that was evil should remain among the good. But it was said to us: *Suffer both to grow until the harvest.* Why so? Because such as you are liable to error. Listen: *Lest perhaps gathering up the cockle, you root up the wheat also with it.* What good can you do? Will you not rather destroy my crop with your rashness? The reapers will be coming: and He explains who the reapers are: *The reapers are angels.* We too, if we finish our course, shall be like unto the angels: but now, though we are angry with the wicked, we are ourselves still men. And we should remember this: *He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall.* [I Cor.10:12]

And do you think, my Brethren, that the tares do not reach to these high seats [i.e. where the clergy sit]? Do you think they are all down among you, and none here above? That we may not be such! *But to me it is a small thing to be judged by you.* [I Cor. 4:3] But I tell Your Charity, that in these high seats there are good wheat and there are tares; as among the people there are good wheat, and there are tares. Let the good be patient with the wicked; let those who do evil change their ways, and become as the good. Let us all, if possible, come unto God. May we all through His mercy escape the wickedness of this world. Let us *seek good days*, for we are in the midst of days that are evil; but in these wicked days let us not blaspheme, that we may reach unto the *good days*.

Turning then with contrite hearts to the Lord our God, the Father Almighty, let us as best we can give thanks with all our hearts beseeching Him that in His goodness He will graciously hearken to our prayers, and by His power drive evil from our thoughts and actions, increase our faith, guide our minds, grant unto us his holy inspiration, and bring us to joy that is without end, through His Son our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

St. Appolonia, Virgin & Martyr *Feast Day ~ February 9*

We hear much in our day about torture and mob violence. Fallen, sinful man will always resort to this kind of behavior when he allies himself with the forces of evil. Devout Christians can expect to be frequently on the receiving end of this behavior. This was certainly true in the early days of the Church.

Near the end of the reign of Emperor Philip or the beginning of that of Decius (in the year 249), a riot broke out in the city of Alexandria. The turmoil was begun by a poet who prided himself on being able to foretell the future. He stirred up the local population in anger against the Christians and men took to the streets to attack these innocent people.

The first victim of this riot was an old man, Metras, who was told to say blasphemous things against the worship of the True God. When the old man refused, the mob dragged him through the streets, poked his eyes out with reeds, and stoned him to death. Thirsty for blood, the rioters then found Quinta, a Christian woman whom they took to the temple of one of the pagan gods. She was ordered to worship this idol, but instead, she poured out reproaches against this false god and she received the same martyrdom as Metras.

The angry mob then found Apollonia, an aged deaconess of the Church. They first beat her, especially on the face, so that most of her teeth fell out. They then dragged her out into a courtyard where they built a huge fire in which they intended to burn her alive if she did not renounce Christ. Apollonia asked for a moment to prepare and her tormenters took this as a sign of a possible victory for them. Perhaps the old woman would turn away from her Christian faith. But instead, Apollonia threw herself into the fire.

The story of St. Apollonia's martyrdom was told to Fabius, the Bishop of Antioch, by St. Dionysius, the Bishop of Alexandria, so we have a first-hand account. As was true for many of the early martyrs, Apollonia was immediately revered as a saint. She was especially venerated in the West and, in the Middle Ages, became known as the saint whose intercessions could help with problems of the teeth.

Theologians have debated about whether St. Apollonia's act of throwing herself on the fire could be considered suicide.



This would have been the "honorable" choice of good pagan Romans or Greeks when public humiliation or fall from power was inevitable. But the Church has never condoned suicide and St. Augustine, among others, defended the saint's actions as noble, showing that she preferred martyrdom to giving up her faith and that she was merely proceeding with the inevitable.

We praise God for the fearless courage of those early saints and ask that those who are in danger of mob violence in our day may be aided by the prayers of St. Apollonia.

Sources: The Lives of the Fathers, Martyres and other Principal Saints, by Rev. Alban Butler; Lives of the Saints, by Omer Englebert; The Oxford Dictionary of Saints, compiled by David Hugh Farmer; Lives of the Saints, by Augustine Kalberer.

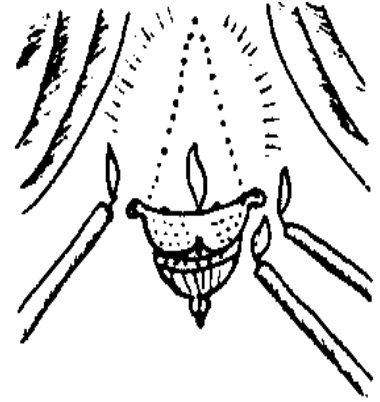
On the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple

by St. Nikolai of Ochrid



On the fortieth day after His birth, the most holy Virgin brought Her divine Son to the Temple in Jerusalem, to consecrate Him to the Lord and to purify herself according to the Law [Lev. 12:27; Exod. 12:2]. And though neither the one nor the other was necessary, nevertheless the Lawgiver would not in any way transgress the Law which he had given through His servant and prophet Moses. At that time Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, was serving his turn as high priest in the Temple. He stood the Virgin Mary in the place for maidens, not that for married women. On this occasion, there were two very special people present: the elder, Simeon, and Anna the daughter of Phanuel. The righteous elder took his Messiah up in his arms and said: "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." Simeon also spoke the following words of the Christ Child: "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel." Then Anna, who had from her youth served God in the Temple in fasting and prayer, and who herself recognized the Messiah, praised the Lord and made known to the inhabitants of Jerusalem the coming of the awaited One. But the Pharisees, present in the Temple and seeing and hearing all that passed, and being vexed with Zacharias for having stood the Virgin Mary in the place for maidens, made this known to King Herod. Believing this to be the new King of whom the star-followers from the East had spoken, Herod quickly sent to have Jesus killed. But in the meantime the holy family had already escaped from the city and set out for Egypt, under the direction of an angel of God.

Speaking of the spread of the celebration of Christmas, St. John Chrysostom says: “As beautiful and prolific fruit-trees, when planted in the earth, quickly attain a great height and ripen and bear fruit; so with this day.” So also with the day of the Presentation of the Lord. This day was commemorated among Christians from the beginning, but its solemn celebration began in the time of the great Emperor Justinian. At that time, Constantinople and its surroundings were struck by an epidemic, with five thousand or more people dying every day. At the same time there was a terrible earthquake in Antioch. Seeing the powerlessness of men to avert these catastrophes, the Emperor and the Patriarch together decided to call for fasting and prayer throughout the whole empire. On the day of the Presentation itself, they arranged processions through the towns and villages to implore the Lord to have mercy on his people. And the Lord did have mercy, the epidemic and the earthquake ceasing instantly. This happened in the year 544. As a result, the Presentation came to be celebrated as a great feast of the Lord. Trees sprout at this time and begin the process of bringing forth their abundant fruit.



[Editor's note: Soon after this, the West also adopted the feastday and Pope Sergius I (687-701) added a procession of the people representing the entrance into the Temple.]

Parish News

We will celebrate the Presentation of our Lord in the Temple (or the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, or Candlemas) on Saturday, February 2 with Matins at 9:30AM and Mass at 10:00, followed by a pot-luck brunch. This feast day is rich in historical and liturgical material. From the Biblical story, we have the canticle, *Nunc dimittis*, the song of the aged Simeon when he saw the child being brought in by Mary and Joseph for a blessing. We sing this canticle at every Vespers (or Compline) service. The numerous references to Christ as “light” on this feast day led to the practice of blessing the candles to be used throughout the year on this day.

At the annual Parish Meeting on Sunday, January 20, Sharon Green and Pieter Dykhorst were elected as new Parish Council members. They will replace Dave Caldwell and Jimmy Lang, who have served their terms faithfully (Dave as president) and will now rotate off the Council. Our Food for the Hungry collection netted 82 pounds of canned goods to be given to Martha's Table for the needy in our area. Thanks for your contributions to this annual collection.

Epiphany house blessings will continue through this month, March 2 being the last day of Epiphany. Please speak with Fr. Nicholas or Fr. Raphael if you haven't yet scheduled the blessing of your home.

The Visitation of Bishop JOHN



The episcopal visitation of Bishop JOHN to St. Gregory's on the weekend of January 26 and 27 was a wonderful opportunity for us to meet and get to know the bishop who has now been assigned as overseer for Western Rite parishes and for him to get to know us.

During his time with us, there was a luncheon with clergy and parish leaders, a service of Vespers on Saturday, followed by a banquet, and Matins and the Liturgy on Sunday, after which the Bishop answered our questions and shared his wisdom as our Shepherd.

Congratulations to Nathaniel Green, who was tonsured as a Reader by Bishop JOHN. He joins Reader Simon (Karl Tsuji) and Subdeacon Jerome as one who has special liturgical responsibilities.

Thanks to all who helped to make this weekend such a wonderful success. The services were beautiful and reverent; at the banquet, the parish hall was beautifully decorated, the food was delicious and served graciously (and the cleanup was efficient!). Sunday's plentiful coffee hour allowed us time to remain and talk with the Bishop at some length. This was a wonderful example of how the members of St. Gregory's work together. Thank you all.



| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
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| <h1>February 2013</h1> | | | | | | |
| <i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i> | | | | | 1 St. Ignatius of Antioch, BM, c. 107; St. Bridgid, V, 523 | 2 Presentation of Our Lord: Candlemas <i>Blessing of Candles & Mass at 10am</i> <i>W</i> <i>Vespers at 6pm</i> |
| 3 Fourth Sunday after Epiphany; St. Blaise, BM, c. 316; St. Anskar of Hamburg, BC, 865 G | 4 New Martyrs of Russia, 1917 and following; St. Joseph of Aleppo, M, 1686 | 5 St. Agatha, VM, c. 250 | 6 St. Photius, BCD, 891; St. Dorothy, VM c. 313 | 7 St. Romuald, Ab, 1027 | 8 | 9 St. Cyril of Alexandria, BCD, 444; St. Apollonia, VM, c. 248 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i> |
| 10 Fifth Sunday after Epiphany; St. Scholastica, V, 543 G | 11 St. Gregory II, PM; St. Benedict of Aniane, Ab, 821; St. Theodora, Empress Ma, 860 | 12 | 13 | 14 St. Valentine, PrM, 3rd C | 15 Ss. Faustinus & Jovita, Mm, 120 | 16 St. Nicholas of Japan, BC, 1912 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i> |
| 17 Sixth Sunday after Epiphany G | 18 St. Simeon of Jerusalem, BM, 1st C.; St. Colman, BC, 675 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 Chair of St. Peter at Antioch; St. Joseph of Arimethea, C, 1st c. | 23 Vigil of St. Matthias <i>Vespers at 6pm</i> |
| 24 St. Matthias, Apostle, 1st c.; Seventh Sunday after Epiphany R | 25 St. Walburga, of Heidenheim, V, 779 | 26 St. Porphyrius of Gaza, BC, 420; St. Ethelbert, KC, 616 | 27 St. Raphael of Brooklyn, BC, 1915; St. Alexander, BC, 326; St. Leander, BC, 600 | 28 St. Oswald of Worcester, BC, 992 | | |

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.