

✠ 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. Gregory Palamas

died 1359AD

Feast Day ~ November 14

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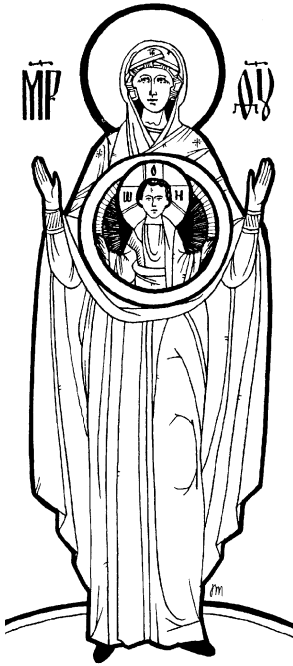
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When the prophet and psalmist was enumerating the different aspects of creation and observing God's wisdom in them all, he was filled with amazement and cried out while writing, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all" [Psalm 104:24]. Now that I am attempting, if I can to tell you about the manifestation in the flesh of the Word who made all things, what fitting word of praise will I find? If all things that exist inspire wonder, and their coming out of non-being into being is something divine and greatly to be hymned, how much more amazing, divine and demanding of our praises is it for a being to become god, and not just god, but the God who truly is? Especially as it was our nature which was neither able nor willing to preserve the image in which it was made, and had therefore been rightly banished to the lower parts of the earth. That our nature should become like God, and that through it we should receive the gift of returning to what is better, is a mystery so great and divine, so ineffable and beyond understanding, that it remained absolutely unrecognized by holy angels and men, and even by the prophets, although they had spiritual vision, and was hidden throughout all the ages. But why am I speaking about the time before it was accomplished? Even now it has happened, how it happened, although not the fact that it has, remains a mystery believed not known, worshiped not investigated, and only believed and worshiped through the Spirit. "No man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost" [I Cor. 12:3], and the apostle tells us that it is through the spirit that we worship and pray [Rom. 8:26].

The event which we celebrate today clearly proves that this mystery is beyond the understanding not only of men but of angels and even archangels. The archangel brought the Good Tidings to the Virgin that she would conceive [Luke 1:26-38]. But when she sought to find out the way it would

happen and asked him, “How shall this be, seeing I know not a man” [Luke 1:34], the archangel was completely unable to explain how. He took refuge in God, saying, “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee” [Luke 1:35]...



Why was this? Because the child to be born was not to be called a prophet or simply a man, like Adam, but the Son of the Highest, Savior, Deliverer of the human race and eternal King. When stones fall away from the peak of a mountain and go right down to the foot, many overhanging crags are left in their place. In the same way, when in paradise we fell away from the divine commandment and the blessed and godly way of life, and were brought down as far as hades, many evils resulted. Not only did the ground yield visible thorns and thistles in accordance with the curse upon our forefather, but we, to an even greater extent, were sown with the thorns of all sorts of evil passions and with sin’s dreadful thistles. Our race did not receive just that sorrow allotted to our First Mother by the curse which condemned her to bear children in sorrow [Gen. 3:16], but almost all our life became pain and sorrow.

However, God who made us looked lovingly down on us in his mercy. He bowed the heavens and came down. Having taken our nature upon him from the Holy Virgin, he renewed and restored it. Or rather, He led it up to divine and heavenly heights. Wishing to achieve this, to bring to fulfilment on this day his pre-eternal counsel, he sent the archangel Gabriel, as Luke the evangelist tells us, “to Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary” [Luke 1:26-27]...

How did the highly favored Virgin, with her unrivaled and holy understanding, respond to these words? She ran to God and reached out to Him in prayer, saying to the archangel, “If, as you tell me, the Holy Spirit shall come upon me, purifying my nature still further and strengthening me to receive the unborn Savior; if the power of the highest shall overshadow me, forming Him who is in the form of God as man within me and bringing about a birth without seed; if the holy child which shall be born is to be the Son of God and God and the everlasting King, since with God nothing is impossible”, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word” [Luke 1:38]. And the angel departed from her, leaving the Maker of all united with a body within her womb. By means of this union, which was the object of his ministry, he had procured salvation for the world.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem *Feast Day ~ March 18*

Those of us who love history often wish for the “good old days.” Orthodox lovers of history often wish for the golden age of a Christian empire when Church and State formed a perfect partnership. But if we honestly look at the facts of history without the rose-colored glasses, we see that more often than not, the relationship between Church and State has been very checkered and many of the saints of God have had to serve our Lord amidst conflict and persecution. Even after Christianity became the favored religion under the Emperor St. Constantine, the devil continued to plague those who followed Christ.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem was born in or near the Holy City in the year 315. There are no records of his early life, but we know of his ordination to the priesthood in the year 346. He was given responsibility for preaching to the faithful in Jerusalem and preparing catechumens for Baptism. Only four years later, Cyril became Patriarch of Jerusalem on the death of Patriarch Maximus.

A miracle occurred in Jerusalem during this time about which we have well-documented testimony. St. Cyril wrote to the Emperor about it and there were many eye-witnesses. On May 7, at about 9:00 in the morning, the form of a cross appeared in the sky over Jerusalem. It was positioned over Golgotha and reached to the Mount of Olives. This vision lasted for several hours and appeared to be brighter than the sun. Those who witnessed this phenomenon ran to the Church in Jerusalem, praising Jesus Christ as Lord of all.

In a manner which is usually associated with political rivals, Acacius, Archbishop of Caesarea, (who eventually became an outspoken Arian) began complaints against Cyril to his friend the Emperor Constantius. His jurisdiction over Jerusalem, his theology, and even his use of the funds of the Jerusalem church were used by Acacius to discredit him. Patriarch Cyril was exiled from Jerusalem and was given hospitality by Sylvanus, the Bishop of Tarsus. Here he spent his time in writing. Sylvanus later became a “Semi-Arian”, and St. Cyril’s reputation is sometimes clouded by his time spent with him although Cyril never wavered from Orthodox belief.

Julian the “Apostate” became Emperor next and, contrary to what many would have thought, he recalled bishops who had been exiled by his predecessor, so Cyril returned to Jerusalem. Perhaps Julian intended to stir up more trouble among Christians as the Arian heresy was spreading rapidly.

Julian also proposed a project which was rife with controversy. He suggested to the Jewish population that they rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. Christian leaders such as Patriarch Cyril reminded the



public that Christ had predicted the fall of the Temple and that his sacrifice had replaced all the animal sacrifices which the Jews had made in the Temple. When the Jews began the work of rebuilding, several earthquakes destroyed the work that had been done and put an end to the project. We have accounts of this event, which occurred in 363, written by St. Gregory Nazianzen and St. John Chrysostom, among others.

Patriarch Cyril endured another exile under the Arian Emperor Valens, beginning in 367, but was restored on the accession of Gratian in 378. The Patriarch attended the Second Ecumenical Council in Constantinople in 381, where he participated in the formulation of the Nicene Creed. In the year 386, at the age of 71, St. Cyril fell asleep in the Lord. He had been faithful to Orthodox Christian teaching through the turmoil of false accusations and exile due to an unholy mixture of politics and religion.

One of the most important gifts which St. Cyril gave to those of us who follow him are his lectures to catechumens. There are eighteen lessons to be given in Lent to those preparing for baptism and five “mystagogical” instructions given during Pascha to those who have just been baptized. These writings include references to liturgical practices and geographical information about Jerusalem and provide a wonderful picture of the Church in the fourth century.

For those of us who live in a time when the relationship between Church and State is often ambiguous and is becoming more hostile, may we seek the prayers of St. Cyril of Jerusalem to aid us in our struggles. Holy Cyril, pray for us.

Sources: Alban Butler, *Lives of the Saints and Martyrs*; *Catholic Encyclopedia* online; George Poulos, *Orthodox Saints*, Vol. I; St. Nikolai Velimirovic, *Prologue From Ochrid*.

Parish News



We will celebrate three important liturgical occasions this month: the feast of our patron, St. Gregory the Great, will be observed on the Eve of his feast day, Monday, March 11 and the Feast of the Annunciation on the evening of Monday, March 25. On both occasions, Vespers will be sung at 7PM, Mass will follow at 7:30, and a pot-luck supper will be enjoyed afterward. March 20, is Ash Wednesday in the Western Rite, the beginning of the season of Lent. The Imposition of Ashes and Mass will begin at 7:30. A light Lenten supper will follow. Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers will be offered at Ss. Peter & Paul Church in Potomac on Sunday, March 24th, at 5:30pm.

Fr. Nicholas and Kh. Rebecca are moving to a new home as of March 1. Their new address is 9415 Wire Ave., Silver Spring, MD 20901. The church office phone number will also be changing soon.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>March 2013</h1>					1 St. David of Wales, BC, 544	2 St. Chad, BC, 672 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
3 Septuagesima; St. Lucius, BM, 254 <i>V</i>	4	5	6 Ss. Perpetua & Felicitas, Mm, 203	7	8	9 St. Gregory of Nyssa, BCD, 394 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
10 Sexagesima; Forty Martyrs of Sebaste, Mm, 320 <i>V</i>	11 St. Sophronius of Jerusalem, BC, c. 369 <i>Mass at 7:30pm W</i>	12 St. Gregory the Great, BCD, 604	13	14	15	16 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
17 Quinquagesima; St. Patrick, BC, 461 <i>V</i>	18 St. Cyril of Jerusalem, BCD, 386; St. Edward, KM 979	19 St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin; 1 st c.	20 Ash Wednesday <i>Blessing of Ashes and Mass at 7:30pm V</i>	21 Repose of St. Benedict, c. 550	22	23 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
24 First Sunday in Lent; St. Gabriel the Archangel <i>Vespers at Ss. Peter & Paul at 5:30pm V</i>	25 The Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary <i>Mass at 7:30pm W</i>	26	27 Ember Wednesday; St. John of Damascus, CD, c. 760	28	29 Ember Friday <i>Lenten Supper & Stations of the Cross at 6:30pm</i>	30 Ember Saturday; St. John of the Ladder, Ab, 649 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
31 Second Sunday in Lent; St. Innocent of Alaska, BC, 1879 <i>V</i>						<i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Sung Mass at 9:30AM</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.