

# ✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

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

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## *From a homily of St. Leo the Great*

*died 461AD  
Feast Day ~ April 10*

*Inside:*

<i>St. Epiphanius. . . . .</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>The Dating of Pascha. . . . .</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Parish News. . . . .</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Calendar. . . . .</i>	<i>7</i>

**T**he Gospel narrative, dearly beloved, describes for us the whole Paschal mystery; and thus, by way of our bodily ears, it has reached the ears of the soul, so that there are none amongst us who have not formed a picture of what took place. For the account of this divinely inspired history shows clearly with what impiety our Lord Jesus Christ was betrayed, with what kind of judgement He was condemned, with what cruelty He was crucified, and with what glory raised from the dead.

**F**or the Cross of Christ, which was dedicated to the salvation of mortal man, is both a sacrament and an example; a sacrament, in which the divine power is made known; an example, by means of which devotion is kindled among men; for to those freed from the yoke of slavery their redemption also brings them this: that they may imitate it. For if human wisdom takes such pride in its errors, so that each one copies the notions, the manners, all the ideas, of the one he has chosen as guide, what share have we in the Name of Christ if we are not wholly united with Him Who is, as he has taught us, *The way and the truth and the life* [John 14:6]? The Way of holy living; the Truth of divine teaching; and the Life of happiness without end.

**D**eary beloved, if without faltering we believe in our in our hearts what we confess with our lips, then have we in Christ been crucified, we have died with Him, we have been buried with Him, and with Him have risen again on the third day. Because of this the Apostle says: *If you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above; where Christ Jesus is sitting at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth. For you are dead; and your life is hid with Christ in God.* [Col. 3:1-4]



And that the hearts of the faithful may know that they have the means by which, putting away the desires of the world, they may be raised to heavenly wisdom, the Lord promises us His own Presence, saying: *Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.* [Mt. 28:20]

Let us then be not led astray by vanities, nor falter when things are hard for us; in the one case deceit will flatter us, in the other our difficulties but grow worse. But since *the earth is full of the mercy of the Lord* [Ps. 32:5], everywhere the victory of the Lord is with us, that the words may be fulfilled which say: *Have confidence, I have overcome the world* [John 16:33]. Whether we are fighting the claims of the world, or the lusts of the flesh, or the darts of the heretics, let us at all times arm ourselves with the Lord's Cross. And if we in the sincerity of truth keep from ourselves the leaven of our old wickedness, the Paschal Feast will never end for us.

## *St. Epiphanius of Salamis*

### *Feast Day ~ May 12*

For those of us who are converts to the Orthodox faith, it is sometimes tempting to go to extremes in our zeal for this new way of life. We often become rigorous in our discipline and critical of “cradle” Orthodox Christians for what appears to us as laxity. It should not be a surprise to us that this phenomenon has even affected one of the saints of the Church.

St. Epiphanius is sometimes called “Epiphanius the Jew”, as he was born into a poor Palestinian Jewish family around the year 310. He was fortunate in that a wealthy Jewish merchant befriended him and made it possible for him to have an education. The merchant also bequeathed his estate to Epiphanius, allowing him to pursue his interests without financial worries.

Through the influence of Christian friends, Epiphanius became convinced of the truth of Jesus Christ as the expected Messiah and he and his sister, Callithrope, were baptized. With characteristic fervor, Epiphanius began a study of the Scriptures and the writings of the Fathers. In order to study in the original languages, he learned Greek, Latin, Syrian, and Egyptian as well as his native Hebrew. For this reason, Epiphanius also earned the name “Pentaglosson” or “Five-tongued”.

By the age of 26, Epiphanius had decided that he needed to give his whole life to God by becoming a monk. He first lived in the monastery of St. Hilarion, with whom he established a strong friendship and from whom he learned to lead an ascetic life of prayer and study. Then, with the money he had inherited, Epiphanius founded his own monastery in Egypt and served as the Abbot for five years. During this time, his reputation for holiness of living and wise counsel spread throughout the land. He was also known for defending correct theological ideas. Living in this time of speculation and innovation, with various heresies swirling around him, Epiphanius was a stalwart defender of Orthodoxy.

At the recommendation of St. Hilarion, Epiphanius was selected as the Bishop of Salamis on the island of Cyprus in 367. The bishop continued to live as a monk; he took special care of the poor; and he was revered by all around him as a holy man. Even during the persecutions by the Arian Emperor Valens in 371, Bishop Epiphanius was spared because of the esteem in which he was held by the people.

In his writings, Epiphanius undertook to uphold Orthodox doctrine. His *Ancoratus* (“well-anchored”) and *Panarin* (the “medicine chest”) refute many heretical views then commonly held. Reading the works of Origen, Bishop Epiphanius was shocked to find theological errors and he was very vocal in warning people about them. The Appolinarists received his censure, but his most ardent objections were for the Arians, which he condemned at every opportunity.

Epiphanius set out on a journey in 376 to visit some of the most important Church centers. In Antioch, he endeavored to persuade Bishop Vitalis to abandon his Apollinarist views. In Bethlehem, he tried to get St. Jerome to break communion with those around him because of what he perceived as “creeping error”. In Jerusalem, he preached against Origenism which he suspected the Patriarch of leaning toward. And in Constantinople, he seemed to side with the Emperor against the Patriarch, St. John Chrysostom, who was taking a more pastoral approach to dealing with a local problem.

St. Epiphanius may not have made many friends on this journey, but no one could dispute his Orthodoxy or his love of God and the Church. When his travels were over, he set sail for Cyprus but died on his return voyage in the year 403. Having lived more than 90 years; having embraced Christianity with great ardor; and having faithfully taught and defended the faith of the Apostles, St. Epiphanius could now take his rest in the Lord. May we seek his intercessions that we may also defend Orthodoxy and serve God faithfully in his Church.



# The Dating of Pascha

One of the most frequent questions asked by and to Orthodox Christians is “*Why does the Orthodox Church celebrate Easter on a different day than other Christians?*” This difference has a long history related to Christianity itself, the complex nature of calendars, and the use of astronomical data.



Almost from the very beginning of the existence of the Christian Church, the issue regarding the date of our Lord’s death and resurrection presented variations. Although the New Testament relates these events to the Jewish Passover, the details of this relationship are not clear. On the one hand, the tradition of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke identifies the Lord’s Last Supper with His disciples as a Passover meal. This would place the death of our Lord on the day after Passover. On the other hand, the tradition of the Gospel of John situates the death of our Lord at the very hour the paschal lambs were sacrificed on the day of Passover itself. This variation in the interpretation of the Scriptures led to two different practices. The one observed Pascha on the day of Passover, regardless of the day of the week, that is a fixed date. The other observed it on the Sunday following Passover. By the fourth century, the latter practice prevailed throughout the Church universally; nevertheless, differences continued to exist.

In response to this ongoing problem, the First Ecumenical Council convened at Nicaea in 325 AD, took up the issue. It determined that Pascha should be celebrated on the Sunday that follows the first full moon after the vernal equinox - the actual beginning of spring. If the full moon happens to fall on a Sunday, Pascha is observed the following Sunday. The day taken to be the invariable date of the vernal equinox is March 21. Hence, the determination of the date of Pascha is governed by a process dependent on the vernal equinox and the phase of the moon.

Another factor that figures prominently in determining the date of Pascha is the date of the Jewish Passover. Originally, Passover was celebrated on the first full moon after the vernal equinox. Christians, therefore, celebrated Pascha according to the same calculation - that is, on the first Sunday after the first full moon following the vernal equinox. The correlation between the date of Pascha and the date of Passover is clear. Our Lord’s death and resurrection coincided with Passover, thereby assuring a secure point of reference in time. This assurance lasted, however, only for a short time.



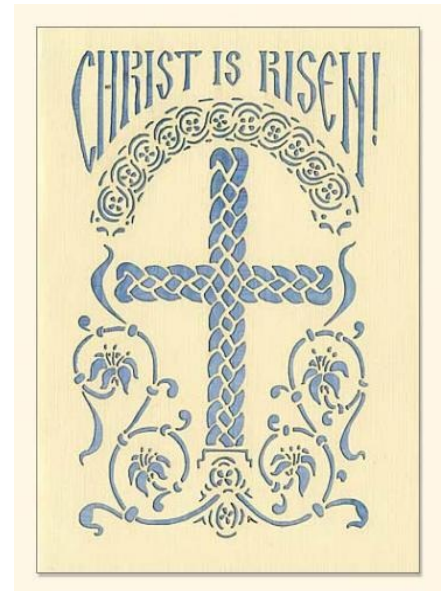
Events in Jewish history contributing to the dispersion of the Jews had, as a consequence, a departure from the way Passover was reckoned at the time of our Lord's death and resurrection. This caused the Passover to precede the vernal equinox in some years. It was, in fact, this anomaly that led to the condemnation reflected in Canon 1 of Antioch (ca. 330AD) and Canon 7 of the Holy Apostles (late 4<sup>th</sup> century) of those who celebrate Pascha "with the Jews." The purpose of this condemnation was to prevent Christians from taking into account the calculation of Passover in determining the date of Pascha.

Most Christians eventually ceased to regulate the observance of Pascha by the Jewish Passover. Their purpose, of course, was to preserve the original practice of celebrating Pascha following the vernal equinox. Thus, the Council of Nicaea sought to link the principles for determining the date of Pascha to the norms for calculating Passover during our Lord's lifetime.

Despite the intervention of the Council of Nicaea, certain differences in the technicalities of regulating the date of Pascha remained even thereafter. This resulted occasionally in local variation until, by the sixth century, a more secure mode of calculation based on astronomical data was universally accepted. This was an alternative to calculating Pascha by the Passover and consisted in the creation of so-called "paschal cycles." Each paschal cycle corresponded to a certain number of years. Depending upon the number of years in the cycle, the full moon occurred on the same day of the year as at the beginning of the cycle with some exceptions. The more accurate the cycle, the less frequent were the exceptions. In the east, a nineteen-year cycle was eventually adopted, whereas in the West, an eighty-four-year cycle. The use of two different paschal cycles inevitably gave way to differences between the Eastern and Western Churches regarding the observance of Pascha.

A further cause for these differences was the adoption by the Western Church of the Gregorian Calendar in 1582 to replace the Julian Calendar. This took place in order to adjust the discrepancy, then observed between the paschal cycle approach to calculating Pascha and the available astronomical data. The Orthodox Church continues to base its calculations for the date of Pascha on the Julian Calendar, which was in use at the time of the First Ecumenical Council. As such, it does not take into account the thirteen-day difference between the Julian and Gregorian Calendars.

Practically speaking, this means that Pascha may not be celebrated before April 3, which was March 21, the date of the vernal equinox, at the time of the First Ecumenical Council. In



other words, a difference of thirteen days exists between the accepted date for the vernal equinox then and now.



Consequently, it is the combination of these variables that accounts for the different dates of Pascha observed by the Orthodox Church and other Christian Churches. If anything, this review of the complexities surrounding the issue of the date of Pascha underscores the compelling need to revisit it with patience and openness. This topic has long been a concern of ecumenical dialogue. This was the spirit that predominated at a consultation on the matter held in Aleppo, Syria in 1997. One of its conclusions was that the underlying reason for the differences in the date of Pascha was the differences in the calendars and lunar tables (paschal cycles) employed rather than any theological disagreement between Eastern and Western Christians. In view of the fact that today both the Julian and Gregorian modes of calculation diverge from the astronomical data, it behooves all Christians to return to the norms determined by the Council of Nicaea, taking advantage of the most up-to-date astronomical data for the vernal equinox and the phase of the moon.

*By Dr. Lewis J. Patsavos, Professor of Canon Law, Holy Cross School of Theology. Reprinted from the website of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.*

## *Parish News*

We begin this month with the holiest week of the liturgical year. Time stands still as we follow Our Lord's steps from His triumphal entry into Jerusalem until his Crucifixion and glorious Resurrection on Easter. We will share a bountiful Paschal feast at the meal following the Liturgy on Saturday, May 4. The Liturgy on Sunday, May 5, will begin at 11:00AM (there will be no Matins).

The celebration of the Dedication of St. Gregory's building will be transferred from May 6 to Tuesday, May 14, at 7:30PM (Vespers at 7PM and potluck supper following the Mass).

We welcome our missionary, Maria Roeber, back to the U.S. after her two-year service through the Orthodox Christian Mission Center. She will be one of the speakers at the OCMC banquet on Tuesday, May 21, at 6:30PM at St. Katherine's Greek Orthodox Church in Falls Church, VA. We look forward to hearing about Maria's work in Tanzania.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>May 2013</h1>						
<i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i>			<b>1</b> Wednesday in Holy Week ( <i>trans. Ss. Philip &amp; James, Apostles, 1<sup>st</sup> c.</i> )  <i>Mass at 7:30pm W</i>	<b>2</b> Maundy Thursday ( <i>omit St. Athanasius, BCD, 373</i> )  <i>Mass at 7:30pm W</i>	<b>3</b> Good Friday ( <i>trans. Finding of the Holy Cross</i> )  <i>Liturgy at Noon B</i>	<b>4</b> Holy Saturday ( <i>omit St. Monica, Ma, 387</i> )  <i>Mass at 9pm V / W</i>
<b>5</b> Pascha: The Resurrection of Our Lord  <i>Mass at 11am, no Matins</i>  <i>W</i>	<b>6</b> Monday in the Octave of Easter  <i>(trans. Dedication of St. Gregory's; omit St. John before the Latin Gate)</i>	<b>7</b> Tuesday in the Octave of Easter  <i>(omit St. Alexis Toth, PrC, 1909 and St. John of Beverly BC, 721)</i>	<b>8</b> Wednesday in the Octave of Easter  <i>(omit Apparition of St. Michael the Archangel)</i>	<b>9</b> Thursday in the Octave of Easter  <i>(omit St. Gregory Nazianzen, BCD, 389)</i>	<b>10</b> Friday in the Octave of Easter  <i>(omit Ss. Gordian, 362 &amp; Epimachus, 250, Mm)</i>	<b>11</b> Saturday in the Octave of Easter  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>12</b> Low Sunday: First Sunday after Easter; St. Epiphanius, BC, c. 403  <i>W</i>	<b>13</b> Ss. Philip & James, Apostles, 1st c. ( <i>transferred</i> )	<b>14</b> Finding of the Holy Cross ( <i>transferred</i> ); St. Boniface of Tarsus, M, 290  <i>Mass at 7:30pm W</i>	<b>15</b> Dedication of St. Gregory's ( <i>transferred</i> ); St. Pachomius, Ab, 346	<b>16</b> of the Octave of Dedication; St. Brendan the Navigator, 577, Ab	<b>17</b> of the Octave of Dedication	<b>18</b> of the Octave of Dedication; St. Venantius, M, 250; St. Theodotus & comp., Mm, c. 303  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>19</b> Second Sunday after Easter; comm. Oct. of Dedication; St. Pudentiana, V, c.160 St. Dunstan, BC  <i>W</i>	<b>20</b> of the Octave of Dedication	<b>21</b> of the Octave of Dedication	<b>22</b> Octave Day of Dedication	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> St. Vincent of Lerins, C, 450	<b>25</b> St. Urban, PM, 230; St. Aldhelm, BC, 709  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>26</b> Third Sunday after Easter; St. Augustine of Canterbury, BC, 605; St. Eleutherius, PM, c. 189  <i>W</i>	<b>27</b> St. Bede CD, 735 St. John I, PM, 526  <i>(Memorial Day)</i>	<b>28</b> St. Germanus of Paris, BC, 576	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b> St. Felix I, PM, 274	<b>31</b> St. Petronilla, VM, c. 100	<b>1</b>  <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.