

✠ 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 the Great

*died 604AD
Feast Day ~ March 12*

Inside:

*St. Elizabeth the New
Martyr. 3
Parish News. 5
Human Love. 6
Calendar. insert*

Since all of Christ's statements contain commandments, why does he say of love, as if it were something special, *This is my commandment, that you love one another*? He says this because every commandment is about love, and all of them add up to one commandment. Whatever he commands is founded on love, just as the many branches of a tree come from one root. The branches, which are our good works, are lifeless unless they remain attached to the root of love.

It follows that our Lord's commandments are both many and one. They are many because there is a variety of good works, and they are one in their root, which is love. He himself often teaches us in the gospel how we are to practice this love. He tells us to love our friends in him, and our enemies for his sake. Those who love their friends in God and their enemies for God's sake possess true love.

Many people love their neighbor because of some blood relationship or with affection that is purely natural, and Scripture does not oppose this kind of love. But what we give freely and naturally is one thing, and what we give in obedience to the Lord's commandment is another. These people indisputably love their neighbor, but they don't attain the sublime reward of love since their love comes from a natural and not from a spiritual motive.

And so when the Lord said, *This is my commandment, that you love one another*, he added immediately, *just as I have loved you*. He means that we must love for the same reason that he has loved us.

My friends, when the devil draws us to take pleasure in passing things, he also stirs up a weak neighbor against us. This neighbor may plot to take away the very things we



love. In this case, our enemy is not concerned with doing away with our earthly possession; he wants to destroy our love. We may suddenly begin to burn with hatred, and while we try to be outwardly invulnerable, inwardly we are gravely wounded. As we defend our few external possessions we lose our great interior one, because when we love something passing we lose true love.

Anyone who takes away one of our external possessions is an enemy; if we begin to hate this enemy, our loss is not of anything external, but of something inside ourselves. And so whenever we suffer anything from a neighbor, we must be on our guard against the enemy hidden within. Our best way of overcoming this inner enemy is to love the one who is attacking us from without.

The unique and supreme proof of love is this: to love a person who opposes us. That is why Truth himself bore the suffering of the cross, and even bestowed his love on his persecutors. He said, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

Should we marvel that his living disciples love their enemies when their dying Master loved his? He expressed the extent of his love when he said that *no one has greater love than this, to lay down his life for his friends.* The Lord had come to die even for his enemies. He said that he would *lay down his life for his friends* to show us that when we are able to win over our enemies by our love for them, then even our persecutors are our friends.

But no one is persecuting us to the point of death, and so how can we prove that we love our friends? In fact there is something we ought to do during times of peace to make clear whether we are strong enough to die for the sake of love during a time of persecution. John, the author of the gospel I have been quoting from, says in his first letter: *Those who have this world's good and see a brother or sister in need, and who close their hearts, how does God's love dwell in them?* And John the Baptist says: *Let one who has two coats give to one who has none.* Will those who refuse to give up a coat for the sake of God during a time of peace give up their lives during a persecution? You must cultivate the virtue of love during times of tranquility by showing mercy, and then your love will be unconquerable in a time of chaos. First you must learn to give up your possessions for almighty God, and then yourself.

You are my friends... how great is our Creator's mercy! We were unworthy servants and he calls us friends! How great is our human dignity, that we should be friends of God! Now listen to what this dignity costs: *if you do what I command you.* And we have already heard that *this is my commandment, that you love one another.*

St. Elizabeth the New Martyr

Feast Day ~ July 5

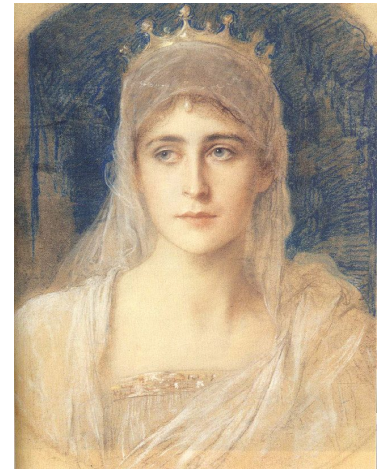
In this turned-upside-down world of ours, God sometimes provides us with examples of holiness in seemingly unlikely places. We are given a saint - an advocate in Heaven - whose path to sanctity was unusual.

The household of a German Grand Duke and his wife, a princess, would rarely be thought to provide the proper atmosphere for spiritual growth. But the family of Grand Duke Louis IV of Hesse and Princess Alice (a daughter of England's Queen Victoria) was just that. Their children learned to love God through the devout Protestant religion of their parents. Despite being surrounded by wealth and privilege, they learned to care for the poor and needy.

Fourteen-year-old Elizabeth was the only survivor in this family of an epidemic of diphtheria, and she now came under the care of her grandmother, Queen Victoria, for a time. Always anxious to find suitable marriages for her large family, the Queen made certain that Elizabeth became acquainted with all those who were eligible, often cousins. Ella, as she was called by her family, met and fell in love with Sergei Aleksandrovich Romanov, the brother of the Czar of Russia. At their marriage, Elizabeth became a Grand Duchess and her life now centered around the imperial court, where - even more than in her native country - she was surrounded by vast wealth and privilege, a life of formal ceremonies, parties, balls, and attendance at the ballet. When Ella's sister, Alexandra, married Nicholas, the heir to the Russian throne (and nephew of Grand Duke Sergei), the two sisters were happily reunited.

In her new life, Elizabeth was also surrounded by the beauty of Orthodox worship. No one forced her to convert from her Protestant faith but after seven years of observation, she asked to be chrismated. Her letters to her father explaining her decision show that she was determined that he not think the outward beauty and majesty of Orthodox churches and services had "charmed" her, but that she had come to believe the truth of Orthodoxy inwardly.

From the beginning of her life in Russia, Elizabeth had continued her practice of charitable works. The needs of the poor were great, and the duchess felt a responsibility to do everything she could to help. Having no children of their own, The Duke and Duchess became the adoptive parents of children of one of Sergei's relatives who were orphaned at an early age.



A tragedy even more horrible than the one she had experienced when she was orphaned as a teenager occurred on February 18, 1905. Grand Duke Sergei was assassinated by a revolutionary bomber as he was being driven in a carriage. Elizabeth went to the scene of the murder as quickly as she could and all were amazed at the strength God gave her to recover the pieces of her husband's body and to attend to the needs of the wounded coachman. The bomber was caught and sent to prison to await execution and Elizabeth even visited him to offer him forgiveness. She took a copy of the Gospels with her and urged him to read them and repent of his evil deed. There is no evidence that he followed her admonition.



As many widows had done from the beginning of Christianity, Elizabeth adjusted to her new state in life by helping others. She sold her jewelry and opened the Martha and Mary Home in Moscow to provide charity to the poor and orphans. In 1905, she became a nun, and with seventeen other women, formed the Sisters of Love and Mercy. Soon, the nuns opened a hospital and expanded their charitable work.

But such Christian endeavors on the part of royalty were not enough to prevent the violence of the Revolution in Russia. The monarchy had to be abolished, according to the revolutionaries. Elizabeth, along with one of her nuns, Barbara, and members and associates of the royal family were exiled to Yekaterinburg and Alapaevsk, and were then thrown into an abandoned mineshaft. Grenades were thrown into the mine to kill those inside, but the murderers told of hearing hymn singing for some time afterward. Elizabeth spent her last breath singing praises to God.

When the royalist White Army overtook the area for awhile, some of the relics were recovered from the mineshaft. Elizabeth and Sergei had provided funds for the building of the Church of St. Mary Magdalene in Jerusalem, and her relics were now smuggled out of Russia and sent there (via China) for burial. A convent was founded at this church and another in Moscow, where a portion of her relics was sent.

How many people, born to privilege and wealth, would be concerned for the plight of the poor? How many would greet the murder of a spouse with forgiveness for the murderer? How many would give up their worldly possessions in order to help the needy? How many would face their own murder by singing the hymns of the Church? These are the actions of a holy woman, one who has sufficiently risen above the passions of the world to be called a saint. Elizabeth was glorified first by the Russian

Orthodox Church outside Russia in 1981, the following year by the whole Russian Orthodox Church, and now venerated by all Orthodox Christians. May St. Elizabeth, the New Martyr, pray for us that we may follow her example of holiness.

Sources: *Recently Canonized Orthodox Saints: Their Lives and Icons* by Dr. Jane M. DeVyver; *Ella's Story: the Duchess Who Became a Saint*, by Maria Tobias; *on-line article* via Orthodox Wiki.

Parish News

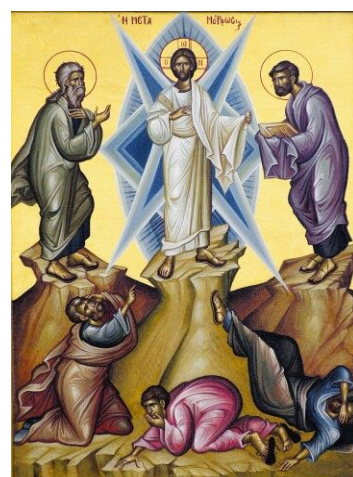
We welcome Sarah Sparks into the Holy Orthodox Church and to the family of St. Gregory's. Sarah was Chrismated on Pentecost and took *Photini* - the Samaritan woman at the well - as her patron saint.

Congratulations to Paul and Allyson Higgins, who were married at St. Gregory's on June 27 in a wonderful celebration. Thanks to all who prepared the reception. The renewal of their vows took place at St. Michael Roman Catholic Church, Allyson's parish church, on June 29. We pray for them as they begin their new life together.

Thanks to all who participated in the parish work day. Many people helped to clean, paint, and generally "spruce up", fueled by pizza. The results of the work are very visible and appreciated.

We have been informed by the Archdiocese that our parish has been transferred from the Diocese of New York and Washington (directly under Metropolitan PHILIP) to the Diocese of Charleston and the East under Bishop THOMAS. Since we have had visitations by Sayedna THOMAS a number of times, this will not be a major change for us. He and Bishop JOHN (the overseer of the Western Rite vicariate parishes) will share episcopal responsibility for us. We are greatly blessed by our godly bishops.

The annual Parish Life Conference for the Eastern Dioceses was held in Breinigsville, PA, July 3-7, hosted by St. Paul Orthodox Church in Emmaus. Fr. Nicholas, Kh. Rebecca, and Reader Simon (Karl Tsuji) attended. Western Rite Vespers, after seven years considered an expected part of the conference, was offered by the four Western Rite parishes of the region on Thursday, July 4. Fr. Nicholas will also attend the bi-annual Archdiocesan Convention in Houston, Texas, July 21-28. This is an opportunity for our whole Archdiocesan family to gather for worship, fellowship, and business.



In the month of August, we will celebrate two major feast days in the liturgical year: Our Lord's Transfiguration will be celebrated on the Eve, August 5, with Vespers at 7PM and Liturgy at 7:30. The Dormition (Assumption) of the Theotokos will be celebrated with Vespers and Liturgy on Wednesday, August 14. A pot-luck supper will follow each of these services. Saturday Vespers will be suspended for the month of August and will resume on Saturday, September 7.

Human Love

by Mother Raphaela



God is the Lord and has revealed Himself to us! [Ps. 117/18:27] This statement is the ancient yet ever new Judeo-Christian response and challenge to American mass insanity. It shows the God of revelation reaching out as surely as He has reached out to humanity and the whole of His Creation from the beginning of time in a way that has given full, positive meaning to the statement, “God is love.”

The means of His self-revelation are as many as his creatures. *Ever since the creation of the world His invisible nature, namely, His eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. [Romans 1:20] He is not far from each one of us, for ‘in Him we live and move and have our being...[Acts 17:27-28]*

It seems that some people have a direct experience of the Living God, whom from that time on they cannot deny no matter how much others may question their sanity, and whom they can only see as the Most Important Person and the Greatest Love in their lives. Others, meeting or hearing of such people and their experience, find themselves in some way entering into that same experience. Many of them would also claim a direct experience of God, mediated through that other person. The situations in which these encounters with the Living God occur are as varied as the people who experience them. Some may be headed into a situation where they plan to act in a certain way, only to find themselves knocked off their high horses and led toward a completely different course of action. Some may be looking at the early blossoms of a fruit tree, and in that moment be given an overwhelming realization of God's creative and renewing love and reality. Some may be called to read a passage in a book and find their own thoughts interrupted with what they can only call a revelation of God's presence that goes far beyond the meaning of the worlds before them. Some find themselves seemingly trapped

at the end of a one-way, dead-end street, only to experience God's opening to them what seems a new lifetime filled with love.

Here, for the most part, we are speaking of the experience of **H**adults. The Christian Church has canonized many of them as the great penitents. They seemed headed in a certain less than divine direction until their lives were turned around by God and led to a realization of the state they were in. They came to see their need for repentance, forgiveness and healing so that they could respond adequately to Him and reveal to others the great goodness, truth and love He had shown them. These men and women provide the greatest hope for those who see their own lives badly warped by their responses to damaging people or situations.

They have left more than an account of their experiences of God for us. Their experience has led them to great wisdom, and their words and writings, their teaching about reality, open up a whole dimension largely lost to human society. They speak of a love that has not left the universe but permeates it and has permeated it from before the dawn of time. They speak of a love vast enough to embrace the far reaches of outer space, yet delicate enough to measure the distances between the bundles of energy that form the atomic structure of what we know as material reality. They speak of a love prodigal enough to have spent thousands - millions - of years as if they were mere days preparing the earth before we came into being, not willing for a single sparrow - or dinosaur - to fall without purpose. They speak of this Love revealing itself most fully in the man Jesus, walking among men and teaching them by His words and actions that *Greater love has no man that this: that a man lay down his life for his friends* [John 15:13]; that God Himself *so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, so that whoever believes in Him may not perish, but have everlasting life* [John 3:16], that He *did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that through Him the world might be saved.* [John 3:17]

This is the Love we call human. It is the love that raises men and women above their merely animal instincts. It is a love that possesses an ever-renewed vision of a life without end; a Kingdom not of this world. It is a love that claims to experience that which is beyond human experience, and to transform even the most horrible and seemingly hopeless situations into steps leading to love, freedom and joy. It is a love that claims the ability to face and accept what is true no matter how it presents itself.

Reprinted from Living in Christ: Essays on the Christian Life by an Orthodox Nun (Mother Raphaela, Abbess of Holy Myrrhbearers Monastery in Otego, NY). Not all footnotes are reprinted.



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>July 2013</h1>					<i>Parish Life Conference in Emmaus, PA, July 3-7</i>	<i>Archdiocesan Convention in Houston, TX, July 21-28</i>
<i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i>	1 Nativity of St. John the Baptist (transferred)	2 Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary; St. John Maximovitch BC, 1966	3 Ss. Peter & Paul, Apostles, 1st c. (transferred); St. Leo II, PC, 683	4 Corpus Christi; commemoration of St. Paul the Apostle; of the Oct. of Ss. Peter & Paul (Independence Day)	5 of the Octave of Ss. Peter & Paul	6 of the Octave of Ss. Peter & Paul <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
7 Sunday in the Oct. of Ss. Peter & Paul; Second Sunday after Pentecost; Ss. Cyril & Methodius, Bb CC, 9th c. <i>W</i>	8 of the Octave of Ss. Peter & Paul; St. Kilian of Wurzburg, BM, 689	9 of the Octave of Ss. Peter & Paul	10 of the Octave of Ss. Peter & Paul; Seven Holy Brothers, Mm, c. 165; St. Joseph of Damascus, 1860	11 Solemnity of St. Benedict, Ab, c. 540; St. Pius I, PM, c. 154	12 Ss. Nabor & Felix, Mm, 303	13 St. Anacleus, PM, 1st c. <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
14 Third Sunday after Pentecost <i>W</i>	15 St. Vladimir of Kiev, KC, 1015; St. Henry, C, 1024	16 Our Lady of Einsiedeln	17 St. Alexis, C, 5th c.	18 St. Sergius, Ab, 1392; Ss. Symphorosa & her Seven Sons, Mm, c. 138	19 St. Seraphim of Sarov, PrC, 1833	20 St. Elias the Prophet, 9th c. BC; St. Margaret of Antioch, VM, 304 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
21 Fourth Sunday after Pentecost; St. Praxedes of Rome, V, 2nd c. <i>G</i>	22 St. Mary Magdalene, Penitent Ma, 1st c.	23 St. John Cassian, Ab, 433; St. Appollinaris, BM, 1st c.; St. Liborius, BC, 397	24 Vigil of St. James St. Christina, VM; St. Romanus & David, Mm, 1015	25 St. James the Greater, Apostle, 44; St. Christopher, C, 251	26 Ss. Joachim & Anne, Parents of the BVM, 1st c.; St. Jacob Netsvetov, PrC, 1864	27 St. Panteleimon, c. 305 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
28 Fifth Sunday after Pentecost; Ss. Nazarius, Celsus Mm, St. Victor, PM & Innocent PC, 5th c. <i>G</i>	29 St. Martha of Bethany, V, 1st c.	30 Ss. Abdon & Sennen, Mm, c. 303	31 St. Germanus of Auxerre, BC, 448			

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

Coffee Hour follows Sunday Mass.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>August 2013</h1>						
<p><i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i></p>				<p>1 St. Peter's Chains; Holy Maccabees, Mm, c. 160 BC; St. Ethelwold, BC, 984</p>	<p>2 St. Stephen I, PM, 257</p>	<p>3 Finding of St. Stephen the Protomartyr, 415; St. Nicodemus, M, 1st. c. <i>No Vespers today</i></p>
<p>4 Sixth Sunday after Pentecost G</p>	<p>5 Our Lady of the Snows (435); St. Oswald, KM, 642 <i>Mass at 7:30pm</i> W</p>	<p>6 Transfiguration of Our Lord; Ss. Sixtus II PM, Felicissimus, 285</p>	<p>7 St. Donatus of Arezzo, BM, 362</p>	<p>8 Ss. Cyriacus, Largus & Smaragdus, Mm, 304</p>	<p>9 Vigil of St. Laurence; St. Romanus, M, 258</p>	<p>10 St. Laurence, Deacon M, 258 <i>No Vespers today</i></p>
<p>11 Seventh Sunday after Pentecost; Ss. Tiburtius & Susanna, Mm, 3rd c.; St. Philomena, VM, c. 304 G</p>	<p>12</p>	<p>13 St. Maximus the Confessor, CD, 662; Ss. Hippolytus & comp., Mm, 235</p>	<p>14 Vigil of the Assumption; St. Eusebius, PrC, c. 300 <i>Mass at 7:30pm</i> W</p>	<p>15 Assumption (Dormition) of the Blessed Virgin Mary</p>	<p>16 of the Octave of the Assumption</p>	<p>17 of the Octave of the Assumption; Octave Day of St. Laurence <i>No Vespers today</i></p>
<p>18 Eighth Sunday after Pentecost; St. Helena, 330; of the Octave of the Assumption; St. Agapitus, M, 272 G</p>	<p>19 of the Oct. of the Assumption; St. Constantine, C, 337</p>	<p>20 of the Octave of the Assumption</p>	<p>21 of the Octave of the Assumption</p>	<p>22 Octave Day Assumption; Ss. Timothy, M, Hippolytus, BM & Symphorian, M, 3rd c.</p>	<p>23 Vigil of St. Bartholomew</p>	<p>24 St. Bartholomew, Apostle, 1st c. <i>No Vespers today</i></p>
<p>25 Ninth Sunday after Pentecost; St. Hilda, V, 680 G</p>	<p>26 St. Zephyrinus, PM, 219</p>	<p>27 St. Caesarius of Arles, BC, 542</p>	<p>28 St. Augustine of Hippo, BCD, 430; St. Moses the Black, C, 405</p>	<p>29 Beheading of St. John the Baptist; St. Sabina, M, c. 125</p>	<p>30 Ss. Felix & Adauctus, Mm, 304; St. Fiacre the Hermit, C, 670</p>	<p>31 St. Aidan Lindisfarne, BC, 651 <i>No Vespers today</i></p>