

✠ 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 Saint Augustine of Hippo

*died c. 430AD
Feast Day ~
28 August*

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Concerning that time it was written: *“And of Sion it shall be reported that he was born in her, and the Most high shall stablish her.”* O how blessed is the omnipotence of him that was born! Yea, how blessed is the glory of him that came from heaven to earth! Whilst he was yet in his Mother’s womb, he was saluted by John the Baptist. And when he was presented in the temple, he was recognized by the old man Simeon, a worthy who was full of years, proved and crowned. This ancient one, as soon as he knew him, worshiped and said: *“Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.”*

He had lingered in the world to see the birth of him who made the world. The old man knew the Child, and in that Child became a child himself, for in the love wherewith he regarded the Father of all, he felt his own years to be but as yesterday. The ancient Simeon bare in his arms the new-born Christ, and all the while, Christ ruled and upheld the old man. Simeon had been told by the Lord that he should not taste of death before he had seen the birth of the Lord’s Christ. Now that Christ was born, all the old man’s wishes on earth were fulfilled. He that was come into a decrepit world now also came to an old man.

Simeon wished not to remain long in the world, but with great desire he had desired to see Christ in the world, for he had sung with the prophet: *“Shew us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation.”* And now at last, that ye might know how that, to his joy, his prayer was granted, he said: *“Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.”* The Prophets have sung that the Maker of heaven and earth would converse on earth with men. An angel hath declared that the Creator of flesh and spirit would come in the flesh. The unborn John, yet in the

womb, hath saluted the unborn Savior yet in the womb. The old man Simeon hath seen God as a little Child.

A Feast of Many Names

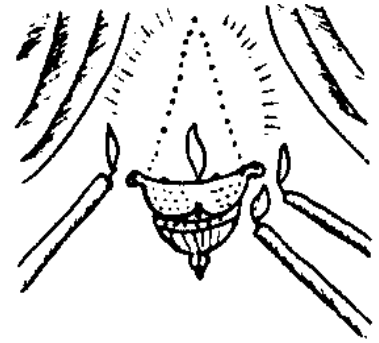


The Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple appears on the calendars of feast days in all Orthodox traditions (Greek, Armenian, Coptic, etc.), and that of Roman Catholics, Anglicans and some Protestants. The first historical evidence of its observance is from the pilgrim nun, Egeria, who visited the Holy Land in the first half of the 4th century. The Jerusalem Church, because it contained the actual places where most of the events of our Lord's life on earth occurred, celebrated these events with great ceremony. The event of this feast - which took place 40 days after the birth of Christ - was the Purification of St. Mary after childbirth and the presenting of her male child to the elders in the Temple as required by Jewish law. At the time of Nun Egeria, the celebration took place on February 14, as the birth of Christ was then combined with the celebration of Epiphany (January 6) and included a procession to the Church of the Resurrection (Holy Sepulchre). By the end of the 4th century, the Roman tradition of celebrating Christmas on December 25 had spread to other parts of the Christian world so that the Presentation was moved to February 2 in Jerusalem.

Called the "Meeting of the Lord" by the Greeks and the "Coming of the Son of God into the Temple" by the Armenians, the feast was celebrated in Antioch by the early 6th century and was introduced to the entire Eastern part of the Roman Empire by mid-century by the Emperor Justinian I. Our patron, St. Gregory the Great, who was Pope of Rome from 590 - 604, may have brought this feast day to the West, as he had earlier served in Constantinople (579-585) as the Papal ambassador to the Emperor. The first written evidence of a Western feast for this day is in the 7th century and it is designated as a feast of St. Mary, the "Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary". A procession does not appear to be a part of the celebration, but the celebration includes the basic elements of the scriptural story: the fulfilling of the Jewish law, the offering of the two doves, the declaration of Simeon (and his singing of the *nunc dimittis*), the prophecy of Anna.

Gradually, this feast came to be celebrated in the entire Western Church. By the 11th century, a procession with candles became common, while the antiphon composed by St.

John of Damascus is sung: “*O Sion, adorn thy bride-chamber, and receive Christ the King: greet Mary, who is the gate of heaven: for she beareth the King of the glory of the new light: she remaineth a Virgin, yet beareth in her hands a Son begotten before the morning star: whom Simeon took into his arms, declaring to the nations that he is the Lord of life and death, and Savior of the world.*”



Because of the emphasis on Christ as the light of the world and the representation of this with candles, the celebrations in the West began to include the blessing of candles which would be used in the church for the remainder of the year, hence another name for the feast day: “Candlemas”. In England, in the Middle Ages, people brought candles from home to be blessed at this service as well.

As we celebrate this feast day with many names, we give thanks to God for sending us his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to be a “light to enlighten the Gentiles” and to show us the way to salvation.

St. Gregory II *Feast Day ~ February 11*

Pope Gregory II shares many characteristics with his namesake (and our patron), Pope St. Gregory I. He was born in the year 669 of a noble and wealthy family and his rise to the papacy followed a typical pattern. As a young man, he was ordained subdeacon and given responsibility for the treasury of the then Pope Sergius I (687-701). Advancing to the dignity of deacon, he was given charge of the Vatican library.

Later, Gregory was made secretary to Pope Constantine and accompanied him to Constantinople in 711. There Gregory handled negotiations regarding the disputed decisions of the Quinisext Council. This Council (held in 692 to make disciplinary canons following the fifth and sixth Ecumenical Councils) had not been attended by any Western representatives and contained several disputed provisions: the prohibition against celebrating Mass (rather than the Pre-sanctified Liturgy) on weekdays in Lent, of omitting the use of “Alleluia” in Lent, of fasting on some Saturdays, of showing Christ as the “Lamb of God” in art, and particularly of requiring celibacy of all deacons, priests and bishops (one which even the West was not able to enforce until many centuries later). Pope Sergius had refused to sign the

decrees of this council, so the talks which Gregory participated in were important for reaching some kind of compromise which the Church in the West could agree to. The Emperor, Justinian II, eventually proposed that any of the canons which violated long-standing practice in the West could be ignored by the churches there. (Although this compromise was not accepted by most in the East at that time, a more genial approach exists now, and those of us who are Western Rite Orthodox have been given permission to continue most of those long-standing Western practices.)



Dealing with such contentions helped to prepare Gregory for his future as the Pope, which he became in 715 on the death of Constantine. As was true for the earlier Pope Gregory, this pope had responsibilities far beyond the spiritual and theological realm. He first had to deal with flooding in Rome due to the broken walls of the city and the needed repairs, while at the same time responding to the Monothelite views of Patriarch John VI of Constantinople. He had to decree that Thursdays in Lent were fasting days like every other day, since some had not fasted because the pagan followers of Jupiter fasted on that day.

Pope Gregory, like his papal ancestor, was concerned for evangelization beyond the boundaries of what had been the Roman Empire. He helped to establish churches in Bavaria with local leadership. In 718, the Anglo-Saxon monk-missionary Wilfrid, came to him requesting his support for work among the German people. Gregory changed the monk's name to Boniface and gave his permission for this work. When the mission effort showed success, Pope Gregory made Boniface a bishop in 722 and we now venerate him as St. Boniface, Apostle of Germany.

Gregory had further contact with the Anglo-Saxon world when Ine, the King of Wessex, gave up his rule in order to travel on pilgrimage to Rome to visit the tombs of the saints and to spend the rest of his life there.

Also like Pope Gregory I, Gregory II was interested in promoting monasticism and restoring monasteries that had been destroyed or damaged by the attacks of the Lombards. He gave his family mansion in Rome to be a monastery, dedicated to St. Agatha.

In Gregory's lifetime, the political stability of Rome was constantly challenged by the Lombards, which Gregory managed to deal with diplomatically. There were also disputes with the Emperor in Constantinople, particularly after Emperor Leo raised property taxes in Rome to help pay for the war against the Arab Moslems. The money was needed to pay for food in

Rome, however, so the pope refused to pay the additional tax. In 726, Leo began his iconoclastic campaign, and this resulted in further unrest among the Roman people and the imperial exarch in Ravenna. Plots were made to revolt against the Emperor, but Gregory urged restraint. However, he was not quiet on the issue of iconoclasm. He wrote to the Emperor denouncing his right, as a political leader, to make doctrinal rulings for the Church and he ridiculed his claim that the people worshiped “stones and walls and boards.” He declared that even little school children laughed at that idea!

Leo responded by appointing a new exarch for Ravenna, Eutychius, who was instructed to kill Gregory and other Roman leaders. This plot was foiled but such unrest between the Romans, the Lombards, and the Byzantines continued for the remainder of the pope’s life. Pope Gregory II died on February 11, 731, having served God and his Church faithfully in a time of great turmoil. After his burial in St. Peter’s basilica (a tomb which can no longer be found), he was declared a saint by those who knew and loved him. He is venerated on February 11, the day of his heavenly birthday. May we, who also see political and religious turmoil, take comfort in the intercessions of this saint. *Holy Gregory, pray for us.*

Parish News

We begin the month of February with the Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple on February 2. This year, the feast falls on a Sunday, so we will all participate in the celebration of this event which contains so much meaningful symbolism. At the end of the Liturgy, we will also be invited to receive the St. Blaise blessing of throats (St. Blaise day is February 3), especially appropriate for this time of year.

At the Annual Parish meeting on January 19, the elections for Parish Council members resulted in the re-election of Patrick Woolley and the return to the Council of Dave Caldwell. We look to the Parish Council for attention to our church building and treasury and the activities of our parish family which grow out of our worship and study and enhance our lives as Christians.

Our outreach efforts of the past Advent and Christmas seasons resulted in a collection of 144 pounds of canned and packaged food for the Food for the Hungry program. This food was donated to Martha’s Kitchen. Thanks to the Green family for delivering it. We also provided the items needed for 106 Health



Kits donated to International Orthodox Christian Charities for its work in disaster areas around the world. Thanks to Jennifer Caldwell for organizing this effort.

The women of the parish have scheduled a tea in the parish hall for February 22 at 3:00PM. All women of the parish are urged to participate in this opportunity for further fellowship.

The Chair of St. Peter at Antioch

by St. Leo the Great



He who was the first in apostolic dignity was the first to confess the Lord. And when he said “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” Jesus made answer, ‘Blessed art thou.’ That is to say, Blessed art thou, because my Father hath taught thee; earthly opinion hath not deceived thee, but heavenly inspiration hath taught thee; not flesh and blood, but he whose only-begotten Son I am hath revealed me unto thee.

And, saith he, as my Father hath manifested to thee my divinity, so I make known to thee thy principdom: For thou art Peter; that is, Even as I am the inviolable rock, (I the Corner-Stone, who make both one, I the Foundation besides which there can be laid none other,) so thou too art a rock, established by my power, and I share with thee the powers which are proper to me. Upon this rock I will build my Church; that is, Upon this strength I will construct an eternal temple, founded upon the firmness of this faith.

This confession shall not be prevailed against by the gates of Hell, nor bound by the chains of death, for these are the words of life. And so he said to that most blessed Peter: I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. This abundance of power verily hath also passed to the other Apostles, and the rights of this decree hath come down to all the rulers of the church. But it was not for nought that what is meant for all should be committed to one only, for it is entrusted specially to Peter because he is held up before all the rulers of the church as an example.

The feast of the Chair of St. Peter at Antioch is on February 22. St. Peter was the first Bishop of Antioch before becoming the Bishop of Rome where he was martyred.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>February 2014</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 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
2 Presentation of Our Lord; Candlemas; Fourth Sunday after Epiphany <i>W</i>	3 St. Blaise, BM, c. 316; St. Anskar of Hamburg, BC, 865	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 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
9 Fifth Sunday after Epiphany; St. Cyril of Alexandria, BCD, 444; St. Apollonia, VM, c. 248 <i>G</i>	10 St. Scholastica, V, 543	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 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
16 Septuagesima; Sixth Sunday after Epiphany; St. Nicholas of Japan, BC, 1912 <i>V</i>	17	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. <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
23 Sexagesima <i>V</i>	24 St. Matthias, Apostle, 1st c.;	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	1 St. David of Wales, BC, 544 <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.