

# ✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

March, 2014- Volume XIX, Issue 3

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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 Saint Caesarius of Arles*

*died 542AD  
Feast Day ~ August 27*

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**B**ehold, dearest brethren, through the mercy of God the season of Lent is approaching. Therefore I beseech you, beloved, with God's help let us celebrate these days salutary for bodies and healing for the soul, in so holy and spiritual a manner that the observance of a holy Lent may lead to progress for us and not judgment. For if we lead a careless life, involving ourselves in too many occupations, refusing to observe chastity, not applying ourselves to fasting and vigils and prayers, neither reading Sacred Scripture ourselves nor willingly listening to others read it, the very remedies are changed into wounds for us. As a result of this we shall have judgment, where we could have had a remedy.

**F**or this reason, dearest brethren, *Have no love for the world, nor the things the world affords* [I John 2:15], because *the world with its seductions is passing away*. [I John 2:17] What, then, remains in a man except what each one has stored up in the treasury of his conscience for the salvation of his soul by reading or prayer or the performance of good works? For miserable pleasure, still more wretched lust and dissipation, through a passing sweetness prepare eternal bitterness; but abstinence, vigils, prayer, and fasting lead to the delights of paradise through the briefest hardships. The Truth does not lie when He says in the Gospel: *Straight and narrow is the road that leads to life, and how few there are who find it!* [Matt. 7:14] Nor for long is there rejoicing on the broad way, and not for long is there labor on the straight and narrow road. After brief sadness those who travel the latter receive eternal life, while those who travel the former, after short joy, suffer endless punishment.

**F**or this reason, dearest brethren, by fasting, reading, and prayer in these forty days we ought to store up for our souls provisions, as it were, for the whole year. Although through the mercy of God you frequently and devoutly hear



the divine lessons throughout the entire year, still during these days we ought to rest from the winds and the sea of this world by taking refuge, as it were, in the haven of Lent, and in the quiet of silence to receive the divine lessons in the receptacle of our heart. Devoting ourselves to God out of love for eternal life, during these days let us with all solicitude strive to repair and compose in the little ship of our soul whatever throughout the year has been broken or destroyed or damaged or ruined by many storms, that is, by the waves of sins. And since it is necessary for us to endure the storms and tempests of this world while we are still in this frail body, as often as the enemy wills to lead us astray by means of the roughest storms or to deceive us by the most voluptuous pleasures, with God's help may he always find us prepared against him.

If in accord with your usual practice you both willingly heed and strive faithfully to fulfill, dearest brethren, the truths which we are suggesting for the salvation of all by presuming upon your obedience, you will celebrate Easter with joy and will happily come to eternal life. May He Himself deign to grant this, who together with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

## *St. Joseph the Betrothed*

### *Feast Day ~ March 19*

Like so many saints who have stepped onto the world's "stage" for a brief period and then disappeared from the records, St. Joseph is one about whom we have only the bare facts. He appears in Holy Scripture from prior to the birth of our Lord until the 12-year-old Jesus is found in the Temple. Then he disappears from the pages of history. It is obvious that God chose Joseph for a particular role in the story of our salvation, he played his part with mercy and kindness, and then he was gone. As a devout Jew, Joseph had been waiting in expectation for the coming of the Messiah, and the part that he was asked to play at the coming of the Savior was of utmost importance in our salvation story.

The Church acknowledges that the most important thing which St. Joseph provided in these few years was his protection. The Blessed Virgin Mary was protected from shame and punishment; both Mary and the child Jesus were protected from cruel rulers; the truth about the God-man Jesus was protected from a too early revelation to the world; and above all, the fact that God had taken our form upon himself was hidden from the Evil One.

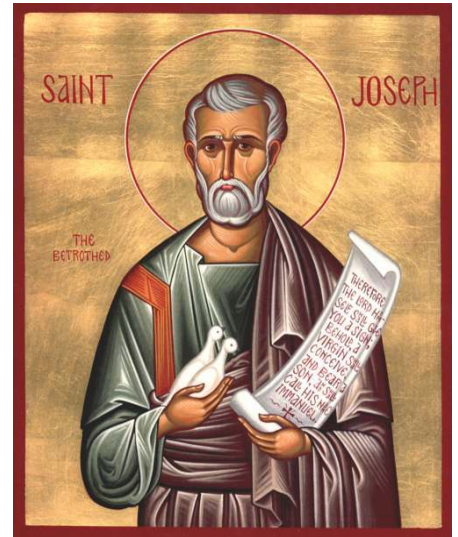
Among other important characteristics of St. Joseph, St. Matthew's Gospel begins with his family lineage. Joseph was a descendant of David, the great King, and Jesus - as the adopted son of Joseph - inherited this honor but is a greater King. St. Luke's Gospel fills in another detail of the story - that because of Joseph's family connection to David, who was of the city of Bethlehem, he and Mary had to travel to that city to register in the census that was being taken and that is where the birth of Christ took place. This fulfilled one of the prophecies of old: *And you, O Bethlehem, House of Ephrathah, though you are fewest in number among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to me the One to be ruler of Israel.* [Micah 5:1]

St. Matthew also tells us that Joseph was a "just" man. But if she had been merely seeking justice, Joseph would have reported Mary's pregnancy to the Jewish authorities and she could have been subjected to a severe and humiliating punishment. Instead, he showed mercy by deciding to seek a divorce privately in order to spare her such shame. But God intervened and sent one of his messengers - an angel - to assure Joseph that the child Mary was carrying was of the Holy Spirit and would *save his people from their sins.* [Matt. 1:21] Joseph, being not only a just and merciful man but also a devoutly religious man who believed the words of the angel, took Mary to be his wife.

Perhaps Joseph now realized his vocation as the protector of the Virgin Mary and her Child. He saved her and the Child when Herod the King, in jealous anger, had all Jewish boys under the age of two murdered. They fled to Egypt after Joseph received another message from an angel in a dream. This, too, fulfilled a prophecy: *Out of Egypt I called My Son* [Hosea 11:1]

When they were finally able to settle down as a family, it was in Nazareth to avoid being under another cruel ruler, Archelaus. This, too, was given to Joseph as a warning by an angel of God in a dream. There Joseph pursued his occupation as a carpenter in Nazareth and taught his foster-son the trade. Hence, Jesus was ridiculed by those of his own hometown: *Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary?* [Mark 6:3a]

As the head of a good Jewish household, Joseph made certain that the requirements of the law were fulfilled. Jesus was circumcised and named on his eighth day and He was presented in the Temple forty days after His birth when Simeon and Anna proclaimed amazing things about this Child. Scripture says that both *Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him.* [Luke 2:33] The family also traveled to Jerusalem



for Passover and it was there, when Jesus was twelve years old that He stayed behind in the Temple when His parents left for home and, after three days, was found by them speaking with the religious leaders. We are told that they then returned to Nazareth where Christ was *subject to them* [Luke 2:51].



**H**ow much we can learn from holy Joseph! By following his example, we can learn to listen for the voice of God in our hearts, giving us direction for our lives - direction that we, living in the ways of the world, would not think of. Whether we experience God's direction through the dramatic appearance of an angel in a dream or by quietly praying, meditating, and listening, we should be like St. Joseph and believe that God has a plan for our lives and cares about the decisions and actions that we take.

**W**e should also remember that we - members of Christ's body, the Church - are in the same royal lineage as St. Joseph. We are inheritors of the promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; to King David and all who followed. We are the New Israel, partakers of the New Covenant. As such, we will not only seek justice but always show mercy; we will remember that God's ways are greater than man's and that God's laws should always be interpreted through the love of Christ. If we look to St. Joseph for an example, we will observe the practices of our faith and teach our children to do so, and we will perform our earthly occupations with humility.

**H**oly Tradition tells us that Joseph was an "old" man, a widower whose children with his first wife, Salome, are Jesus' "brothers and sisters" referred to in Matthew 13:55, 56 and Mark 6:3. His icon often shows him holding the two turtle-doves which were offered at the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple and he is depicted in the Nativity icon being tempted by the Devil to doubt Mary's virginity. Since the tenth century, March 19 has been observed as the feast day for St. Joseph in the West; on Eastern calendars, St. Joseph is honored with his ancestor, King David, on the Sunday following the Nativity or variously, December 16 or 26.

**M**ay St. Joseph the Betrothed - a just, righteous, and devout believer; the protector of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Child Jesus - intercede for us. *Holy Joseph, pray for us.*

*Sources: Orthodox Saints, Volume Four, by George Poulos; Prologue From Ochrid, Part Four, by St. Nikolai Velimirovic; The Orthodox Study Bible; pamphlet by Fr. Nicholas Solak, published by St. Vladimir's Seminary; article from Orthodox Wiki; article from the website of Fr. Serfes.*

We begin the season of Lent with the service for the Imposition of Ashes and Mass on Ash Wednesday, March 5, at 7:30PM (Vespers will be at 7PM). A Lenten pot-luck supper will follow. For the remainder of the season, from March 14 until Holy Week, we will meet for a Lenten supper at 6:30PM on Fridays, with a brief class afterward, and ending with Stations of the Cross. These evenings are offered as a part of our Lenten discipline and all are encouraged to attend. Please remember that we are to be more intentional in our reading of Holy Scripture and the Lives of the Saints, in prayer and fasting, and in almsgiving during this season. Lenten coin boxes will be available for contributions for the Food for the Hungry program.

Two important feast days occur in the month of March: the feast day of our Patron, St. Gregory the Great is on March 12 and we will celebrate his festival on the eve, Tuesday, March 11, with Vespers at 7PM, Mass at 7:30 and a pot-luck supper following. We will celebrate the feast of the Annunciation on Monday, March 24, with the same schedule.

St. Katherine's Greek Orthodox Church in Falls Church, VA will host the Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers at 5:30PM on the first Sunday of Lent, March 1. The speaker will be Metropolitan Anthony of the Ukrainian Archdiocese.

Fr. Nicholas has begun an "Ask Abouna" period of time at coffee hour on Sundays to answer your questions about Church teachings, liturgical practices, etc. He will *try* to limit answers to five minutes.



## *A Lenten Reading*

*an excerpt from Longing for God by John Breck*

Orthodox Christianity calls us to live on two different but intimately related levels. One is the level of our daily experience: life in family and on the job, paying bills and doing the shopping, cutting the grass and getting the kids to their various activities. It is also life marked by anxiety in a world of war and political upheaval, of poverty, violence and natural disasters. For many people, it is a life that Thomas Hobbes aptly described as "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short."

Yet there is another level, another reality that can radically transform our daily routine and even the tenor of the world around us. It is the level of our faith, where celebration of the Paschal mystery turns every Sunday and feast day into the First and Eighth Day of the new Creation, enabling us to participate already here and now in the coming glory of the kingdom of God. This second level, this other realm or dimension of our life, is one of prayer and silent meditation, of life-giving communion, of joyous celebration, and of healing, reconciling love.



A major reason for the Lenten journey is to equip us for the spiritual warfare necessary to hold these two levels together. As problems and tensions mount in our personal and collective life, we are constantly tempted to focus on one level or the other. Either we give into the secularizing pressures of the society we live in and pay mere lip service to the faith, power and authority of Orthodox Christianity; or we reject the reality of this world by seeking solace in the esthetically beautiful worship of a comfortable church of our own making. Either of these choices merely deepens the compartmentalization of our life and activity. And we wonder why the experience of Sunday morning seems to have so little to do with the realities and urgencies of Monday.

As we move each year through the Lenten fast - in a world of conflict, brutality and injustice - it is important to remember what Scripture and the rest of the Church's Tradition tell us about this world. Although the fact is hardly reflected in the morning's headlines, the world was created, and is constantly being re-created, by the God of love and mercy, whose deepest desire is to lead everyone, including ourselves, to the perfection and joy of eternal communion in the life of the Holy Trinity. This is a world where people of faith can behold the hand of God in everyday miracles of forgiveness and reconciliation; and in more astounding miracles of unexpected healings, weeping icons, and self-sacrifice.

This is God's world, and we are part of it. As such, our primary calling is to announce and to live out the Paschal message of salvation and eternal life, offered through the victory of Christ over the powers of sin and death.

To do so, however - to facilitate the transformation of the fallen world into a world of faith and love - requires that we devote our time and our energy to the arduous work of inner transformation and spiritual awakening. The Lenten period invites us to do this by increasing our prayer, by fasting, by giving more attention to the poor and needy around us, and by nourishing ourselves with frequent readings from Scripture and the Holy Fathers...

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>March 2014</h1>					<i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i>	<b>1</b> St. David of Wales, BC, 544  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>2</b> Quinquagesima; St. Chad, BC, 672  <i>V</i>	<b>3</b> St. Lucius, BM, 254	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> Ash Wednesday  <i>Blessing of Ashes and Mass at 7:30pm</i> <i>V</i>	<b>6</b> Ss. Perpetua & Felicitas, Mm, 203	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>9</b> First Sunday in Lent; St. Gregory of Nyssa, BCD, 394 (Sunday of Orthodoxy) <i>V</i>	<b>10</b> Forty Martyrs of Sebaste, Mm, 320	<b>11</b> St. Sophronius of Jerusalem, BC, c. 369  <i>Mass at 7:30pm</i> <i>W</i>	<b>12</b> St. Gregory the Great, BCD, 604 (Ember Wednesday)	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> Ember Friday  <i>Lenten Supper &amp; Stations of the Cross at 6:30pm</i>	<b>15</b> Ember Saturday  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>16</b> Second Sunday in Lent <i>V</i>	<b>17</b> St. Patrick, BC, 461	<b>18</b> St. Cyril of Jerusalem, BCD, 386; St. Edward, KM 979	<b>19</b> St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin; 1 <sup>st</sup> c.	<b>20</b> St. Cuthbert, BC, 687	<b>21</b> Repose of St. Benedict, c. 550 <i>Lenten Supper &amp; Stations of the Cross at 6:30pm</i>	<b>22</b>  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>23</b> Third Sunday in Lent <i>V</i>	<b>24</b> St. Gabriel the Archangel  <i>Mass at 7:30pm</i> <i>W</i>	<b>25</b> The Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> St. John of Damascus, CD, c. 760	<b>28</b>  <i>Lenten Supper &amp; Stations of the Cross at 6:30pm</i>	<b>29</b>  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>30</b> Fourth Sunday in Lent; St. John of the Ladder, Ab, 649 <i>V</i>	<b>31</b> St. Innocent of Alaska, BC, 1879	<b>1</b> St. Melito of Sardis, BC, 177	<b>2</b> St. Mary of Egypt, Penitent	<b>3</b> St. Sixtus I, PM, 127	<b>4</b> St. Isidore of Seville, BCD, 636  <i>Lenten Supper &amp; Stations of the Cross at 6:30pm</i>	<b>5</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.