

# ✠ 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 Treatise of Saint Basil the Great on the Holy Spirit*

*died 379AD  
Feast Day ~ June 14*

*Inside:*

<i>Parish News.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Practicing the Presence of God..</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>St. Alexei. ....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Calendar. ....</i>	<i>7</i>

**W**e can learn about the loftiness of the Spirit's nature not only because he shares the same titles and works as the Father and the Son, but also because He, like them, cannot be grasped by our thoughts. The Lord says that the Father is beyond human conception, and that the same is true of Himself, the Son. Concerning the Father He says: *O righteous Father, the world has not known Thee.* [John 17:25] By the world He does not mean the whole complex of heaven and earth, but this life of ours, subject to death and endless troubles. Concerning Himself He says: *yet a little while, and the world will see me no more, but you will see me.* [John 14:19] Again, by "world" He means those who are tied down by a material and carnal life, and restrict truth to what is seen by their eyes. They refuse to believe in the resurrection, and become unable to see the Lord with the eyes of their hearts. So neither the Father nor the Son may be seen by the "world," but notice that He uses the same language concerning the Spirit: *the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; you know Him, for He dwells with you, and will be in you.* [John 14:17]

**A** carnal man's mind is not trained in contemplation, but remains buried in the mud of fleshly lusts, powerless to look up and see the spiritual light of the truth. So the "world" - life enslaved by carnal passions - can no more receive the grace of the Spirit than a weak eye can look at the light of a sunbeam. First the Lord cleansed His disciples' lives through His teaching, and then He gave them the ability to both see and contemplate the Spirit. He says, *You are already made clean by the word which I have spoken to you.* [John 15:3] Therefore, *the world cannot receive Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; you know Him, for He dwells with you.* [John 14:17] Isaiah says, *thus saith the Lord God,...who settled the earth and the things in it; and gives breath to the*

people on it, and Spirit to those who tread on it; [Is. 42:5] from this we can learn that those who trample earthly things and rise above them become worthy to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. What should we think about Him? The world cannot receive Him, and only holy men can contemplate Him through purity of heart. Is there any limit to the honor He deserves?



**W**e believe that the Spirit is present everywhere, while the rest of the bodiless powers are circumscribed by place. The angel who came to Cornelius [Acts 10:3] was not with Philip at the same time, [Act 8:26] nor did the angel who spoke with Zechariah from the right side of the altar [Luke 1:11] simultaneously occupy his place in heaven. But the Spirit is believed to have been inspiring Habakkuk and Daniel in Babylon at the same time, though they were in different places; [Dan 14:33ff] the same is true for Jeremiah in the dungeon [Jer. 20:2] and Ezekiel by the river Chebar, [Ez. 1:1]. *the Spirit of the Lord fills the world*; [Wis. 1:7] *where shall I go from Thy Spirit or where shall I flee from Thy presence?* [Ps. 139:7] The prophet says: *I am with you, says the Lord of hosts... My Spirit abides among you.* [Hag. 2:4-5]

**I**f wherever God is, the Spirit is present also, what nature shall we presume Him to have? An all-encompassing nature, or a nature confined to particular places as we have described the nature of angels? No one would say the latter. He is divine in nature, infinite in greatness, mighty in his works, good in his blessings; shall we not exalt Him; shall we not glorify Him? I reckon that this “glorifying” is nothing else but the recounting of His own wonders... to describe His wonders gives him the fullest glorification possible. The same is true for the God and Father of our Lord Christ and the Only-Begotten Son Himself; we are only able to glorify them by recounting their wonders to the best of our ability.

## *Parish News*

**T**he month of June is a month of Sunday feast days. The Sunday after Ascension Day begins the month on June 1; June 8 is the great feast of Pentecost, followed by Trinity Sunday on June 15; we celebrate the Sunday within the Octave of Corpus Christi (the actual feast day is on the Thursday following Trinity Sunday) on June 22; and we end the month with the feast day of Ss. Peter and Paul, the patrons of our Patriarchate. Each of these important days presents us with beautiful scripture readings, hymns, and prayers which illuminate Christian truth.

Many thanks to all who helped to make the visit of Bishop THOMAS a memorable event. The services, the wonderful banquet, the flowers, the music all helped to welcome Sayedna THOMAS back to celebrate with us the anniversary of the dedication of our building, his first visit since the actual dedication in 2007.

On Pentecost, following the reading of the story of the first Pentecost told in the book of Acts, we will read some of that same story in as many languages as we can find represented at St. Gregory's (last year, we had about a dozen).

On Thursday, June 5, our archdiocese will convene a special convention in Chicago for the purpose of nominating three candidates for Metropolitan. The names and biographies of the ten bishops and priests and one monk who are eligible have been sent to each parish. From that list, three will be chosen by the votes of the priests and delegates from each parish (Subdeacon Jerome will be the delegate from St. Gregory's). These names will then be sent to the Patriarch and the Holy Synod of Antioch, who will make the final appointment of our new Metropolitan.

We will have a votive Mass for the election of a new bishop on Tuesday evening, June 3, to offer prayers for our clergy and delegates, the Patriarch and the Holy Synod of Antioch as they seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in this most important task.

The Antiochian clergy and members of area choirs presented a service of Vespers on Sunday, May 18, at the Franciscan Monastery in Washington. This was at the invitation of the Franciscans and had the blessing of Metropolitan Philip, of blessed memory, before his repose. The event was one of several commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the historic meeting of Pope Paul VI and Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagorus in Jerusalem when the anathemas (which had been in place since 1054 when the Great Schism officially began) were removed. Pope Francis I and Patriarch Bartholomew met in Jerusalem on May 25 to celebrate that occasion and to further the cause of fraternal love between our two churches.



## *Practicing the Presence of God*

*by Fr. Anthony Coniaris*

The liturgical calendar unfolds before us annually the whole life of Christ from His birth to the Ascension and the coming of

the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. By bringing into daily focus the great events of the life of Christ, the Church Year helps us remember the great events in the history of our salvation and makes them present again mystically so that we may relive them and participate in them. With the regularity of the yearly cycle, the Church calendar reminds us of what God has said and done for us in Christ. Thus, the liturgical year is a most effective instrument for practicing the presence of God. It sanctifies time.



**T**hrough the events of the liturgical year, we actually relive with Christ the great events of his life. Unlike a movie or a play, however, which merely reenacts the events in the life of a great person, the liturgical year not only reenacts those events but also places us in each event. An existential encounter takes place between us and Christ in the events of His birth, crucifixion, resurrection, etc. These sacred events are mystically present in the Church here and now.

**W**e reenter each event in such a way that it becomes a unique and refreshingly new act of salvation for us today. Thus, far from being a cold and lifeless representation of the events of the past, the liturgical year is a living and personal encounter with Jesus today. Today He comes to be born in the manger of my soul and yours. Today He offers me His Precious Body and Blood for my salvation. Today He hangs on the cross for me. Today He is resurrected and I am resurrected with Him. Today He ascends into heaven and I ascend with Him. So it is that the beautiful word **today** tears down the walls of the past and the future and makes Christ the eternally present One, Who is “the same yesterday and today and forever.” [Hebrews 13:8]

**T**he Church Year helps us practice the presence of God in a very real way.

*[An excerpt from Discovering God Through the Daily Practice of His Presence.]*

## *St. Alexei, the Righteous Priest*

*Feast Day ~ June 9*

*Editor’s note: Since so many of the saints whom we venerate lived in the early years of Christianity, it would be easy to conclude that the age of saints is over, that there are no more holy priests and bishops, monastics, missionaries and evangelists, or martyrs. But there are numerous souls in our time who have shown the light of Christ in their lives to such a degree that they will be revered forever as saints. As in the early Church,*

*these saints are first known in their own lands and become known to the wider Christian community slowly through the years. Last month, we began a series of lives of saints who lived in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries and we will continue presenting their stories for our spiritual benefit.*

Our Lord's parable of the mustard seed would surely apply to Alexei Mechev. There was no sign of real promise in this child's early life. He was born in 1859, the son of a choir director who served under Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow. The family lived modestly with no opportunity for young Alexei to have the privacy of a room of his own. His ambition was to become a doctor after finishing school, but his mother's ambition was for him to be a priest.

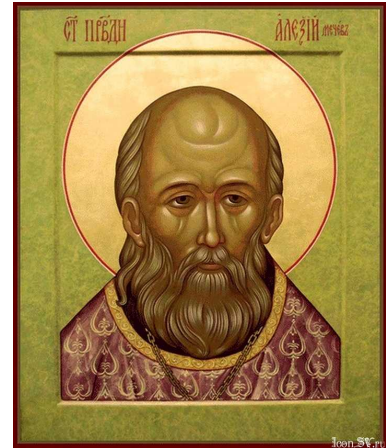
Alexei sang in the choir of another Moscow church, where the priest was extremely cruel to him, even to the point of beating him at times. Instead of rebelling, Alexei decided that the priest was trying to teach him humility and so he endured this treatment.

At the age of 25, Alexei married Anna Molchanova and they had six children over the next decade. Only one of these children - Sergius - remained close to his father through the years. Finally, at the age of 35, Alexei was ordained to the priesthood, fulfilling his mother's ambition. He was assigned to the small church of St. Nicholas in Moscow which was in terrible decline. When Fr. Alexei began offering the Divine Liturgy, no one came! He would ring the church bell to indicate that services were about to begin, but the church would remain empty. For eight years, this situation existed, and despite the ridicule of some of his fellow priests, Fr. Alexei did not give up hope.

Gradually, people began to come to the church for services and soon, many people came. Fr. Alexei also visited prisons, and read to the prisoners. He even gave readings in restaurants and he provided religious instruction at a school for girls.

Tragedy struck the family in 1902, when Anna became ill and suddenly died, leaving Fr. Alexei with the six children to raise alone. He was grief-stricken and sought the spiritual guidance of Fr. (St.) John of Kronstadt. The advice he was given sparked the blossoming of the mustard seed into a great tree: "Go to the people and share in their grief!"

Through his grief, Fr. Alexei was able to discern the spiritual needs of people even before they told him of their troubles. He was able to speak to their hearts and give counsel that would help them in their lives. He worked tirelessly among his flock and kept a notebook with all the names of those for whom he prayed daily.



Soon Fr. Alexei became known as a great spiritual father, an Selder or “starets”. Those who came to him for counsel were so numerous that there were long lines waiting for him at the church or his home. Like his mentor, St. John of Kronstadt, he gave each person his full attention and turned no one away, even those who were not church-goers or who were of other faiths.



Descriptions of Fr. Alexei’s personal appearance and that of his home are indications of how he spent all of his time helping others: he was a small, bald-headed man with a very unkempt beard and his cassocks were old and faded. His books and liturgical items were strewn everywhere in his study.

Among the many words of wisdom which Fr. Alexei passed on to others were those which served as his motto: “Live for others, and you yourself will be saved. To be with people, to live their life, rejoice in their joys, sorrow over their misfortunes...herein lies the meaning and way of life for a Christian, and especially for a pastor.”

With the uprisings in Moscow in 1905, Fr. Alexei foresaw the Revolution and the chaos and hardships which that would bring, especially to the Church. He advised the writer Nikolai Berdyaev to leave the country so that the world would be able to hear his words.

When he fell asleep in the Lord on June 22, 1923, tens of thousands attended his funeral. The incarcerated Patriarch Tikhon (the St. Tikhon who is considered a patron saint of Western Rite Orthodoxy) was allowed out of prison for a few hours in order to be present for the burial. In 1934, as Fr. Alexei’s body was being removed to a new grave, it was found to be incorrupt. This mighty tree, which blossomed from a humble mustard seed, was declared a saint - the Righteous Priest, St. Alexei, by the Moscow Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church in 2000. Now closer to the throne of God, he can intercede for us as he did for so many in life. Holy Alexei, pray for us.

Following in his father’s footsteps, Fr. Alexei’s son, Sergius, who had also become a priest, was assigned to continue the work of his father at St. Nicholas Church. With the worsening of relations between the Soviet government and the Church, Fr. Sergius was imprisoned several times and finally murdered in 1941. He is now also a saint of the Church.

*Sources: on-line articles from Orthodox America, Orthodoxy and the World, OrthodoxWiki, online article by Fr. Michael Knechten.*

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>June 2014</h1>						<i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i>
<b>1</b> Sunday after the Ascension  <i>W</i>	<b>2</b> of the Octave of Ascension; Ss. Marcellinus, Peter and Erasmus, Mm, 304	<b>3</b> of the Octave of Ascension; St. Kevin of Glendalough, Ab, c. 618  <i>Mass at 7:30pm</i>	<b>4</b> of the Octave of Ascension; St. Petroc, C, 564	<b>5</b> Octave Day of the Ascension; St. Boniface, BM, 754	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> Vigil of Pentecost  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>8</b> Pentecost  <i>R</i>	<b>9</b> Monday after Pentecost; St. Columba of Iona, Ab, 597	<b>10</b> Tuesday after Pentecost; St. Margaret of Scotland, QW, 1092	<b>11</b> Ember Wednesday in the Octave of Pentecost	<b>12</b> Thursday after Pentecost; Ss. Basilides, late 3 <sup>rd</sup> c., Cyrinus, Nabor & Nazarius, c. 303, Mm	<b>13</b> Ember Friday in the Octave of Pentecost	<b>14</b> Ember Saturday in the Octave of Pentecost; St. Basil the Great, BCD, 379  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>15</b> Trinity Sunday; First Sunday after Pentecost; Ss. Vitus, Modestus & Crescentia, Mm, c. 303  <i>W</i>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> St. Ephrem the Syrian, DnCD, 373;	<b>19</b> Corpus Christi; Ss. Gervase & Protase, Mm, 2nd. c	<b>20</b> St. Silverius, PM, 538; Translation of St. Edward, KM, 980	<b>21</b>  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>22</b> Sunday in the Oct. of Corpus Christi; St. Alban, Protomartyr of England, 209 and St. Paulinus, BC, 431 <i>W</i>	<b>23</b> St. Etheldreda, QV, 679	<b>24</b> Nativity of St. John the Baptist	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b> Ss. John & Paul, Mm, c. 362	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b> St. Irenaeus of Lyons, BM, 202  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>29</b> Ss. Peter & Paul, Apostles, 1st c.; Third Sunday after Pentecost  <i>R</i>	<b>30</b> Commemoration of St. Paul the Apostle; of the Oct. of Ss. Peter & Paul	<b>1</b> of the Octave of Ss. Peter & Paul	<b>2</b> Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary; of the Octave of Ss. Peter & Paul; St. John Maximovitch BC, 1966	<b>3</b> of the Octave of Ss. Peter & Paul; St. Leo II, PC, 683	<b>4</b> of the Octave of Ss. Peter & Paul  <i>(Independence Day)</i>	<b>5</b> of the Octave of Ss. Peter & Paul  <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.