

✠ 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 Caesarius of Arles

*died 542AD
Feast Day ~ August 27*

Inside:

*St. Matrona of Moscow. . . 2
Parish News..... 5
Praise to the Resurrector. 6
Calendar. 7*

Through the goodness of Christ, today we are celebrating with joy and exultation the feast day of this temple, dearly beloved, but it is we who ought to be the true, living temple of God. Deservedly, Christian people devoutly celebrate the sacred feast of their mother, the Church, through whom they realize that they have been spiritually reborn... If we reflect somewhat carefully on the salvation of our soul, we recognize that we are the true and living temple of God. God not only *dwelleth in buildings made by human hands* [Acts 7:48] or in those constructed of wood and stone, but above all in the soul which has been made according to the image of God and was formed by the hand of the Creator Himself. Thus the blessed Apostle Paul said: *the temple of God is holy, and you are that temple.* [I Cor. 3:17]

These temple are made of wood and stone in order that the living temples of God may gather there and come together into one temple of God. A single Christian is one temple of God, and many Christians are many temples of God. Also notice, brethren, how beautiful is the temple which is constructed from temples; just as many members form one body, so many temples form one temple. Now these temples of Christ, that is, devout Christian souls, are scattered throughout the world, but when judgement day comes they will all be gathered together and will form one temple in eternal life. Just as the many members of Christ form one body and have one head, Christ, so also those temples have Christ himself as their inhabitant, because we are members of Him, who is our head. Thus the Apostle says: *May Christ inwardly dwell in your hearts through faith.* [Eph. 3:16, 17]

For this reason, beloved, if we want to celebrate a feast of the Church with joy, we should not destroy the living



temples of God within us by evil deeds. I will tell you what everyone can understand. As often as we come to church, we ought to prepare our souls to be such as we want to find the church. You want to find the church shining; do not defile your soul with the filth of sin. If you want a church to be full of light, God also wants your soul not to be in darkness. What our Lord says, should happen, that the light of good works shine forth in us in order that He who is in heaven may be glorified. Just as you enter this church, so God wants to enter your soul, as He promised: *I will dwell with them and walk among them.* [2 Cor. 6:16]

There are two who want to dwell within us, Christ our Lord and the devil our adversary; both of them knock at the door of our heart. Do not reject Christ, if you want to be unafraid of the enemy; cling to the lawful king, and you will not fear the cruel tyrant; hold fast to the light, and darkness will not dare to approach you; love life, in order that you may be able to avoid death. Therefore let us fill our soul with the sweet perfume of chastity, brighten it through almsgiving, and adorn it with the flowers of various virtues, in order that we may invite Christ our Lord in faith, feed Him with hope, and give Him to drink with charity. As often as there are solemn feasts, let us come to church, not only with a chaste body but also with a pure heart.

St. Matrona of Moscow

Feast Day ~ May 2

In 1881, in a small Russian village, the mother in a poor family was expecting her fourth child. Doubtful of the family's ability to feed another mouth, she decided to send the child to a neighboring village to an orphanage. The orphanage had been founded and was supported by one of the royal family for the care of orphans, illegitimate children, and others whose families were too poor to keep them. But this mother changed her mind after having a dream in which her baby appeared to her as a beautiful white bird with a human face and closed eyes. Matrona was born without eyes - only lids tightly shut over empty eye sockets - but the devout Nikonov family determined to care for her as best as they could.

Even as a toddler, Matrona showed great interest in the things of God. She loved attending the nearby village church and would stand, meditating, for hours. Often, her family would discover her in the middle of the night, having taken their icons

from the icon corner and talking to them in her childish language. Even then, she was communicating with the saints.

As she grew, Matrona's handicap of blindness was ridiculed by other village children, who threw things at her and made fun of her. Because of this, the girl spent more time at home and in church and it was soon discovered that her "handicap" was greatly balanced by a wonderful gift from God. She showed the ability to foresee danger and to be aware of peoples' troubles. Her gift for healing became known by the age of seven.

From then on, many people came to the family's home, seeking the prayers of little Matrona for healing of body and soul. They often brought gifts of food or money in thanksgiving, so the poverty of the Nikonov family did not increase as they had feared.

When she was a teenager, Matrona was taken by a patroness on a pilgrimage to holy places. Visiting St. John of Kronstadt and standing among the huge numbers of people who flocked around him, Matrona heard St. John call out for her to come near him. With his gift of spiritual foresight, he said of her, "Here is my successor, the eighth pillar of Russia!" With time, this prophecy became understood.

Another handicap came to Matrona at the age of 17 when she lost the use of her legs. From then on, she was limited to sitting on her bed most of the day and had to be carried wherever else she went. But her spiritual gifts increased and people continued to flock to her for advice, prayers and healing. Matrona predicted the Russian Revolution and warned of the persecutions which the Russian Christians would face.

During the years of Soviet rule, Matrona had to lead the life of a vagabond. Her two brothers, with whom she had been living, became Communists. They could no longer tolerate their sister's prayers and visits by so many people seeking spiritual help. So Matrona moved to Moscow and began to live wherever she could find shelter, constantly moving from one place to another. Her reputation caused the Soviet authorities to seek to arrest her, but it never happened. Matrona always knew ahead of time when someone was coming for her and her protectors always got her away in time to escape arrest.

Once, when she knew a policeman was coming to arrest her, Matrona stayed where she was and did not escape. She immediately told the policeman of a horrible disaster at his home, so he left her to discover that his wife had been badly burned by their stove and he was just able to get her to the hospital in time to save her life. The policeman refused to come back for Matrona!



When someone expressed pity that Matrona had no sight, she told them that God had once given her a vision of the whole world. She had seen the sun and moon, the trees and grass, birds and other animals. She surrounded herself with icons which she could not see with her eyes, but which she knew with her heart. This blind, handicapped, illiterate woman was greatly blessed by God, and she always made certain that people understood that God had helped them through her - that it was not of her doing.



When World War II broke out, many families of soldiers came to Matrona to ask about their loved one. She could always tell them if the soldier was alive and they should continue to pray fervently for them or if they had died and the family should prepare for their funeral.

After so many years of the suppression of Christianity, many Russian people turned to witchcraft and sorcery. Matrona was hated by those who practiced these “dark arts” and she often had to offer healing to their victims. She encouraged everyone to go to Confession and receive Communion regularly for their spiritual health.

Foreseeing her death, Matrona gave instructions for her funeral and told everyone that, even after death, she would be with them, would be able to hear them and would continue to pray for them. She passed from this world to the next on May 2, 1952 and, as she predicted, miracles of healing continued when people prayed at her tomb. St. Matrona was glorified by the Russian Orthodox Church in 1999 and her relics were moved to the Convent of the Holy Intercession of the Mother of God, which has become a place of pilgrimage for many.

Why is it that we do not have people like her among us in America today? Where are these people who can predict the future and perform miracles? St. Matrona was immersed, she was "marinated" in the divine services of the Church, spending countless hours in her village church along with hours daily of her own private prayer. What are we in America immersed or marinated in? To what do we devote our time? Television, internet, Facebook, movies, magazines, shopping.... The Bible also describes the "fruit" of this type of immersion: adultery, fornication, hatred, jealousy, selfish ambition, dissension... (see Galatians 5:19) Which do you prefer in your life, the fruit which St. Matrona had or the fruit of this world? (*From the website of the American Carpatho-Russian Archdiocese*)

The world has not become closer to God since St. Matrona was alive. We pray that God will raise up saints like her for our spiritual help. May St. Matrona pray for us, for those who suffer with handicaps, and for the Church. *Holy Matrona, pray for us.*

Parish News

Christ is risen! Indeed He is risen! Our services for Holy Week and Pascha were very beautiful, thanks to the efforts of so many people. Clergy, acolytes, choir singers, flower arrangers, bread makers, cooks, cleaners, seamstresses - all worked diligently to beautify our celebrations. Thanks to all of you for your work.

St. Ignatius of Antioch said that: *"You should act in accordance with the Bishop's mind...your Presbytery...is as closely tied to the Bishop as the strings to a harp. Wherefore your accord and harmonious love is a hymn to Jesus Christ."* We will have several opportunities for showing this harmonious love in the near future. The first is when we greet Bishop THOMAS as he visits our parish on the weekend of May 10 and 11. All of us should be present for Vespers on Saturday evening at 6:00PM and a dinner in honor of the bishop following the service. Bishop THOMAS will also be with us at Matins (9:00AM) and Mass (9:30) on Sunday morning and will speak further to us at coffee hour that day. While Bishop JOHN, who was at St. Gregory's last year, is the overseeing bishop for the Western Rite, Bishop THOMAS is our diocesan bishop.



On Saturday, May 3, we will not have Vespers at St. Gregory's, but all are invited to St. George's on 16th Street, for Vespers as Metropolitan SILOUAN of Argentina will preside at this service. He is the Patriarchal Vicar for our archdiocese until we are given a new Metropolitan to succeed Metropolitan PHILIP of blessed memory.

A special convention has been called for the Archdiocese on June 5 in Chicago for the purpose of nominating three candidates for Metropolitan. The names of the candidates will then be sent to the Holy Synod of Antioch, who will choose the new Metropolitan. All clergy will be able to vote at this special convention and St. Gregory's is given the vote of one delegate.

The Antiochian clergy of our area have been invited by the monks of the Franciscan Monastery in Washington to offer Vespers on Sunday, May 18, at 5:00pm in prayer for the plight of the Christians in the Middle East. This service will coincide with a visit to Jerusalem by Pope Francis and Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople on the 50th anniversary of a similar meeting between Patriarch Athenagoras and Pope Paul VI.

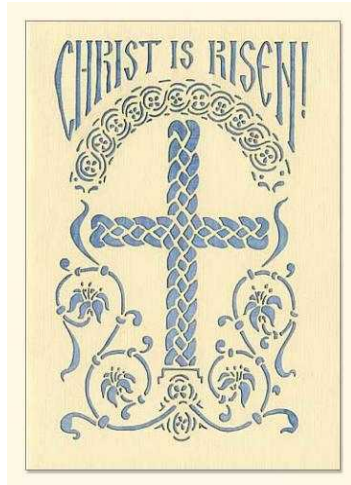
We will celebrate the Ascension of Our Lord on the Eve, May 28, with Vespers at 7PM, Liturgy at 7:30 and a pot-luck

supper following. The Paschal Candle, which has been burning at every service since the Paschal Vigil to represent the presence of the Risen Christ, will be extinguished at this service.

We bid farewell to Paul and Allison Higgins, who are moving to Portland, Oregon this month. We will always fondly remember their wedding at St. Gregory's last year, and look forward to hearing about the birth of their first child later this year. May God's blessings go with them.

Praise to the Resurrector of the Dead

by St. Ephraim the Syrian



All the deceased will arise at the sound of the trumpet and sing praise to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the resurrector of their bodies.

O Father Who created Adam from dust, O Son Who by Thy cross delivered Adam's race from ruin, resurrect me and set me at Thy right hand, that I might glorify Thy name!

Thee do I worship, O Christ our Savior. Thou art the resurrector and savior of all the departed who were baptized in Thy name and confessed Thy cross and Thy death.

Blessed is Christ Who promised life and resurrection to Adam's children in the day of His coming. We too shall arise and exalt Him along with the saints who have been pleasing to Him.

Praise to thee! By Thy resurrection didst Thou grant all the mortal race the hope of life and resurrection. And we offer thee praise, for Thou art the resurrector of all flesh.

Ye mortals, exalt and praise Him Who by his death emptied the dominion of death and promised all the mortal race life and resurrection.

May the soul that has sought refuge in Thy cross and inherited eternal incorruptible treasure praise and exalt Thee together with the spirits that number her among Thy ranks.

Meet it is to worship the Father Who sent us His only-begotten Son, Who saved our race from death and Satan, and sits at the right hand of His Father entreating His compassion on behalf of all of us.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>May 2014</h1>						
<i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i>				1 Ss. Philip & James, Apostles, 1 st c.	2 St. Athanasius, BCD, 373	3 Finding of the Holy Cross <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
4 Second Sunday after Easter; St. Monica, Ma, 387 <i>W</i>	5	6 Dedication of St. Gregory's; St. John before the Latin Gate	7 of the Octave of Dedication; St. Alexis Toth, PrC, 1909 and St. John of Beverly, BC, 721	8 of the Octave of Dedication; Apparition of St. Michael the Archangel	9 of the Octave of Dedication; St. Gregory Nazianzen, BCD, 389	10 of the Octave of Dedication; Ss. Gordian, 362 & Epimachus, 250, Mm <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
11 Third Sunday after Easter; of the Octave of Dedication <i>W</i>	12 of the Octave of Dedication; St. Epiphanius, BC, c. 403	13 Octave Day of Dedication	14 St. Boniface of Tarsus, M, 290	15 St. Pachomius, Ab, 346	16 St. Brendan the Navigator, 577, Ab	17 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
18 Fourth Sunday after Easter; St. Venantius, M, 250; St. Theodotus & comp., Mm, c. 303 <i>W</i>	19 St. Pudentiana, V, c.160 St. Dunstan, BC	20	21	22	23	24 St. Vincent of Lerins, C, 450 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
25 Fifth Sunday after Easter; St. Urban, PM, 230; St. Aldhelm, BC, 709 <i>W</i>	26 Rogation Monday; St. Augustine of Canterbury, BC, 605 <i>(Memorial Day)</i>	27 Rogation Tuesday; St. Bede, CD, 735; St. John I, PM, 526	28 Vigil of the Ascension; St. Germanus of Paris, BC, 576 <i>Mass at 7:30pm</i> <i>W</i>	29 Ascension Day	30 of the Octave of Ascension; St. Felix I, PM, 274	31 of the Octave of Ascension; St. Petronilla, VM, c. 100 <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.