

✠ 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 Leo the Great

*died AD 461
Feast Day ~ April 11*

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Apostolic teaching, Beloved, exhorts us that we *put off the old man with his deeds* [Eph. 4:22; Col: 3:9], and renew ourselves from day to day by a holy manner of life. For if we are the temple of God, and if the Holy Spirit is a Dweller in our souls, as the Apostle says; *You are the temple of the living God* [2 Cor.6:16]; we must then strive with all vigilance that the dwelling of our heart be not unworthy of so great a Guest. And just as in houses made with hands, we see to it with praiseworthy diligence that whatever may be damaged, either through the rain coming in, or by the wind in storms, or by age itself, is promptly and carefully repaired, so must we with unceasing concern take care that nothing disordered be found in our souls, that nothing unclean be found there. For though this dwelling of ours does not endure, without the support of its Maker, nor would the structure be safe without the watchful care of the Builder, nevertheless, since we are rational stones, and livingh material, the Hand of our Maker has so fashioned us, that even he who is being repaired may cooperate with His Maker.

Let human obedience then not withdraw itself from the grace of God, nor turn away from that Good without which it cannot be good. And should it find in the fulfilment of His commands something that is difficult to accomplish or beyond its powers, let it not remain apart, but turn rather to Him who commands us, and Who has laid on us this precept that He may both help us and awaken in us the desire of Him, as the prophet tells us: *Cast thy care upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee* [Ps. 55:23]...

When, Dearly Beloved, should we more fittingly have recourse to the divine remedies than when, by the very law of time, we are once again reminded of the mysteries of our redemption? And that we may the more worthily

commemorate then, let us earnestly prepare ourselves by this forty days of abstinence. And not alone do they, necessarily and profitably, take to themselves this safeguard of charity who are by the regeneration of baptism to enter into newness of life by means of the mystery of Christ's death and Resurrection, but also all who are reborn; the first that they may receive what they do not yet possess, the latter, to protect what they received. For as the Apostle says: *He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall* [1 Cor. 10:11], no one is sustained by such strength of mind that he can be certain of his own constancy in virtue.



Let us then, Dearly Beloved, observe these venerable practices of this most acceptable time, and with anxious care clean the windows of our soul. For however chastely and soberly we live in this mortal life, we shall yet be soiled by some dust in the course of our earthly journey, and the brightness of our soul, formed to God's image and likeness, is not so remote from the smoke of every vanity, that it will be unclouded by any stain, and need never to be polished...

Let us then take refuge in the ever present mercy of God, and, also that we may with becoming reverence celebrate the holy Pasch of the Lord, let all the faithful seek to make holy their own hearts. Let harshness give place to mildness, let wrath grow gentle, forgive one another your offences, and let him who seeks to be forgiven be not himself a seeker of vengeance. For when we say: *Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors* [Matt. 6:12], we bind ourselves in the most enduring bonds unless we fulfil what we profess. And if the most sacred contract of this prayer has not in every respect been fulfilled, let every man now at least examine his conscience, and gain the pardon of his own sins by forgiving those of others...

Nothing is more fitting than that a man imitate his Maker, and that as best he can he is a doer of the works of God. For when the hungry are fed, the naked clothed, the sick assisted, are not the hands that minister but completing the help God gives, and is not the generosity of the giver also a gift from God?

He Who has no need of a helper to perform His works of mercy, so orders his own omnipotence that it is by means of men He comes to the aid of men. And rightly do we give thanks to God for the ministers of that Charity whose works of mercy are seen in His servants. It was because of this the Lord Himself said to his Disciples: *So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your father who is in heaven* [Matt. 5:16]; Who with the same Father and the Holy Ghost lives and reigns God for ever and ever. Amen.

St. Felix of Dunwich

Feast Day ~ March 8

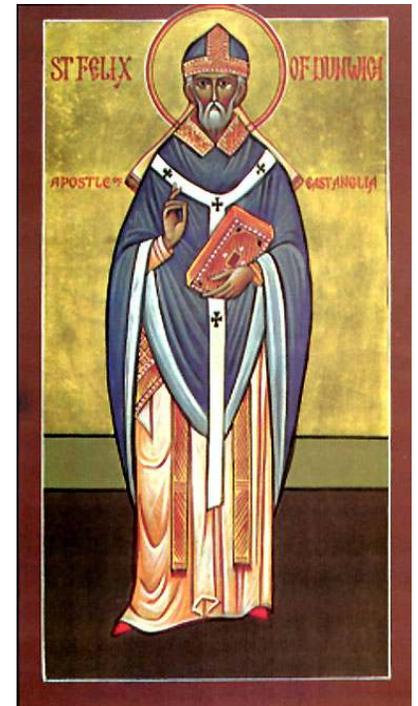
The Apostles of our Lord took literally His command to “go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” [Matt. 28:19]. Their disciples did the same and the bishops, priest, monks, and missionaries who followed them did also. In the first several hundred years following the Resurrection, Christianity had spread from North Africa to Ireland, from Palestine to Armenia and many other places.

This spreading of the Faith was often accomplished through networks of relationships: from parent to child, from master to slave (or the other way around), from ruler to subject, and frequently from teacher to pupil. Christian missionaries formed their own networks for the spreading of the Gospel. St. Felix, Apostle to East Anglia, was part of such a network.

Most of what we know of St. Felix is from the *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* by St. Bede the Venerable, completed in 731. Bede tells us that Felix was a native of Burgundy, part of the kingdom of the Franks. The Irish monk, Columbanus, had come to this area with twelve other monks around 590 and had founded several monasteries where his evangelistic efforts took root. It is thought that Felix was a priest/monk in one of Columbanus’ monasteries.

Meanwhile, the kingdom of the East Anglians in Britain was in need of help. Early in the seventh century, the then ruler of this kingdom, Raedwald, had been converted to Christianity, but (as Bede tells us) his wife was not so sure about this and convinced her husband to keep the old gods as well as the new. The king’s son, Earpwald, was at first a pagan but then converted to Christianity and was killed soon after. His brother, Sigberht, became the new king.

As it happens, Sigberht had been living in exile in Francia and had been converted to Christianity and baptized by Felix. Now he and his priest left the kingdom of the Franks for Britain. Felix first went to Canterbury to meet with Archbishop Honorius. The Archbishop was the fourth in line from St. Augustine, who had traveled from Rome to this land in 597 at the direction of St. Gregory the Great to preach the Gospel. Archbishop Honorius consecrated Felix in 631 to be the first Bishop of East Anglia. So a great network of the Christian faith from Rome to Canterbury,



from Ireland to Francia, and now from Francia to East Anglia was established for spreading the Gospel.

The Kingdom of East Anglia included Norfolk, Suffolk, and Cambridgeshire. With the support and encouragement of the new king, Bishop Felix established his see at Dummoc (or Dummoc-ceastre) which most historians identify as Dunwich. This seacoast city had been the site of a Roman station, so still had its strong stone walls for protection, and there were good ancient roads leading to other cities. The Cathedral for the diocese was built here and the king and the bishop, working together, also established a school for boys like those of high repute in Kent. (Cambridge University claims this as its foundation.)



Unfortunately, Dunwich is no longer in existence. Fr. Alban Butler, in his *Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs and Other Saints* tells us that it had been a large city containing 52 religious houses, but that erosion of the shore had allowed the sea to swallow it almost entirely up by the mid-18th century. He relates that the steeples of churches could still be seen about five miles from the shore. The *Smithsonian* website gives information about current nautical archaeological investigations of Dunwich's underwater ruins.

God worked through Bishop Felix to re-establish Christianity as the true faith in this formerly pagan land. Felix founded the famous monastery of Bury St. Edmunds and another at Soham. When it was evident that his kingdom was securely in the fold of Christianity due to the tireless efforts of Bishop Felix, King Sigberht left his throne to his cousin Egric and retired to a monastery.

St. Felix reposed on March 8, 648 after seventeen years of missionary work in this land. He was buried in his cathedral in Dunwich, but his relics were removed and taken to Soham because of the destruction of Viking invaders. For the same reason, the saint's relics were later again removed and buried at Ramsey Abbey.

St. Bede gives great tribute to St. Felix when he says that "like a good farmer [he] reaped a rich harvest of believers. He delivered the entire province from its age-old wickedness and infelicity and brought it to the Christian faith and works of righteousness, and in full accord with the significance of his own name, guided it towards eternal felicity." An Orthodox parish named for St. Felix exists in Felixstowe, England. May we, through the networks that are available to us, help to spread the good news of Jesus Christ and bring our ever increasingly pagan world into the Christian faith. Holy Felix, pray for us.

Sources: *Bede*: Ecclesiastical history of the English People; *Butler*: Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs and Other Saints; *Farmer, ed.*: The Oxford Dictionary of Saints; *Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia*: Orthodox England; *website of the Orthodox Church of America*; *Wikipedia*.

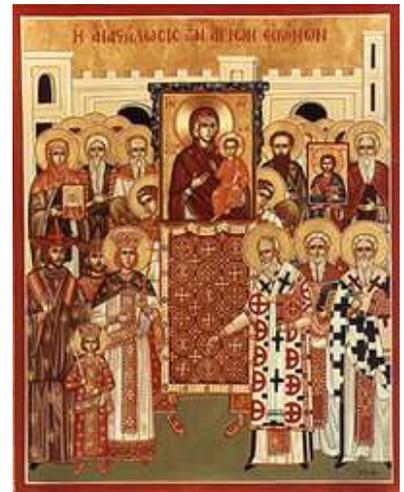
The Triumph of Orthodoxy

On the first Sunday in Lent, Orthodox Christians around the world come together to celebrate, in a service of Vespers, the Triumph of Orthodoxy over the iconoclastic controversy of the 8th and 9th centuries.

There had been artistic representations of Christian themes from the earliest days of the Church. We can see even today drawings in the catacombs in Rome of Christ the Good Shepherd and of the three Magi. Holy Tradition holds that St. Luke was not only a physician but also an artist who painted the first images of the Theotokos and our Lord. Images such as this were held in great esteem and were venerated in these early years as holy. They were “windows into Heaven”. Some were seen as miraculous, such as the image of the Mother of God at the door of the Church of the Resurrection which stopped St. Mary of Egypt and caused her to leave behind her life of prostitution.

But there had been differing views on the subject of religious art from the early centuries. Some held to the strict Jewish prohibition regarding “graven images” and considered the honor given to paintings on board or walls or mosaics of Christ and the saints as idolatrous. Some historians believe that decrees by Islamic leaders in the 8th century forbidding the depiction of people or animals may have influenced imperial decisions in the Byzantine Empire.

St. John of Damascus was one of the most vocal defenders of the veneration of icons; his writings remain the clearest articulation of the Orthodox position on this devotional practice. However, his writings did not influence imperial orders and iconoclasm continued. The 7th Ecumenical Council held in 787, under the influence of the Empress St. Eirene (who reigned with her young son), condemned iconoclasm, but it was re-introduced in the policies of the next emperors. Finally, in the year 843, a solemn ceremony was held in Constantinople on the first Sunday in Lent formally ending the policy of iconoclasm. St. Theodora (another Empress who was serving as regent for her young son) was influential in establishing this ceremony which has been repeated every year since then.

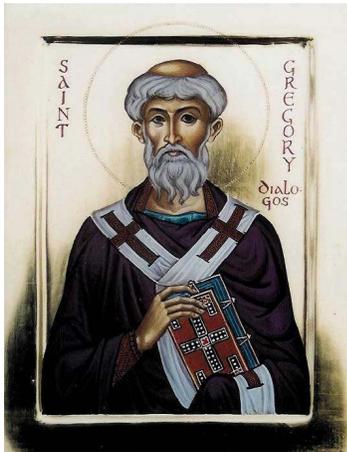


Some would say that iconoclasm was an Eastern problem and did not affect the Church in the West. However, the popes of Rome - still among the patriarchs of the Church throughout this period - made their objections clear and refused to obey the commands of the iconoclastic emperors. Christians in the West were not to suffer from the puritanical destruction of the images of Christ and the saints until centuries later. For Western Rite Orthodox Christians, the Sunday of Orthodoxy can be celebrated as a defeat of iconoclasm in every age and a confirmation of the fact that Christians may recognize and venerate - in icons and relics - the reality of the Incarnation of the second Person of the Trinity and the holiness of His saints.

In more recent times, there have been terrible versions of iconoclasm when anti-Christian forces have desecrated churches, destroyed sacred objects, and persecuted and killed Christians for their faith. We pray that we may have the courage to be “icons” of Christ in this world, no matter the cost.

Parish News

We will celebrate the Sunday of Orthodoxy with Vespers at St. Peter & Paul Church in Potomac, MD at 5PM on Sunday, March 1. All are invited to this annual pan-Orthodox service. Bishop ANTHONY of the Antiochian Diocese of Toledo and the Midwest will be the speaker.



Lenten suppers, classes, and Stations of the Cross will begin on Friday, March 6 and continue on Fridays through April 3. The classes this year will be an examination of five classic works on the spiritual life: *The Confessions* of St. Augustine, *The Way of the Pilgrim*, *The Philokalia*, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, and *Unseen Warfare*. We will begin these evenings at 6:30.

Liturgy for the feast day of our Patron, St. Gregory the Great will be on the Eve, Wednesday, March 11 and for the feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary on the eve, Tuesday, March 24. Mass on both evenings will be at 7:30, with Vespers at 7 and a pot-luck supper following.

Thanks to the sewing skills of Linda Byrum and gifts from two parishioners, we have a beautiful new purple frontal to match our set of purple High Mass vestments.

At its meeting to elect new officers, the Parish Council elected Doug Byrum as president and re-elected vice-president Pieter Dykhorst, secretary Patrick Woolley, and treasurer Karl Tsuji.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>March 2015</h1>						<i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i>
1 First Sunday in Lent; St. David of Wales, BC, 544 (Sunday of Orthodoxy) <i>V</i>	2 St. Chad, BC, 672	3 St. Lucius, BM, 254	4 Ember Wednesday	5	6 Ember Friday; Ss. Perpetua & Felicitas, Mm, 203 <i>Lenten Supper & Stations of the Cross at 6:30pm</i>	7 Ember Saturday <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
8 Second Sunday in Lent <i>V</i>	9 St. Gregory of Nyssa, BCD, 394	10 Forty Martyrs of Sebaste, Mm, 320	11 St. Sophronius of Jerusalem, BC, c. 369 <i>Mass at 7:30pm</i> <i>W</i>	12 St. Gregory the Great, BCD, 604	13 <i>Lenten Supper & Stations of the Cross at 6:30pm</i>	14 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
15 Third Sunday in Lent <i>V</i>	16	17 St. Patrick, BC, 461	18 St. Cyril of Jerusalem, BCD, 386; St. Edward, KM 979	19 St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin; 1 st c.	20 St. Cuthbert, BC, 687 <i>Lenten Supper & Stations of the Cross at 6:30pm</i>	21 Repose of St. Benedict, c. 550 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
22 Fourth Sunday in Lent <i>V</i>	23	24 St. Gabriel the Archangel <i>Mass at 7:30pm</i> <i>W</i>	25 The Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary	26	27 St. John of Damascus, CD, c. 760 <i>Lenten Supper & Stations of the Cross at 6:30pm</i>	28 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
29 Passion Sunday <i>V</i>	30 St. John of the Ladder, Ab, 649	31 St. Innocent of Alaska, BC, 1879	1 St. Melito of Sardis, BC, 177	2 St. Mary of Egypt, Penitent	3 Seven Sorrows of the BVM; St. Sixtus I, PM, 127 <i>Lenten Supper & Stations of the Cross at 6:30pm</i>	4 St. Isidore of Seville, BCD, 636 <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.