

✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

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St. Gregory the Great Orthodox Church
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stgregoryoc.org

From a Homily by
St. Leo the Great
d. 461

Dear beloved, if we study diligently the history of the creation of our race, we shall find that man was made in the image of God, to the end that he might grow into his Maker's likeness. This is the natural dignity of human nature, that in us, as in a mirror, there can be a reflection of the goodness of the divine nature. To help us attain this dignity, we are daily offered the grace of our Savior, for as in the first Adam all men are fallen, so in the second Adam all men can be raised up again.

The cause of our restoration is the mercy of God, and nothing else. We could not love him unless he had first loved us, and scattered the darkness of our ignorance by the light of his truth. This the Lord promised by Isaiah, where he saith: *I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them to paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight; these things will I do unto them and not forsake them.* And again: *I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.*

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From the Apostle John we learn how this was fulfilled: *We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son.* And again: *We love him, because he first loved us.* God, by loving us, reneweth his image in us. And that he may find in us the likeness of his goodness, he giveth us grace to do his works. To this end he lighteth the soul as though it were a candle. And so it is that he doth enkindle in our hearts the fire

of his holy charity, in order that we may love both him and whatsoever he loveth.

St. Flavian, Bishop & Martyr *Feast Day ~ Feb. 17*

In the Orthodox Church, we emphasize that decision-making by councils is the historic method begun by the Apostles themselves in Jerusalem, and we honor the seven Ecumenical Councils for the decisions regarding the theological truths of our faith which were made in those meetings. Even though we are amused by the stories of St. Nicholas punching Arius at the Council of Nicea, we usually tend to ignore the “untidy” nature of this kind of decision-making and the difficulties that have occurred in so many councils. The Devil is always at work in the affairs of men - especially those men who seek to steer the course of the Church.

When the priest Flavian, who was the chief sacristan of the cathedral church in Constantinople, became Patriarch on the

death of Patriarch Proclus, he was immediately confronted with a difficulty. The eunuch Chrysaphius, chamberlain to the Emperor Theodosius II, approached the new archbishop and asked for a gift for the emperor in return for his appointment. Bishop Flavian gave him some holy bread (*antidoron*) to take to the Emperor. Chrysaphius angrily replied that what he had in mind was a gift of gold. The Patriarch refused, saying that this would be an inappropriate use of the Church's treasure. Thus a battle had begun.

Another problem soon presented itself to the new Patriarch. The Archimandrite Eutyches, abbot of a nearby monastery, had been so vehement in his condemnation of Nestorius and his belief that Christ was somehow a combination of two persons - one human, one divine - that he went too far in the other direction and claimed that Christ had only one nature, a heresy called Monophysitism. Patriarch Flavian decided to call a local council (in November of 448) to address this problem. He urged moderation and prayed that Eutyches would see his error and proclaim the Orthodox understanding of Christ, but the bishops and priests at this council voted to excommunicate the monk. A report of the decision of this council was sent to Pope Leo I, Patriarch of Rome, who replied, concurring with the decision.

Eutyches was a relative of Chrysaphius and his condemnation furthered angered the eunuch. He enlisted the help of the Empress Eudocia, whose motivation for opposing the Patriarch was that he was favored by the Emperor's sister, Pulcheria, and there was jealousy between the two. Eutyches' machinations went even further: he took advantage of the anger of Dioscorus, Bishop of Alexandria, toward the see of Constantinople which had been declared second to Rome in the Diptychs. Together, they convinced the Emperor to call an ecumenical council to solve the dispute, hoping to reverse the decision already made.

So a council was called to be held in Ephesus, in August of 449 under the presidency of Patriarch Dioscorus. Dioscorus



controlled the invitations and many who had attended the local council were not invited this time. Pope Leo was notified late, but was able to send several delegates, among them the deacon Hilary, who later became pope. When Eutyches was absolved of heresy and Patriarch Flavian was condemned by Dioscorus, many bishops cried out against this and Chrysaphius appeared with imperial soldiers. In the chaos which ensued, St. Flavian was beaten, kicked, and bruised. He was sent into exile but died several days later from his injuries.

This was a false council and this was a battle which the Devil had won. But the powers of darkness had only a short time of triumph. Pope Leo continued his opposition to the decisions made, calling this council a "robber council", a name which has been used since then, and he wrote to the Emperor and to the whole church in Constantinople with his objections. In 450, Theodosius died and his sister, Pulcheria, succeeded him after one last-ditch effort on

the part of Chrysaphius to seize power for himself. She had the relics of St. Flavian brought to Constantinople where they were given great honor and reverence. Then in 451, at the recognized Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon, the earlier "council" decisions were declared invalid and Flavian was named a martyr for the faith, a saint of the Church.

We can be grateful that the major Christological disputes of the Church were resolved in those first Seven Ecumenical Councils and that future councils need only be concerned with

matters of practice and discipline. If the proposed Great and Holy Council is able to meet this summer (now scheduled to meet in June in Crete), we pray that it will be free from power struggles, from greed and jealousy, from all the works of the Devil. And we ask St. Flavian, Bishop and Martyr, to intercede for the Council participants and for the Church. *Holy Flavian, pray for us.*

Sources: *Prologue from Ochrid* by St. Nikolai Velimirovic; *Orthodox Saints* by George Poulos and articles from the websites of *Eternal Word Television Network*; *New Advent*; *Orthodox Church in America*, and *Wikipedia*.

Parish News

The great ‘blizzard of 2016,’ which paralyzed the Washington DC area for days, also had its impact on St. Gregory’s parish. This was to have been our visitation weekend from Bishop JOHN, but after attending the March for Life, Sayedna took the last train out of Washington to get home to Massachusetts and avoid being snowed in here for days. We hope that his schedule will allow him to visit another time - preferably in the Spring or Summer! The snow also prevented us from having any services the weekend of January 23-24, something which has only happened twice before in our twenty-year history.

Thanks to all who participated in the funeral for our Subdeacon Jerome and who helped with the mercy meal afterward. We are grateful to Fr. Joseph Rahal and St. George’s Church for allowing us to use their facilities once again.

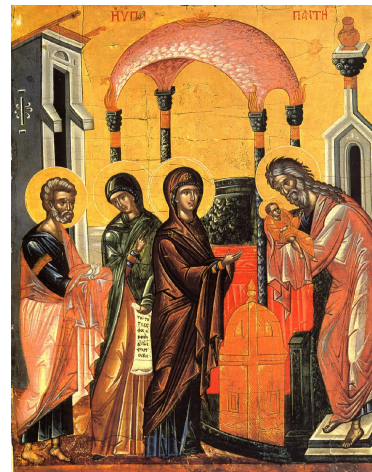
The Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple will be celebrated on Monday, February 1, with 7PM Vespers, 7:30 Mass and pot-luck supper following.

We are fortunate to have a longer period of time for house blessings this year. Please schedule yours with Fr. Nicholas or Fr. Raphael by February 27, the last possible day to sing the Alleluia before the beginning of Pre-Lent.

It is with sadness that we bid goodbye to Doug and Linda Byrum, who are returning to their home in Rhode Island. We thank them for all they have done in the parish for these 3 years - for Doug’s diligent service as Parish Council President, for Linda’s excellent service as a seamstress and good cook, for their hard work in organizing the move from the Euclid Street building to Roxbury Rd., and many other contributions. We shall miss them but wish them well.

We are grateful to Sister Michele for sending a copy of the book *The Names of Jesus* by Fr. Thomas Hopko for our parish library. Our library is currently stored at our new Roxbury Road location and books may be checked out during this interim period.

A Feast of Many Names



The feast which we celebrate on February 2 has many names and is rich with many layers of meaning and emphases. The “meeting of the Lord” (the name used in the Byzantine rite for this day) is told in the Gospel of St. Luke (2:22-39). Christ was brought to the Temple in Jerusalem by his mother and Joseph to be presented to the priests according to the law. This law (described in the Old Testament

books of Numbers and Leviticus) required that a first-born male child should be offered to God in the Temple and that a new mother should appear in the Temple to be purified forty days after giving birth. This latter requirement is the origin of the term “Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary”, another of the titles for this feast, and it is the precursor to our service of the “Churching” of women when mothers present their newborn children in church.

In describing the presentation of Christ in the Temple in *The Feasts of the Lord*, Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos wrote:

It is a moving scene when Christ as an infant, as a baby, is offered to the Temple. The pre-eternal God Who, as the Word of God, has always been united with His Father and the Holy Spirit and simultaneously has directed the world, the entire universe, is presented to the Temple as an infant in the arms of His mother. Although Christ was an infant, at the same time He was “God before the ages”, and therefore He was wiser than anyone else. We know that human nature in the womb of the Theotokos was deified by the union of divine and human nature in the person of the Word and therefore Christ’s soul was enriched with the fulness of wisdom and knowledge.

Mary, the Temple of the Lord, and Jesus, the Redeemer of the world, should not have had to comply with these laws. But in the words of Dom Prosper Guéranger:

The Divine Will was dear to Mary in this as in every circumstance of her life. The Holy Virgin knew, that by seeking this external rite of Purification, she was in no wise risking the honor of her Child, or failing in the respect due to her own Virginité. She was in the Temple of Jerusalem what she was in the house of Nazareth, when she received the Archangel’s visit - she was the Handmaid of the Lord. She obeyed the Law, because she seemed to come under

the Law. Her God and her son submitted to the ransom as humbly as the poorest Hebrew would have to do; he had already obeyed the edict of the emperor Augustus, in the general census; he was to be obedient even unto death, even to the death of the Cross. The Mother and the child, both humbled themselves in the Purification, and man’s pride received, on that day, one of the greatest lessons ever given it.



As with most of our celebrations, the Church in Jerusalem - where so many of the events in the earthly life of Our Lord occurred - was the first to observe this event liturgically. We have an account of that observance written by the Spanish nun, Egeria (Sylvia), who made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in the first part of the 4th century and kept a travel diary to share with her fellow monastics. At that time, the celebration of Christmas and Epiphany were combined on January 6, so the observance of the forty-day presentation occurred on February 14. When Christmas began to be celebrated on December 25, Presentation was moved to February 2.

The feast was celebrated in Antioch by the early 6th century and was introduced to the entire Eastern part of the Roman Empire when Emperor Justinian I ordered its celebration in thanksgiving for the end of a severe plague in the year 542. 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. It is believed that Pope Sergius I (687-701) added a procession of the people, representing the entrance into the Temple.

St. Gregory Orthodox Church

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Address Correction Requested

Just as the Savior had been revealed to only a few at his birth - several shepherds and the Wise Men - so at his presentation, only two others in the Temple saw the child for what he really was, the longed for Messiah. Both the aged Simeon and the prophetess Anna had spent their lives waiting and praying for the Messiah and now, in His presence, they recognized Him and worshiped Him. Simeon was moved to sing, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace...for mine eyes have seen thy salvation...”

Echoing Simeon’s description of our Lord as “a light to enlighten the Gentiles”, we also sing his canticle and bless the candles which the Church uses to honor and to represent this light, hence the name *Candlemas*, another title for this feast day. We make a procession with lighted candles as at that first procession in the Temple, singing an antiphon composed by St. John of Damascus: “*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.*”

This procession of lights is described in Butler’s *Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs, and Other Principal Saints*: “We... hold these lights in our hands to honor Christ, and to acknowledge him as the true light, whom they represent under this character, and who is called by holy Simeon in this mystery “a light for the enlightening of the Gentiles,” for He came to dispel our spiritual darkness. The candles likewise express that by faith His light shines in our souls, as also that we are to prepare His way by good works, by which we are to be a light to men.”

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.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>February 2016</h1>						<i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i>
	1 St. Ignatius of Antioch, BM, c. 107; St. Bridget, Abs, 523 <i>Mass at 7:30pm W</i>	2 Presentation of Our Lord: Candlemas	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, 889; St. Dorothy, VM c. 313 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
7 Fifth Sunday after Epiphany; St. Romuald, Ab, 1027 <i>G</i>	8	9 St. Cyril of Alexandria, BCD, 444; St. Apollonia, VM, c. 248	10 St. Scholastica, V, 543	11 St. Gregory II, PC, 731; St. Benedict of Aniane, Ab, 821; St. Theodora, Empress Ma, 860	12	13 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
14 Sixth Sunday after Epiphany; St. Valentine, PrM, 3rd C <i>G</i>	15 Ss. Faustinus & Jovita, Mm, 120	16 St. Nicholas of Japan, BC, 1912	17	18 St. Simeon of Jerusalem, BM, 1st c.; St. Colman, BC, 675	19	20 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
21 Seventh Sunday after Epiphany <i>G</i>	22 Chair of St. Peter at Antioch	23	24 Vigil of St. Matthias <i>(Note that in Leap-Years, the observances from this point to the end of the month are one day later than usual)</i>	25 St. Matthias, Apostle, 1st c.	26 St. Walburga of Heidenheim, V, 779	27 St. Porphyrius of Gaza, BC, 420; St. Ethelbert, KC, 616 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
28 Septuagesima; St. Raphael of Brooklyn, BC, 1915; St. Alexander, BC, 326; St. Leander, BC, 600 <i>V</i>	29 St. Oswald of Worcester, BC, 992					

Confessions are heard after Vespers, during the Psalms at Matins, and by appointment.

*Coffee Hour follows Mass.
Sunday School is during Coffee Hour.*