

✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

March, 2016 - Volume XXI, Issue 3

*St. Gregory the Great Orthodox Church
A Western Rite Congregation of the Antiochian Archdiocese
stgregoryoc.org*

*From a Homily by
St. John Chrysostom
d. 407*

Repentance, which is terrible and formidable to the sinner, is a medicine to trespasses, a destruction to lawlessness, an end to tears, courage before God, weapon against the devil, a knife that decapitates his head, the hope of salvation, the abolishment of despair. Repentance opens heaven, admits into paradise, defeats the devil just as boldness causes us to trip and fall. Are you a sinner? Do not become discouraged. I never cease to administer these medicines, because I know very well how our lack of despair is an important weapon against the devil. If you have sins, do not become discouraged. I never stop saying these things; and if you sin every day, repent everyday. And that which we do to old houses when they become rotten - we discard the decayed matter from the foundation and we build new ones and we do not neglect to take care of them - let us likewise do to

Inside:

<i>St. Gerasimos.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>The Martyrology.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Parish News.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Forgive us our Trespasses.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>The Lord's Prayer.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>March Calendar.....</i>	<i>11</i>



ourselves. If today you have grown old due to sin, rejuvenate yourself with repentance.

Is it possible, Scripture says, for one to repent and be saved? It is absolutely and most certainly the case. What, though if I have wasted all my life in sins and then repent, will I be saved?

Yes, indeed! What source indicates this? The philanthropy of your Master. Can I take courage from your repentance? Could it be that your repentance has the power to wipe clean so many evils? If it were only up to repentance, then assuredly be afraid. However, since repentance is mixed together with the philanthropy of God, take courage. For God's philanthropy is immeasurable, nor can any word provide the measure of His goodness. Your wickedness is measurable, but the medicine is immeasurable. Your wickedness, whatever it may be, is human wickedness, but God's philanthropy is ineffable. Have courage because it surpasses your wickedness. Just think of one spark that fell into the sea; could it stand or be seen? What one spark is in comparison to the sea, so wickedness is before the philanthropy of God; not even this much, but much more so. For the sea, even though it is vast, has limits, but God's philanthropy is unlimited.

When a physician administers a medicine to you and he fails to purge you of the disease, does he not apply it to you again on another day?.... Be ashamed when you sin. Do not be ashamed when you repent. Pay attention to what the devil did to you. These are two things: sin and repentance. Sin is a wound, repentance is a medicine. Just as there are for the body wounds and medicines, so for the soul are sins and repentance.

And though they be as scarlet, I will make them as white as wool. [Isaiah 1: 18] ...The mouth of the Lord has said these things...For to God who has the power to cleanse the filthiness of sin, everything is possible. Therefore, since we heard God speak to us, and since we know the medicine of repentance, let us send up glory to Him. For to Him belong the glory and the might forever.

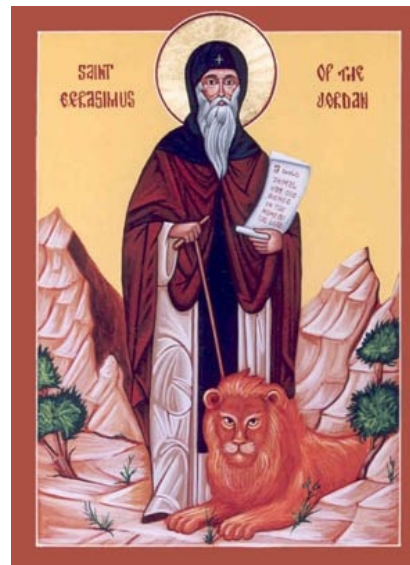
St. Gerasimos

Feast Day ~ March 4

In the lives of the saints, we frequently encounter the phenomenon of affinity with wild animals: we read of St. Kevin of Glendalough, holding a bird in her nest on his outstretched arm while in prayer; and of St. Kenneth, who stilled the chattering of the birds during the Liturgy on Sunday mornings. St. Gerasimos of Jordan was a desert monk who, through his holy piety, was able to tame a lion. This story - which some will consider a “pious legend” similar to the Aesop fable of Androcles and the lion - was recounted by Archbishop Sophronios of Jerusalem (d. 638), who wrote a life of St. Gerasimos.

The holy monk was praying beside the Jordan River, a place where he was able to find inner peace and tranquility, when he heard the roar of a lion. Rather than run away in fear, the saint looked around to see the beast crying in pain because of a great thorn in his paw. Gerasimos fearlessly went to the lion and pulled the thorn out, only to find that he had made a life-long friend! The lion followed him back to his cell where he remained for the rest of the saint’s life and mourned his master when Gerasimos passed away. This story - like those of any saint with this ability - shows that the peace of Christ which a holy person carries in his heart can tame even wild animals.

The ability to tame a lion is not what St. Gerasimos is best known for, but rather his life of ascetic struggle. As a young



man, Gerasimos turned away from the life of wealth and leisure that his family offered and began to live the solitary life of a hermit. Later, he traveled from his native Lycia (in Asia Minor) to the Egyptian desert to learn from the monks there. Eventually, he settled in Palestine, where he formed a monastic community of seventy monks who practiced a very extreme form of asceticism.

The rule which Abbot Gerasimos formulated for his monks was one of silent prayer with active bodies. The monks spent each day in their cells weaving mats and baskets; they partook of one meal of dry bread and a few dates each day; they owned only one piece of clothing and kept their cells open so that any one of them could come in and take from any other whatever he needed. On Saturdays and Sundays, the monks came together for worship, to present the fruits of their labors of the previous week, and to share a meal of boiled vegetables and a little wine. It is said that, during Lent, St. Gerasimos took only the Bread and Wine he received from Holy Communion.

This pattern of life did not shield the monks from the theological disputes of the day. St. Gerasimos had leaned toward the Monophysite position - that Our Lord had only one nature - but by the time he attended the 4th Ecumenical Council in Chalcedon in 451, he had been persuaded by St. Euthymius of Christ’s two distinct natures - divine and human - and was a staunch supporter of the Orthodox position. Returning to his monastery, St. Gerasimos continued his life of prayer until he fell asleep in the Lord in 475.

May we, following the example of St. Gerasimos, learn to tame our passions in submission to God's will, to live simply in prayer and honest work, and to seek the mind of the Church regarding Christian revelation. *Holy Gerasimos, pray for us.*

Sources: *Orthodox Saints*, Volume One by George Poulos, *Prologue from Ochrid* by St. Nikolai Velimirovic, website of the Orthodox Church in America.

The Martyrology

Those of you who attend Saturday Vespers will have noticed that, before the service begins, Fr. Nicholas reads out a list of the martyr saints who are to be commemorated the following day. The names often have a bit of information about how the saints received the crown of martyrdom. Fr. Nicholas is reading from the book, *A Western Rite Orthodox Martyrology: an adaptation of the Roman Martyrology for Orthodox Use.*

From earliest times Christians have remembered and given thanks for the lives and examples of the Saints, and have asked for their intercessions. The Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of that "cloud of witnesses" and the Revelation of John tells of "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues" worshiping before the throne of God. St. John also speaks of the prayers of the saints rising with the incense before the throne. In many diverse ways the Saints show us, by word and deed, how to live Christ-like lives.

Each early Christian community kept its own list of the Saints, remembering the dates of their deaths or heavenly "birthdays." At first these were lists of Martyrs, those who had been killed for their witness to Christ and who had been faithful, even unto death, during times of persecution. In time other holy people were added to the lists of witnesses: holy Confessors, Bishops, Monastics,

Wonder-workers, Teachers, even saintly Kings and Queens. A well-known Martyrology was attributed to St. Jerome. St. Gregory the Great wrote of the list in Rome in the 6th century as "a codex containing the names of almost all the martyrs from various lands and from different provinces according to their days, together with the date and place of their martyrdom." St. Bede the Venerable in England, Rabanus Maurus in Germany and Usard in France all compiled Martyrologies. The Roman Martyrology was first published in 1583, drawing heavily on these older works, together with the Dialogues of St. Gregory and the Greek Menologion of Sirletus. It was subsequently revised and expanded many times.

The edition of the Martyrology we now use at Vespers is one begun by Fr. Jack Witbrock, the first Dean of the Antiochian Orthodox parishes of New Zealand, and edited and completed by Fr. Nicholas following Fr. Jack's repose. This edition includes both Eastern and Western saints venerated in the Orthodox Church. The reading from the Martyrology occurs in the Office of Prime (the first hour) in the Monastic Office. In seminaries the reading was often offered after the main meal of the day.

The Martyrology recalls our "heroes in the Faith." In our own day, as we continue to hear of Christians being put to death in the Middle East, Africa and elsewhere for their faith in Christ, often in no less brutal ways than the saints of old, may we be strengthened by their prayers and their examples. *All ye holy Saints of God, intercede for us!*

Parish News

Happy Anniversary! St. Gregory's parish is now twenty years old! After months of preparation - studying and praying together - our group of enquirers was chrismated by Bishop ANTOUN on Saturday, March 2, 1996, at Ss. Peter & Paul Church

(then in Bethesda). Fr. Nicholas was ordained deacon at the same service and the following day (the First Sunday of Lent that year) was ordained to the priesthood. Metropolitan PHILIP granted us the name we had requested, and the Orthodox Church of St. Gregory the Great was begun. May God continue to shower his blessings upon our parish and give us the wisdom and strength to do His will. We will postpone an anniversary celebration until later this year when we can combine it with the dedication of our new home.



Saturday, March 12 is the feast day of our patron, St. Gregory, and we will celebrate with Sung Mass at 10:00AM, preceded by Matins at 9:30 and followed by a pot-luck brunch.

We move from the pre-Lenten Sundays of preparation (the “gesimas”) to Lent itself this month, beginning with Ash Wednesday on March 16. In this service, our foreheads are marked with ashes as a call to repentance, a theme which will continue throughout the season. Our Lenten studies will begin in April.

On the First Sunday in Lent, March 20, we will join with all the Orthodox parishes in the Washington DC area to celebrate Vespers for the Sunday of Orthodoxy. This year’s service will be at St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Cathedral, at 5:30pm. The speaker will be Bp. GREGORY of the Carpatho-Russian Archdiocese.

We will celebrate the Feast of the Annunciation on the Eve, Thursday, March 24, with Vespers at 7:00PM, Mass at 7:30 and pot-luck supper following.

Forgive Us Our Trespases

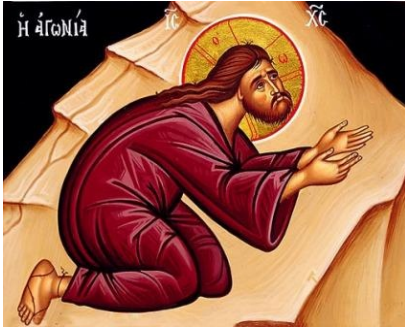
St. Cyprian of Carthage (from his treatise on the Lord’s Prayer)

The Lord openly adjoined, added a law and bound us by a definite condition and promise that we might ask for our sins to be forgiven us according to the manner in which we ourselves forgive those who have sinned against us. We know that we are not able to obtain what we ask for concerning our sins unless we ourselves do likewise to those who sin against us. Therefore, He says in another place, By which measure you measure out, it will be returned to you, [Mt. 7:2], and that servant who, after his entire debt had been cancelled for him by his master, did not want to cancel his fellow servant’s debt is thrown into prison. Because he did not wish to be generous with his fellow servant, he lost that which had been pardoned him by his master.

These things Christ now proposes more strongly in his precept by the greater force of his own authority. He says, *when you stand to pray, forgive whatever you have against anyone so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive you your sins.* [Mk. 11:25] No excuse remains for you on the day of judgement, since you will be judged according to your own sentence and what you have done, you will suffer yourself. God commands that we be at peace and in harmony and at one in His house. He wants those who have been reborn to remain such as He has made them by their second birth so that we, who are children of God, may remain in the peace of God and that those who have the one spirit may be one in mind and heart. Thus God does not accept the sacrifice of one who is quarreling, but orders him to leave the altar and first go and be reconciled with his brother so that God, too, may be appeased by peaceful prayers. Our peace and fraternal harmony and a people gathered together by the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is the greatest sacrifice we can offer to God.

The Lord's Prayer

from "Life Transfigured" the journal of Holy Transfiguration Monastery



This prayer to God in our hearts, or on our lips in Church is both private and communal, harkened unto, heard and joined by others in this world and the next. If we say the Lord's Prayer in our own little Eden-type backyard cabbage-patch, suddenly the Apostles of Gethsemane awaken to the word and stand in the rows of our humble Garden!

When you pray, go into your closet," Christ said. And for us, 2000 years later, our closet is still the most quiet, innermost space in our little house, in our heart. And the throbbing pulse of our worship therein is its continuous, repetitive, heart-beat which quickens life in the womb, sustains it in this world and in the world to come. It is also our Gethsemane, our Mount of Olives, the very heart of the Kingdom of God. This might suggest private prayer only, but the Lord's Prayer, which Jesus Himself shares with us, begins with the word "our" ("Our Father...") and continues with the word "us" (*give us...those who transgress against us...lead us not*"); joining us to our brethren, the ones who pray the Prayer beside and with us.

At the very moment we begin the Lord's Prayer, we become aware of the communal presence of saints and angels from the closeted, sacred chambers of the Kingdom of Heaven which embrace the many mansions in our Father's House. .. In church, we pray to the One God who hears each prayer. Because we are reading the King's highway, earthly and heavenly pilgrims hear our footsteps and in solemn drives join the ranks in our procession God-wards. God gave man his own Prayer to unit to Himself and all mankind.

St. Gregory Orthodox Church
c/o 9415 Wire Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20901
Address Correction Requested

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>March 2016</h1>						<i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i>
		1 St. David of Wales, BC, 544	2 St. Chad, BC, 672	3 St. Lucius, BM, 254	4	5 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
6 Sexagesima; Ss. Perpetua & Felicitas, Mm, 203 ✓	7	8	9 St. Gregory of Nyssa, BCD, 394	10 Forty Martyrs of Sebaste, Mm, 320	11 St. Sophronius of Jerusalem, BC, c. 369	12 St. Gregory the Great, BCD, 604 <i>Mass at 10am</i> <i>W</i> <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
13 Quinquages- ima ✓	14	15	16 Ash Wednes- day <i>Blessing of Ashes and Mass at 7:30pm</i> ✓	17 St. Patrick, BC, 461; St. Joseph of Arimethea, C, 1st c.	18 St. Cyril of Jerusalem, BCD, 386; St. Edward, KM 979	19 St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin; 1 st c. <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
20 First Sunday in Lent; St. Cuthbert, BC, 687 ✓	21 Repose of St. Benedict, c. 550	22	23 Ember Wednesday	24 St. Gabriel the Archangel <i>Mass at 7:30pm</i> <i>W</i>	25 The Annun- ciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary; Ember Friday	26 Ember Saturday <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
27 Second Sun- day in Lent; St. John of Damascus, CD, c. 760 ✓	28	29	30 St. John of the Ladder, Ab, 649	31 St. Innocent of Alaska, BC, 1879		

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

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