

✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

April, 2016 - Volume XXI, Issue 4

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

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

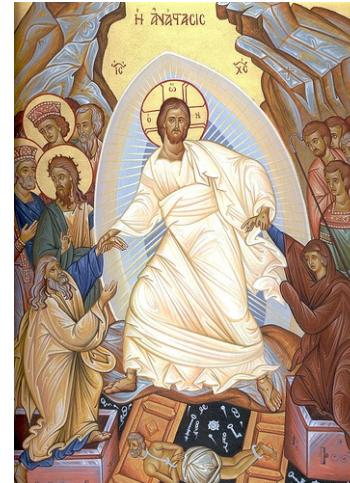
The earth, Dearly Beloved, is indeed always filled with the mercy of the Lord [Ps. 32], and it is the teaching of nature itself

to all who believe, that God is to be adored, since heaven and earth, the sea, and all things that are in them, proclaim the goodness and might of their Creator. And the wondrous beauty of the stars, and of all creatures that serve Him, call for a giving of thanks from that creature who is endowed with reason. And now a more earnest purification of our hearts is asked of us, as once again we draw near to those special days in which we so solemnly recall the mystery of man's redemption, and which in ordered sequence precede the Paschal Festival.

For though the life of many among you is at all times without stain, and the regular practice of good works commends many of you to God, yet for this reason are we so

Inside:

<i>St. Adalbert of Prague</i>	4
<i>Parish News</i>	7
<i>The Precious and Holy Cross of Our Lord and Savior</i>	9
<i>April Calendar</i>	11



to trust to the healthiness of our conscience, that we may think that, though we dwell in the midst of temptations and occasions of sin, we cannot fall into anything which could injure it. For the most worthy of prophet says, *Who can say, my heart is clean; I am free from sin?* [Proverbs 20:9]. And again: *Who can understand sins? From my secret ones cleanse me, O Lord; and from those of others spare thy servant.* [Ps, 28:13]

But if, as experience proves to us, such is the state of the soul of those who resist evil desires, who struggle against the impulses of anger, and who restrain their most secret thoughts, so that never is anything found in their hearts that may be blamed, and yet are often unaware of their own secret sins, or troubled by those of others, let them then carefully consider during this time what are the blemishes, what the weaknesses, how grievous the effects of past sins, for which a stronger medicine may be needed: that they may not be found strangers to that mystery *by which the works of the devil are destroyed.* [I John 3:8]

For this is the special nature of the Paschal Festival, that the whole Church rejoice in the forgiveness of sins, which has place not alone in those who are reborn in holy baptism, but also in those long since numbered among the adopted children of God. For though the baptism of regeneration causes men to be reborn, since there is to all men a need for daily renewal against the rusting of our nature, and since in every state of soul there is no one who ought not be better, all should therefore strive that on the day of Redemption no one shall be found in his former sins.

That, therefore, Dearly Beloved, which it becomes every Christian to do at all times, let it be done now more earnestly

and more devoutly, so that the apostolic institution of Lent may be fulfilled by your abstinence; not alone in refraining from food, but especially in refraining from wickedness. For since this self denial is practiced to this end, that men may be drawn away from that which kindles the desires of the flesh, no form of self denial should be more practiced than to keep ourselves at all times from unworthy desires, and to abstain from unworthy actions...

Nothing is more profitably joined to worthy and holy fasting than almsgiving, which includes many works of piety under the single name of mercy, so that in this the good will of all the faithful may be equal, though their means may not be. For nothing ever can so stand in the way of the love we owe both to God and to man, that it is not free at all times to be of good will. For according to what the angels said, *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will*, whosoever is joined in charity to others, and has mercy on those who are in suffering, from any cause whatever, he shall be blessed, not alone with the virtue of good will, but also with the gifts of peace...

As you are about to celebrate the Paschal Festival, Dearly Beloved, let you so exercise yourselves in these sacred abstinences, that you may approach the most holy feast free from every disorder. Let the spirit of pride, from which all sins have come, be driven out by the spirit of humility; and let those who are puffed up with arrogance become mild through forbearance. Let those whom some insult has provoked, becoming reconciled, seek earnestly to return to the peace of friendship.

And if there be any among those subject to you who have earned bonds or imprisonment, let them in mercy be pardoned: that we who are in daily need of pardon may not be slow in forgiving others. For when we say to the Lord our Father: *Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us*, there can be no doubt whatever, that when we pardon the offences of others against us we prepare the way for the divine

mercy towards ourselves, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who with the Father and the Holy Ghost lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

St. Adalbert of Prague

Feast Day ~ April 23

The conversion of Eastern Europe toward the end of the first Christian millennium is a story of many different elements vying with one another for prominence in the history of this area. While the work of such missionaries as St. Boniface and Ss. Cyril and Methodius had brought the Christian faith to the Germanic and Moravian peoples in the 9th century, paganism was still very much alive among others in the next century, making for uneasy relations between neighboring territories. Ancient ethnic rivalries stood in the way of peace. Some of those lands which had become at least nominally Christian struggled with the relationship between the authority of the Church and that of the civil rulers. Although the Latin and Slavic languages co-existed in liturgical usage, the Byzantine Empire in the East and the Holy Roman Empire in the West competed for influence in this area, both politically and ecclesiastically. In the midst of these struggles was St. Adalbert of Prague, whose memory we celebrate on April 23.

Adalbert - called Vojtěch by his family - was born around 956 to a Christian Czech prince and his Bohemian wife. After their son survived a serious illness in childhood, his parents dedicated him for service in the Church and to this end, sent him to Magdeburg to study with (St.) Adalbert, a monk and archbishop with missionary zeal. Vojtěch took the name of his mentor, and when the elder Adalbert died in 981, the younger man returned to Prague where he was ordained to the priesthood by the bishop, Dietmar. A year later, when Bishop Dietmar died, Fr. Adalbert was chosen as his successor despite his being under the canonical age requirement.



The people of Prague expected to continue their practice of Christianity in name only. They expected that a young bishop from a wealthy family would fit in very well, but Bishop Adalbert disappointed them. At his consecration, he remarked that it would be easy to wear the mitre and the crown but quite another thing to answer to the Judge of the living and the dead for his care of his people. The bishop led an austere life, giving a portion of the diocese's income and much of his personal wealth to the poor;

he opposed Christians who participated in the slave trade and who practiced polygamy; he visited those in prison and worked for their release.

Bishop Adalbert spent six years trying to establish true Christianity among the Bohemian people, but made little progress. When his family refused to participate in a war against the Polish people, the bishop was no longer welcome so he left Prague. In 990 he traveled to Rome, where he lived as a hermit in the Benedictine Monastery of St. Alexis.

The ruling Duke in Prague did not give up in seeking the support of Adalbert's family for his political ambitions and so, in 995, he wrote to Pope John XV and requested that the bishop be returned. The pope agreed, with the understanding that Adalbert could leave again if he felt it necessary. Upon his return, Bishop Adalbert established the first monastery in Czech territory. But his time in Prague was very short-lived as war again broke out between rival factions and his brothers were killed in the fighting. In the midst of this turmoil, a woman accused of adultery sought

sanctuary in a monastery and the bishop upheld her right to do this. After her accusers broke into the monastery and murdered her, Bishop Adalbert excommunicated them. Once again, it was not safe for him to remain in Prague so he returned to Rome.

The man who was appointed to be the successor to Bishop Adalbert in Prague, Strachkvas, died unexpectedly and mysteriously during his Consecration Mass and the Pope ordered Adalbert to return to Prague. This time, Adalbert successfully begged to become a missionary instead and so went into Hungary, where he baptized Grand Prince Géza and his son, Stephen (later St. Stephen of Hungary). Further missionary efforts took him into Poland where he was made bishop of Gniezno. Bishop Adalbert desired to preach the Christian faith to the Prussian people, who were enemies of the Poles, so the duke of Poland sent soldiers with the bishop for his protection. This no doubt contributed to the hostility with which the missionary was received. Although many of the people were receptive to his preaching, the pagan priests strongly objected to his presence.

St. Adalbert was stabbed to death on April 23, 997. He was then decapitated and his head displayed on a pole. Duke Boleslaus of Poland ransomed his body for its weight in gold and it was sent back to Gniezno, where a shrine for his relics was built. Later, Prague also received relics of the saint and another shrine was built. Within three or four years of his martyrdom, Adalbert was declared a saint and several "lives" were written by monks and bishops who had known him. In the centuries since, he became known as the patron saint of Bohemia, Poland, Hungary and Prussia. In 1997, the one thousandth anniversary of his martyrdom was celebrated by the Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant churches of Poland, the Czech Republic, Germany and Russia.

Are the times we live in any less tumultuous than those which St. Adalbert experienced? Do not some of the same struggles between Church and State and Christian and non-Christian still

exist? Are there not still tensions between East and West in our world? May St. Adalbert intercede for us that we may remain steadfast in the faith against opposition, that we may share his missionary zeal, and that we may be prepared even to suffer martyrdom. Holy Adalbert, pray for us.

Sources; Rev. Alban Butler: *Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs and Other Saints*; Andrew Louth: *Greek East and Latin West* (Vol. II of the Church in History); online Wikipedia article.

Parish News



Our Lenten classes on the Fridays in April will be on the topic of models of repentance. On April 1: Repentance in the Old Testament; April 8: Repentance in the parables of our Lord; April 15: Repentance in the lives of the Apostles; and on April 22: Repentance in the lives of saints. We will sing the service of Compline at the end of each evening. The classes will be held in homes this year to provide meeting places in several

different areas, beginning at the home of Fr. Nicholas and Kh. Rebecca, 9415 Wire Ave., Silver Spring, MD, on April 1. A Lenten supper will be provided at 6:30PM. We will also meet at the home of Brian and Stella Green, 4124 Mason Ridge Drive in Annandale, Virginia and at the home of Pieter Dykhorst and Joana Tasi, 3319 Alden Place NE, Washington, DC. The location of each week's class will be announced. Please let each host family know if you are able to attend.



We begin Holy Week with the ancient ceremonies of Palm Sunday on April 24. The service begins outside with the blessing and distribution of palms, the reading of the Palm Sunday Gospel, and a procession into the church, where the Liturgy will include the singing of the Passion Gospel of St. Matthew. On Monday and Tuesday of Holy Week, Liturgy will be at 7:30PM (preceded by Vespers at 7:00) and the Passion Gospels of Luke and Mark will be chanted.

The service on Wednesday of Holy Week is the Unction service, at which the oils for catechumens and for healing are blessed. On Maundy Thursday, the service includes the foot washing, the procession to the Altar of Repose, and the stripping of the Altar. For those who can remain longer, we will have a brief Lenten supper and the service of Tenebrae that evening. The Pre-Sanctified Liturgy is offered on Good Friday at 12 noon and the Passion Gospel of St. John will be sung. The Paschal Vigil will begin with the lighting of the New Fire at 9PM. The Exultet will be sung and the story of our Salvation will be read; water will be blessed, we will sing the Litany of Saints, and the first Mass of Easter will be celebrated followed by a Paschal feast. Announcement of the location of the Holy Week and Pascha services will be made closer to the time.

We are making slow progress towards the necessary permits we need to occupy our new home. As this newsletter “*goes to press*” we are expecting approval for our Storm Water Management plan, which in turn will allow us to submit the plans for our building renovations. If there are no major problems with the plans, we may be able to start construction by the beginning of May, and have an occupancy permit sometime in June.

The Precious and Holy Cross of Our Lord and Savior

by Fr. Timothy Sawchak

We venerate the Precious and Holy Cross of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. On an earthly level, it doesn't make sense to bow down in front of a means of destruction, pain, suffering and execution. But, as we sing, "through the Cross, joy has come into all the world!" A symbol of defeat has now become a symbol of victory and Resurrection! For in the Cross of Christ crucified lies both "the power of God and the wisdom of God" for those being saved. [I Cor. 1:24]

It is on the Cross that Christ proclaims the vital words; "It is finished!" What is finished? The creation of man is complete as Christ dies on the Cross as a human being and descends into Hades. Mankind, made in the image and likeness of God, is complete when Christ tramples on death and the Evil One, and brings all of his creation in procession with Him out of hades into everlasting Life after dying on the Cross. Christ's human flesh is resurrected and then ascends to sit at the right hand of the Father. With Him, He brings our human flesh to be with Him in Paradise as St. Paul writes: "When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. [Col. 3:4]

God's love of His Creation is complete as Christ dies on the Cross. Our Veneration of the Cross is expressed by the faithful through prayer, fasting, almsgiving and the forgiveness of the trespasses of others.

Reprinted from *The Lenten Journey*, a pamphlet published by International Orthodox Christian Charities.

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

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>April 2016</h1>						<i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i>
					1 St. Melito of Sardis, BC, 177 <i>Lenten Supper, Class & Compline at 6:30pm</i>	2 St. Mary of Egypt, Penitent, c. 421 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
3 Third Sunday in Lent; St. Sixtus I, PM, 127 V	4 St. Isidore of Seville, BCD, 636	5	6 St. Notker, C, 912	7 St. Tikhon of Moscow, BC, Patron of the Western Rite, 1925	8 <i>Lenten Supper, Class & Compline at 6:30pm</i>	9 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
10 Fourth Sunday in Lent V	11 St. Leo the Great, PCD, 461	12	13 St. Hermenegild, C, 583	14 St. Justin, M, 167	15 <i>Lenten Supper, Class & Compline at 6:30pm</i>	16 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
17 Passion Sunday; St. Anicetus, PM, c. 168 V	18	19 St. Alphege of Canterbury, BM, 1012	20	21	22 Seven Sorrows of the BVM; Ss. Soter, & Caius, Bb, Mm <i>Lenten Supper, Class & Compline at 6:30pm</i>	23 St. George, M, 303 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
24 Palm Sunday R/V	25 Monday in Holy Week (<i>St. Mark the Evangelist, 1st c. tr. to 5/10</i>) <i>Mass at 7:30pm</i> V (location TBA)	26 Tuesday in Holy Week; Ss. Cletus, BM, 89 & Marcellinus, BM, 304 <i>Mass at 7:30pm</i> V (location TBA)	27 Wednesday in Holy Week <i>Mass at 7:30pm</i> W (location TBA)	28 Maundy Thursday <i>Mass at 7:30pm</i> W (location TBA)	29 Good Friday <i>Liturgy at noon</i> B (location TBA)	30 Holy Saturday <i>Vigil at 9pm</i> V/W (location TBA)

Confessions may be made during the Psalms at Matins, following Vespers, and by appointment.

Coffee Hour follows Sunday Liturgy. Christian Education for all is offered during Coffee Hour.