

# ✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

May 2016 - Volume XXI, Issue 5

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

*From a Discourse by*  
*St. Symeon the*  
*New Theologian*  
*d. 1022*

**E**aster, that joyful day, that day of all gladness and delight, the day of Christ's Resurrection, has arrived in the circle of the year.

But rather, it happens daily and eternally in those who know its mystery, and so has filled our hearts with unspeakable joy and gladness. Likewise it has broken off the labor of the all-holy fast, or, rather, it has perfected our souls and encouraged them as well. So, as you see, it has come and invited all the faithful together to rest and to thanksgiving. Let us therefore give thanks to the Lord, who has brought us over the sea of Lent and led us with joy into the harbor of His Resurrection. Let us give thanks to Him, both those who have nobly and zealously completed the course of Lent with fervent resolve and struggles of virtue, and those of us as well who have been weak in this matter through neglect and weakness of soul.

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**H**e it is who in great generosity gives crowns to the zealous and duly rewards their labors, and also in mercy and loving-kindness grants forgiveness to the weaker. He sees the dispositions and intentions of our souls rather than the labors of our bodies, by which we exercise ourselves in virtue, whether we increase our asceticism out of eagerness of soul or practice less than the zealous ones because of the weakness of our bodies.

According to our intentions He measures out the prizes and the gifts of the Spirit to each one, whether He grants fame and glory to one who is zealous or leaves him still in lowliness and in need of more strenuous purification.

**L**et us look and carefully examine what is the mystery of that Resurrection of Christ our God which takes place mystically in us at all times, if we are willing, and how Christ is buried in us in a tomb and how He united himself to our souls and rises again, and raises us with Himself.

**C**hrist our God was hanged on the cross and nailed on it the sins of the world. He tasted death and went down to the uttermost depths of hell. Again, He returned from hell into His own spotless body, from which He had in no way been separated as he descended thither, and forthwith He arose from the dead. After that he ascended into heaven with great glory and power. So, likewise, as we have now come out of the world and entered into the tomb of

repentance and humiliation by being assimilated to the sufferings of the Lord, He Himself comes down from heaven and enters into our body as into a tomb. He unites Himself to our souls and raises them up, though they were undoubtedly dead, and then grants to him who has thus been raised with Christ that he may see the glory of his mystical resurrection.

Christ's resurrection is thus our resurrection, ours who lie here below... Christ's resurrection and His glory are our glory. Through His resurrection in us it comes into being in us, is shown to us, and is seen by us... The resurrection of the soul is union with life. The body is dead and cannot live or be called alive unless it receives the living soul in itself and is joined to it, though not mingled with it. Likewise the soul cannot live unless it is ineffably and without confusion united to God, who is truly the life eternal...

Most men believe in the resurrection of Christ, but very few have a clear vision of it. Those who have no vision thereof cannot even adore Christ Jesus as the Holy One and as Lord. As it is written, "No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit." [I Cor. 12:3]... The resurrection of Christ takes place in each of us who believes, and that not once, but every hour, so to speak, when Christ the Master arises in us, resplendent in array and flashing with the lightnings of incorruption and Deity. For the light-bringing coming of the Spirit shows forth to us, as in early morning, the Master's resurrection, or, rather, it grants us to see the Risen One Himself. Therefore, we say, "The Lord is God, and He has given us light" [Ps. 118:27] and we allude to His second Coming and add these words, "Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord." [Ps. 118:26]. Those to whom Christ has given light as He has risen, to them he has appeared spiritually, He has been shown to their spiritual eyes. When this happens to us through the Spirit He raises us up from the dead and gives us life.

## *St. John I, Pope and Martyr*

### *Feast Day ~ May 27*

Many saints of the Church have received the crown of martyrdom because of the policies of political leaders - from the first Christian martyrs who refused to reverence state deities or to acknowledge emperors as divine, to those who suffered in the twentieth century at the hands of atheist Communist leaders. In the intervening centuries, there were many other situations in which a Christian could suffer for his faith, even at the hands of those who also called themselves "Christian." The Roman Pope St. John I fell asleep in the Lord on May 18, 526, due to the harsh conditions which he suffered when he was imprisoned by the Ostrogothic King Theodoric.

Two hundred years after Arius first propounded his idea that God the Son was not equal to God the Father, the Arian heresy was still active among the converted tribes which had settled in Europe as the Roman Empire dissolved in the West. Among those tribes, the Ostrogoths had come to rule in parts of Italy in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. King Theodoric, whose headquarters were at Ravenna, was an Arian, but his position was becoming tenuous. As early as 506, the Frankish King Clovis had converted to Orthodox Christianity and in 510 Theodoric's own son-in-law, Sigismund of Burgundy, became Orthodox. When Theodoric's brother-in-law and compatriot in the Arian religious view, the Vandal King Thrasimund, died in 523, Theodoric felt threatened. If rulers and their people in the West were of the same faith as those in the East, the Emperor had greater possibility for reuniting the Christian world and diluting the power of the smaller rulers such as himself.

Lashing out at this threat, Theodoric accused the eminent Christian philosopher Boethius of conspiring with the Emperor against Gothic rule and had him executed. Emperor Justin reacted to this by enacting a law banning Arian churches in the Byzantine



territories, making Theodoric even more defensive. Pope John was caught in the middle of these power plays.

John had been one of the seven deacons of Rome when he was elected to the papacy following the death of Pope Hormisdas. John was already fairly old and frail when he became pope, and he was definitely

not happy to be sent on a difficult mission for the Arian ruler. But Theodoric ordered the bishop to travel to Constantinople to demand that the new edict be rescinded, that earlier regulations which had allowed Orthodox Christians to take over the buildings of Arians be reversed, and that people who had converted from Arianism to Orthodoxy be allowed to return to their earlier Arian beliefs. Pope John protested against this mission, but the king threatened harm to the Orthodox in Italy if their bishop did not carry out his orders.

Traveling with several other bishops and some senators, Pope John left on his arduous journey and was heartened by the reception he received upon his arrival shortly before Pascha of 526. People went out of the city to greet the bishop as he arrived and Emperor Justin was very cordial to him. The pope was even given the privilege of celebrating the Western Liturgy in Latin in the great church of Hagia Sophia on Easter.

Undoubtedly, the Pope and the Emperor had much to discuss! It seems that Emperor Justin agreed to refrain from enacting his edict against the Arians in an extreme manner. The bishop refused to even ask that Arians who had converted to Orthodoxy could return to their heretical beliefs. But the concessions that were granted were not enough for Theodoric. When the bishop arrived back in Rome, exhausted from his travels, he was immediately

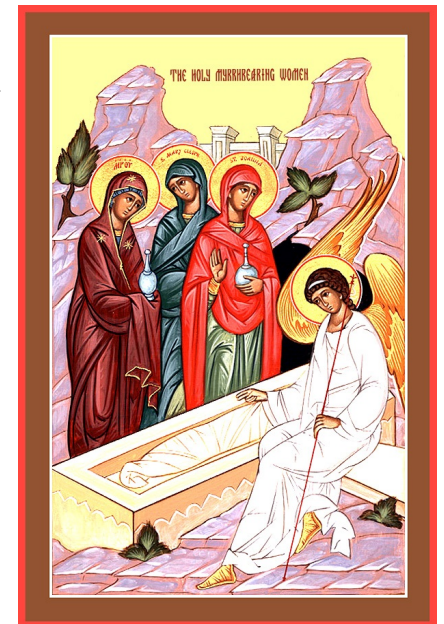
arrested and thrown into prison in Ravenna, where he died from hunger and ill treatment on May 18, 526. He was hastily buried in Ravenna, but on May 27, his body was exhumed and he was taken to Rome and given a proper burial in the nave of St. Peter's Church. His feast day is the day of this burial.

We are once again living in an age of heterodoxy, heresy, schism, and paganism. Our bishops must transmit the faith of the Apostles to believers but also represent the Church in the world. In our own day, bishops have been kidnaped and martyred. May we ask for the intercessions of St. John, Pope and Martyr, for the safety of our bishops. *Holy John, pray for us.*

## Parish News

On Easter Day, May 1, we will celebrate Mass at 11:00 am. Just as at the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord, it is the Western tradition to allow for three celebrations of the Liturgy on Easter. Fr. Nicholas and Fr. Raphael beg to be excused from the Mass to be celebrated at dawn!

Because of delays in the process of applying for Montgomery County permits for remodeling and preparing our new property and obtaining an occupancy permit, we will continue to meet on Sunday mornings at 6801 Greentree Rd., Bethesda, MD with the exception of Easter Sunday and Sunday,



May 15. Please call 703-618-2348 for information about meeting place and time on these Sundays.

A parish work day has been scheduled for Saturday, May 14 for work on the Roxbury Road property - both inside the house and on the grounds. Please let Pieter Dykhorst, property committee chairman, know if you are available to help.

## *Christ's Resurrection*

An excerpt from *The Twelve Feasts of the Lord*  
by Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos

Christ's Resurrection is the greatest event in history. It is a matter of deification and resurrection of the human nature and of a hope for deification and resurrection of our own person. Since the medicine has been found, there is hope of life. Through Christ's Resurrection both life and death acquire another meaning. We do not regard as life the whole of the events of history, but communion with God. And we do not regard as death the end of the present life but man's withdrawal from Christ, while separation of the soul from the body is not death, but a temporary sleep. The Apostle Paul, precisely because he feels united with the Risen Christ, can confess: "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." [Rom. 8: 38-39]

In a catechetical oration of St. John Chrysostom which is a triumphal hymn of victory, he says that through Christ's Resurrection all human problems have been overcome. No one should weep about poverty and in general about deprivation of necessary material goods, because the common Kingdom has appeared. No one should bewail the sins which he has committed,

because forgiveness has risen from the tomb. No one should fear death, because the death of the Savior has freed us.

## *The Finding of the Cross*

The holy and life-giving Cross of Christ is the great emblem of our faith. Christians are "marked as Christ's own" with this sign at Baptism and Chrismation and all other blessings. We sign ourselves with this symbol in church services and in our private prayers. The Cross appears on church buildings throughout the world and over the altars within; it is displayed in our homes; it is woven into the rich fabrics for vestments; it is worn on the breasts of most Christians. The means of our Lord's death became the means of our salvation. We hold this sign in the greatest honor and sing its glory in the feasts of the Church.

We pay special honor to the Cross on the feast of the Finding (or "Invention") of the Holy Cross on May 3, when it is celebrated in the West (transferred this year to May 12 because of the late date of Easter). This feast commemorates the discovery of the remains of Christ's Cross in Jerusalem by St. Helena in the year 326. In the Eastern Rite, the commemoration of this historical event is combined with the celebration, on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross on September 14, of the return of the relics of the Cross to Jerusalem in the year 628 after its capture by the Persians.

There are many versions of the miracle story about the discovery of the Cross. St. Helena, at age 80, is said to have made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to see the places where Christ lived and walked and there, she asked the local Christians to point out to her the place where He had been crucified. Although a shrine to the pagan goddess Venus had been erected over the place of the Crucifixion, Christians had continued to pray at this place and showed Helena who then ordered that the shrine be torn down.

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

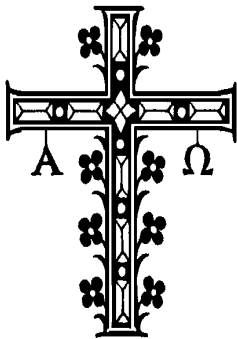
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Excavations revealed the trash dump where the crosses and their inscriptions had been discarded.

St. Macarius, the Patriarch in Jerusalem at that time, aided St. Helena in identifying the Cross by placing those found over a sick woman, who was healed by the touch of one Cross - the True Cross of Christ. A church was built to mark this place as one of the holiest sites for Christians and a piece from the Cross was sent to Rome where another church was built for its keeping.

Through the ages, many other pieces from this holy relic were sent to monasteries and cathedrals around the world. One of the most beautiful hymns sung in our Western Rite services, “The Royal Banners Forward Go”, sung throughout Passion-tide and on feasts of the Cross, was written by the poet Venantius Fortunatus (540-600) for the presentation of a relic of the Cross to the monastery of St. Radegund in Poitiers in the year 569. Donated by the Emperor Justin II, this relic was brought in procession to the monastery by Bishop Eufronius of Tours with “much chanting of Psalms, with candles gleaming and with a great burning of incense” as described by St. Gregory of Tours in his *History of the Franks*.

*We adore thee, O Christ, and we bless thee, because by thy Cross thou hast redeemed the world.*



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>May 2016</h1>						<i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i>
<b>1</b> Pascha: The Resurrection of Our Lord  <i>W</i>	<b>2</b> Monday in the Octave of Easter; St. Athanasius, BCD, 373	<b>3</b> Tuesday in the Octave of Easter	<b>4</b> Wednesday in the Octave of Easter; St. Monica, Ma, 387	<b>5</b> Thursday in the Octave of Easter	<b>6</b> Friday in the Octave of Easter; St. John before the Latin Gate, 95	<b>7</b> Saturday in the Octave of Easter; St. Alexis Toth, PrC, 1909; St. John of Beverly, BC, 721 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>8</b> Low Sunday: First Sunday after Easter; Apparition of St. Michael of the Archangel  <i>W</i>	<b>9</b> St. Gregory Nazianzen, BCD, 389	<b>10</b> St. Mark the Evangelist, 1st c. (tr.); Ss. Gordian, 362 & Epimachus, 250, Mm	<b>11</b> Ss. Philip & James, Apostles, 1 <sup>st</sup> c. (tr.)	<b>12</b> Finding of the Holy Cross (tr.); St. Epiphanius, BC, c. 403	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> St. Boniface of Tarsus, M, 290  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>15</b> Second Sunday after Easter; St. Pachomius, Ab, 346  <i>W</i>	<b>16</b> St. Brendan the Navigator, 577, Ab	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> St. Venantius, M, 250; St. Theodotus & comp., Mm, c. 303	<b>19</b> St. Pudentiana, V, c.160; St. Dunstan, BC, 988	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> St. Constantine the Great, Emperor C, 337  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>22</b> Third Sunday after Easter  <i>W</i>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> St. Vincent of Lerins, C, 450	<b>25</b> St. Urban, PM, 230; St. Aldhelm, BC, 709	<b>26</b> St. Augustine of Canterbury, BC, 605; St. Eleutherius, PM, c. 189	<b>27</b> St. Bede, CD, 735; St. John I, PM, 526	<b>28</b> St. Germanus of Paris, BC, 576  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>29</b> Fourth Sunday after Easter  <i>W</i>	<b>30</b> St. Felix I, PM, 274  <i>(Memorial Day)</i>	<b>31</b> St. Petronilla, VM, c. 100				

*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.*