

# ✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

June, 2016 - Volume XXI, Issue 6

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

*From a sermon by*  
*St. Leo the Great*  
*d. 461*

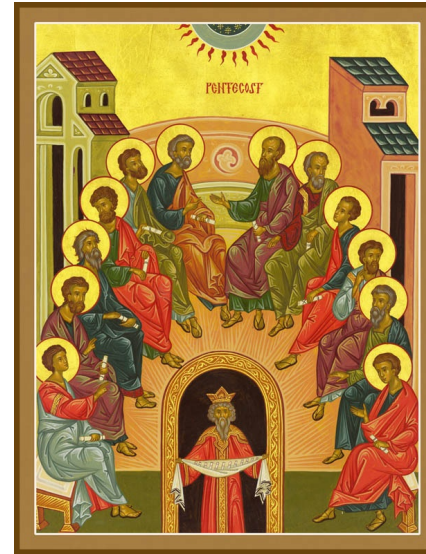
**A**s once to the Hebrew people, freed from Egypt, the law was given on Mt. Sinai on the fiftieth day after the sacrifice of the lamb, so

after the Passion of Christ when the true Lamb of God was killed, on the fiftieth day from his Resurrection, the Holy Spirit came down on the apostles and the community of believers. The attentive Christian can easily know that the beginnings of the Old Testament had ministered to the principles of the Gospel, and that the Second Covenant was established by the same Spirit who had set up the first.

**A**s the history of the apostles shows us, *When the fifty days were completed and they were all together in the same place, suddenly a sound was made from heaven as of a violent wind approaching, and it filled the whole house where they were. And there appeared to them parted tongues as if of fire,*

*Inside:*

<i>Saints Peter and Paul, Apostles.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Parish News.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Volunteer Opportunities.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>The Great and Holy Council.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Calendar.....</i>	<i>11</i>



*and these rested on each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak in other tongues, just as the Holy Spirit was giving them to speak. [Acts 2:1-4] O how swift is that speech of wisdom! Where God is the teacher, how quickly is that learned which is being taught! No interpretation is used in order to understand, no practice is needed in order to*

use it. No time is needed to study, but, with the Spirit of Truth “blowing wherever he pleases,” [John 3:8] the particular voices of each distinct people become familiar in the mouth of the Church.

**F**rom this day the trumpet of the Gospel teaching resounds. From this day showers of graces, streams of benedictions, water all the desert and every wasteland, since to renew the face of the earth, God’s Spirit hovered over the water. To take away the old darkness, beams of new light flash out, when by the splendor of those glowing tongues, the Word of the Lord becomes clear and speech takes fire. Both the force of giving light and the power for burning were present for this reason, to create knowledge and to destroy sin...

**L**et us rouse ourselves with one mind to the celebration of Pentecost. Let us rejoice in honor of the Holy Spirit through whom the whole Church is sanctified and every rational soul is filled. He is the inspiration of faith, the teacher

of knowledge, the fountain of love, the sign of chastity, and the cause of all virtue. Let the spirits of all the faithful rejoice that in the whole world one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is extolled by the praise of all languages, and that this sign, which appeared as fire, perseveres in both its work and its gift. This Spirit of Truth makes the home of his glory shine with the glow of his own light, and in his temple wishes that nothing be dark, nothing be lukewarm.

## *Saints Peter and Paul, Apostles*

*Feast Day ~ June 29*

On June 29, we celebrate two of our most revered saints, two men whose names have been intertwined in the Church's memory from earliest times. They are patrons of both the Church in Antioch and the Church in Rome. Were there ever two more different people than St. Peter and St. Paul? Their backgrounds - family, education, social status - were completely different, their personalities, and even their physical characteristics were completely different. Peter was the rough, strong fisherman, a Jewish tradesman from the small village of Bethsaida who lived and worked surrounded by family, who was impetuous and who could be described as one who "spoke before thinking". Paul, on the other hand, was born in the sophisticated metropolis of Tarsus; he was highly educated by the eminent teacher, Gamaliel; although a Jew, he was a Roman citizen and therefore, protected by Roman law. He was an intellectual, a gifted writer, and his actions were based on well-thought-out convictions. He was afflicted with a physical infirmity. They were two very different men. And yet, in God's great plan for his Church,

these two men were dramatically changed and they were brought together in such a way that they changed the world forever.

The vivid pictures of the two men presented in the Holy Gospels and in the Acts of the Apostles, our primary source of information about them, are very familiar to all of us as we hear them in the liturgical readings throughout the year. We first encounter Peter in Matthew 4:18 when Christ is "walking by the Sea of Galilee" and sees two fishermen - Peter and his brother Andrew (obviously, this was a family business). He called them to follow Him, and they immediately dropped their nets and did just that. (In St. John's Gospel, Andrew is called first and he brings his brother to meet Christ so that he, too, can follow Him.) The *Orthodox Study Bible* notes describe these disciples as "peasants", unlearned and unsophisticated in their understanding of Judaic theology.

Throughout the Gospels, Peter is continually with Jesus, hearing the parables, witnessing the miracles. He is present at the Transfiguration and, even before the majesty of that moment could sink in, impetuous Peter blurts out his desire to build a booth for Jesus, and for Moses and Elijah who had appeared in the light with Christ, just as those in our day who would snap photos on their cell phones instead of fully experiencing an important event!

Peter knows that Jesus can heal so when his mother-in-law is sick with a high fever, he calls for the Lord who brings her back to health immediately. [Luke 4:38-39] Above all, Peter knows that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God." [Matt. 16:16]



Jesus had changed Peter's name from Simon to the word which means "rock". For three years, this rock of devotion and loyalty had followed Christ as a fervent disciple, but when faced with the most difficult test leading up to the Crucifixion, Peter's courage dissolved and he denied even knowing Jesus. The remorse which he felt was then wiped away by the knowledge of the

Resurrection and by Christ's

post-resurrection appearances to his disciples. Peter's courage was renewed ten-fold and he miraculously became an eloquent preacher, converting 10,000 souls by his convincing words on the day of Pentecost.

From that time on, Peter lived up to his name as the "rock" of the Church, traveling throughout Palestine and Asia Minor, preaching and healing in Christ's name. Because of a dream in which he was told by God to eat anything that God had cleansed, the Church was released from the restrictions of Jewish dietary laws. Peter became the first Bishop of Antioch before serving the Church in Rome, where he was imprisoned by the order of the Emperor Nero and crucified upside-down in the year 67. This "rock of faith" had - despite his impetuous nature and the limitations of his background - been the chief of the Apostles and now became an intercessor for us at the heavenly throne.

The Biblical stories first reveal St. Paul at the stoning of St. Stephen, the first martyr. The angry Jewish zealot who stood by and watched this murder was Saul of Tarsus. Saul was on a rampage to root out the followers of Jesus, going house-to-house and arresting men and women and putting them into prison. [Acts 8:3] But these misguided efforts soon came to a sudden end when Saul was on his way to Damascus to make more arrests. The dramatic story tells how Saul was struck blind and heard the voice of Jesus saying that he had been persecuting Him and that he was to go into the city and await instructions. Another vision was given to the Christian Ananias, who reluctantly found Saul and healed him of his blindness. Jesus said that Saul had been made a "vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel." [Acts 9:15]

Most of the remainder of the New Testament is a record of the changed life of Paul - renamed by Christ as an indication of his new life and purpose. After instruction by the other Apostles, Paul traveled extensively throughout the Roman Empire, preaching and teaching, establishing churches, being persecuted himself and having some narrow escapes, being shipwrecked, and always suffering from his unnamed chronic illness. His sometimes irascible personality led to conflicts (particularly with St. Barnabas). After being under house arrest for several years and demanding that his case be tried in a court in Rome, Paul was executed by beheading in the year 67 on the same day as the martyrdom of St. Peter. St. Paul's letters to the Christian communities he had established in many places have been read in churches for 2,000 years. This great "apostle to the Gentiles" now also intercedes for us in heaven.

The lives and witness of these two great saints should be an inspiration for those of us who follow them in the way of Christ. We should see that God can take any sort of person - simple or brilliant, strong or weak, poor or privileged, impetuous or thoughtful - and make a new person, one who can help to change the world. The icon of Saints Peter and Paul show the two holding a church building between them - a reminder to us that the Church needs people with many different characteristics and backgrounds and that we can all work together to further the Kingdom of God. May the intercessions of Saints Peter and Paul help us as we strive to serve Christ in His Church.

References: *Orthodox Saints*, Vol. 2 by George Poulos; *The Orthodox Study Bible*; *The Lives of the Holy Apostles* (published by Holy Apostles Convent, Buena Vista, CO); *The Prologue from Ochrid* by St. Nikolai Velimirović.

## Parish News



We celebrate two great feast days in this month. On Ascension Day, forty days after the Resurrection, as Christ ended his bodily presence on earth, we celebrate the fact that He carried our human nature, which He had assumed at the Incarnation, into Heaven. Our celebration of Ascension Day will be on the Eve, Wednesday, June 8, with Vespers at 7pm and Mass at 7:30 with a pot-luck supper following (*location TBA*). The Paschal

Candle is extinguished following the reading of the Gospel during this service.

On Pentecost, fifty days after the Resurrection, we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit, which descended upon the Apostles, emboldening them to continue the work of preaching, teaching, performing miracles, and establishing the Church throughout the world. On Pentecost, June 19, the portion of the Epistle which tells the story of the Apostles' ability to speak to all people in their own language will be read in as many languages as we can manage, as is our custom.

The Parish Life Conference will be held at Antiochian Village (near Bolivar, Pennsylvania) from June 29 to July 3, with Western Rite Vespers offered on Friday evening, July 1. Please speak with Fr. Nicholas if you are able to attend any part of this annual gathering of our church family.

Thanks to all who participated in our parish work day in May. It is important during this interim time, while we await County permits to remodel and occupy our new home, that we maintain the beauty of the grounds and keep the building in good repair.

## Volunteer Opportunities

FOCUS (*Fellowship of Orthodox Christians United to Serve*) is a pan-Orthodox association with centers in fifty cities providing food, job skills, medical aid, and other needed services to the poor and needy. FOCUS will begin two new programs in our area this summer and volunteers are needed to help.

Volunteers are needed to prepare meals at St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Cathedral, in Washington and at St. Mary's in Falls Church, Virginia. More information and the opportunity to sign up to volunteer can be found at [focusna.org](http://focusna.org).

# *The Great and Holy Council*



The long-anticipated Great and Holy Council of the Orthodox Church is about to begin. The meeting, to be held on the Island of Crete during Pentecost - from June 16-27 - will include representatives from the fourteen autocephalous churches around the world. During many years of preparation for

this Council, committees have met, documents have been drawn up and debated, and logistical details have been worked out.

The concept of a “conciliar” church, whose leaders make decisions in council with each other, discussing various positions, and praying for the guidance of the Holy Spirit existed from the earliest days of Christianity. The Council of Jerusalem, described in Acts 15, set the precedent for all future decision-making in the Church.

Topics to be addressed at this council include: the mission of the Orthodox Church in today’s world, the issue of the Orthodox “diaspora”, autonomy and autocephaly and the means of granting it, the sacrament of marriage, the importance of fasting and its observance, and relations of the Orthodox Church with the rest of the Christian world.

The seven Great Ecumenical Council dealt with various Christological controversies, answering the question “who is Jesus?” The world has changed very much in the last twelve hundred years, since the last Ecumenical Council in 787! There are many new challenges to Christianity and a unified voice from the patriarchs, bishops, and theologians regarding an appropriate Orthodox response to those challenges would give hope to all of us. May we pray fervently that our Church can once again meet in council and be led by the Holy Spirit.

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

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>June 2016</h1>						<i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i>
			1	2 Ss. Marcellinus, Peter and Erasmus, Mm, 304	3 St. Kevin of Glendalough, Ab, c. 618	4 St. Petroc, C, 564  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
5 Fifth Sunday after Easter; St. Boniface, BM, 754  <i>W</i>	6 Rogation Monday	7 Rogation Tuesday	8 Vigil of the Ascension  <i>Mass at 7:30pm W</i>	9 Ascension Day; St. Columba of Iona, Ab, 597	10 of the Octave of Ascension; St. Margaret of Scotland, QW, 1092; Vigil of St. Barnabas	11 St. Barnabas, Apostle, 1 <sup>st</sup> c.; of the Octave of Ascension  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
12 Sunday after the Ascension; Ss. Basilides, late 3 <sup>rd</sup> c., Cyrinus, Nabor & Nazarius, c. 303, Mm <i>W</i>	13 of the Octave of Ascension	14 St. Basil the Great, BCD, 379; of the Octave of Ascension	15 of the Octave of Ascension; Ss. Vitus, Modestus & Crescentia, Mm, c. 303	16 Octave Day of the Ascension	17	18 Vigil of Pente- cost; St. Ephrem the Syrian, DnCD, 373  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
19 Pentecost (omit Ss. Gervase & Protase, Mm, 2nd. c.)  <i>R</i>	20 Monday after Pentecost (omit St. Silverius, PM, 538; Translation of St. Edward, KM, 980)	21 Tuesday after Pentecost	22 Ember Wed- nesday in the Oct. of Pentecost; St. Alban, Proto-martyr of England, 209 & St. Paulinus, BC, 431	23 Thursday after Pentecost; St. Etheldreda, QV, 679	24 Ember Friday in the Octave of Pentecost ( <i>Nativity of St. John the Baptist tr. to 6/27</i> )	25 Ember Saturday in the Octave of Pentecost  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
26 Trinity Sunday; First Sunday after Pentecost; Ss. John & Paul, Mm, c. 362  <i>W</i>	27 Nativity of St. John the Baptist (tr.)	28 St. Irenaeus of Lyons, BM, 202; Vigil of Ss. Peter & Paul	29 Ss. Peter & Paul, Apostles, 1st c.	30 Corpus Christi; Commemor- ation of St. Paul the Apostle		<i>Parish Life Conference at Antiochian Village, June 29-July 3</i>

*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.*