

✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

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St. Gregory the Great Orthodox Church
A Western Rite Congregation of the Antiochian Archdiocese
13407 Roxbury Rd., Silver Spring, MD -- stgregoryoc.org

An excerpt from a Homily of St. Augustine of Hippo d. 430

The passion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ gives us the confidence of glory and a lesson in the endurance of suffering.

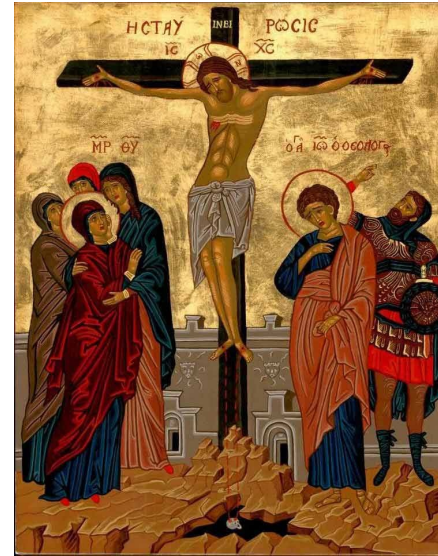
Is there anything which the hearts of the faithful may not promise themselves from the grace of God? It was not enough that the only Son of

God co-eternal with the Father, should be born as man from man for them - He even died for them at the hands of men, whom He had created.

What God promises us for the future is great, but what we recall as already done for us is much greater. When Christ died for the wicked, where were they or what were they? Who can doubt that He will give the saints his life, since He has already given them His death? Why is human weakness slow to believe that men will one day live with God? A much more incredible thing has already happened: God died for men.

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For who is Christ, unless that which in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God? This Word of God became flesh and dwelt among us: for in Himself He was incapable of dying for us, unless He had assumed mortal flesh from us. In this way the immortal One was able to die, in this way He wished to give life to mortals; He would later make them sharers in Himself, since He had

first shared in what was theirs. For of ourselves we did not have the ability to live, as of Himself He did not have the ability to die.

Accordingly He carried out a wonderful transaction with us through our mutual sharing: He died from what was ours, we will live from what is His.

So far from being ashamed at the death of the Lord our God, we must have the fullest trust in it; it must be our greatest boast, for by assuming from us death, which He found in us, He pledged most faithfully to give us life in Himself, which we could not have of ourselves.

He loved us so much that what we deserved by sin He who was without sin suffered for sinners. Surely then He who justifies will give us what justice gives. Surely He whose promise is truthful will give us the rewards of the saints, since though without wickedness Himself He bore the punishment of the wicked.

So, brethren, let us acknowledge without fear or indeed let us declare publicly that Christ was crucified for us. Let us

announce it not trembling but rejoicing, not with shame but boasting.

The apostle Paul saw Him, and approved a cause for boasting. Though he had many great things, divine things, to recall about Christ, he did not say that he boasted of Christ's marvels, that Christ created the world when He was God with the Father and ruled the world when He was man as we were, but what he did say was *Far be it from me to glory except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

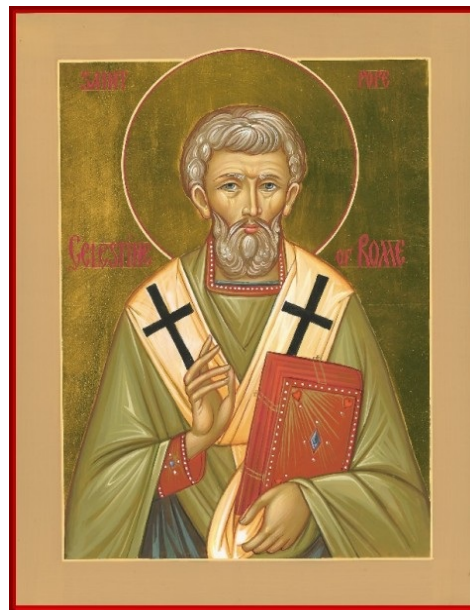
St. Celestine, Pope of Rome

Feast Day ~ April 8

At many points in the history of the Church, Christians have been accused of being merely *against* things. "Thou shalt nots" appear to take precedence over "Thou shalt". What we believe is wrong seems to be emphasized over what we believe is right. This accusation could certainly be made against Pope St. Celestine I, whose pontificate lasted from 422 to 432.

Very little is known of Celestine's early life except that he was a Roman from the region of Campania. He is known to have lived in Milan (perhaps as a student) when St. Ambrose was the bishop of that city. He is mentioned as a deacon in a document by Pope Innocent I in the year 416. Evidence in his writings suggest that he had received an excellent education. When Pope St. Boniface died in the year 422, Celestine was selected to succeed him.

After the terrible persecutions of the early centuries of the Church, which produced so many martyrs and confessors, Christians had enjoyed the peace and safety of a legal and favored religion since the reign of Constantine I. But the dangers came



from within now, and with each wave of controversy regarding theological innovation, that peace and safety were threatened. Pope Celestine had to deal with three of these controversies.

One of the heresies that had persisted for several centuries was that of Novatianism (begun during the persecutions of Emperor Decius) - the position that forgiveness for apostasy could not be given by the Church, no matter the

sincerity of the penitent. Even though this controversy had been settled by the excommunication of Novatian, adherents of this rigid approach remained active, with congregations occupying churches under the jurisdiction of the Pope in Celestine's time. The Pope removed the Novatian priests and their followers from church buildings and, as attested in a letter of St. Vincent of Lerins in 434, wrote to the clergy in Gaul that *by their silence* on this issue, they were acquiescent in the error.

Further afield, Pope Celestine had to deal with a controversy among the Christians in Britain. There, the priest Pelagius taught that man, through his free will, had the power to achieve salvation without direct aid from God. Pelagius died in the year 418, but his heresy outlived him and Celestine was compelled to send Germanus, the bishop of Auxerre in Gaul, to Britain to combat this false teaching. (St. Bede tells a wonderful story of St. Germanus' time in Britain when he aided in the winning of a battle through the shout of the Paschal "Alleluia!") Urging the Pope to send Germanus was the presbyter Palladius, who was

soon sent by the Pope to be the first bishop of Ireland. St. Patrick may also have been sent by Pope Celestine.

In his ten-year pontificate, Pope Celestine had yet another heresy to combat - that of Nestorius, the Bishop of Constantinople who taught that Christ was two distinct persons - one divine and one human (as opposed to the Orthodox teaching that Christ is one person with two natures, human and divine). This controversy raged primarily in the Eastern part of the Empire, but St. Celestine, as an ardent protector of Orthodox Christianity sent representatives to the First Council of Ephesus (the Third Ecumenical Council) in 431 to support the teaching of the Apostles. He also wrote letters to bishops in Africa, Gaul, and the East in support of the Orthodox position.

St. Celestine passed from this life to the next in 432 and his body was buried in the cemetery of St. Priscilla in Rome. His relics were later translated to the basilica of St. Prassede.

Was St. Celestine a “nay-sayer”? Did he just represent a negative religion which is against many ideas? The fathers of the Church teach us that vigilance is essential for combating the evil and sin that exist in this world. We have been entrusted with the Truth of God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - and we must guard this Truth against all efforts to pervert it, to water it down, to make it more palatable for the people of today. We must remember St. Celestine’s admonition that, when Truth is thwarted, *by our silence* we consent to the sin. May St. Celestine pray for us as we face mighty challenges to the Orthodox understanding of Christian teaching.

[Resources: St. Nikolai of Ochrid: *The Prologue From Ochrid*; online articles from the website of the Orthodox Church of America, EWTN, and Wikipedia]

The Light of Christ



We know Christ our Savior as the “light of the world”, a “light to enlighten the Gentiles” the “true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” So many times in our liturgies we use candlelight to represent this True Light and, at the beginning of our celebration of the greatest of Christian feasts - Pascha - we are especially exuberant in our use of candlelight! The Paschal candle, which is lighted from a bonfire and carried through the church to bring us from darkness into light is the most dramatic of all the candles we use throughout the year.

We have a historical record of St. [Emperor] Constantine filling the city of Milan with innumerable candles to light up that city at the Paschal Vigil in the early 4th century. A letter of St. Jerome to the Deacon Presidio in Piacenza, Italy, written in the year 384, gives evidence of a hymn of praise being sung as one large candle was lighted at the Vigil. During the next several centuries, this practice of using a special candle at the Vigil spread throughout the West. Pope Zosimus (417-18) is credited with introducing it into the churches of Rome, and references by St. Augustine (d. 430) hint at its use in the African churches. St. Bede writes in the early 8th century of the date being inscribed on the Paschal candle.

The method of lighting the Paschal candle was different from place to place and time to time. Most commonly, the candle was (and still is) lighted from flint, but there are records from the

Germanic lands, including Anglo-Saxon England describing the use of sunlight for this purpose. The glass lens used to focus the sunlight was given special care. The placing of five grains of incense on the candle, representing the five wounds of our Lord, dates from the tenth century, and placing the Greek symbols “Alpha” and “Omega” on the candle from the twelfth. During the Middle Ages, Paschal candles were often of enormous size; some in English cathedrals measured thirty-six feet high and those of Westminster and Canterbury Cathedrals were described as weighing 300 pounds!

Another practice in the Middle Ages regarding the Paschal candle was the use of “Exultet scrolls”. The words of the hymn sung by the Deacon (or Priest) were written on long scrolls and these were decorated at intervals along the way with illuminated paintings. As the scroll was unrolled during the singing of the hymn, the paintings - upside down for the singer - were visible to the uneducated faithful in the congregation to help them understand the meaning of what was being sung.

The great hymn known as the “Exultet” is the hymn sung in praise of this special candle. In the earliest days, there were many different hymns sung for this occasion (both St. Ambrose and St. Augustine wrote such hymns); our current hymn is believed to date from before the eighth century but its authorship is unknown. The earliest manuscript in which it appears are those of the three Sacramentaries of Gaul: the Bobbio Missal (seventh century), the Missale Gothicum and the Missale Gallicanum Vetus (both of the eighth century).

Over and over in this hymn, we hear “This is the night...”, drawing us into the mystery of this great festival. We are reminded that, in God’s time, NOW is the time, all is happening now. This is the night of our Passover, when we are freed from slavery and led through the waters of baptism toward the promised land; this is the night on which we are led by the light of this

“pillar of fire” as were Moses and the Hebrew people; this is the night “wherein, breaking the chains of death, Christ ascendeth from hell in triumph;” this is the night “wherein heavenly things are joined unto earthly, things human unto things divine.” This is the night of our salvation through the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord.

[Sources: James Monti: *The Week of Salvation*; Thomas Talley: *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*; online articles from EWTN and The Catholic Encyclopedia]

Parish News

As we begin to settle into our new church home, we continue to beautify both the chapel, the exterior of the building, and the grounds. The Stations of the Cross, which were hung for the Lenten Friday services, will remain in place throughout the year and all are invited to walk these Stations as a form of personal



devotion at any time. The text for the service can be found in the *St. Gregory Prayer Book*. Our large icons of Christ and the Theotokos, which were in storage for a year and a half, have also been hung, as have all the other icons.

Having land surrounding our church will afford us the opportunity to have processions in the beautiful and dramatic services of Holy Week now. On Palm Sunday, weather permitting, we will begin

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outside and process around the building with blessed palms before going into the chapel for the remainder of the Liturgy. We will do the same thing on Maundy Thursday as the Blessed Sacrament is taken from the Chapel to the Altar of Repose in the Parish Hall. *(Please wear comfortable shoes for these processions!)*

Holy Week at St. Gregory's

Palm Sunday - April 9 - Matins at 9AM; Blessing of Palms and Procession at 9:30 followed by High Mass with the singing of the Passion Gospel of St. Matthew

Holy Monday and Holy Tuesday - April 10, 11 - Vespers at 7PM, Mass at 7:30; Liturgy with the Passion Gospels of Ss Mark and Luke

Holy Wednesday - April 12 - Vespers at 7PM, Mass with the Blessing of the Oils and Unction at 7:30

Maundy Thursday - April 13 - Vespers at 7PM; Mass with the Foot Washing, Procession of the Sacrament to the Altar of Repose, and the Stripping of the Altar beginning at 7:30, with Tenebrae following.

Good Friday - April 14 - Mass of the Presanctified at 12 noon with the Passion Gospel of St. John and Veneration of the Cross

Holy Saturday - April 15 - Confessions at 8PM, Lighting of the New Fire and the Paschal Vigil beginning at 9:00.

Pascha - Easter Day - April 16 - Mass at 10AM (no Matins)

English: Christ is Risen! Indeed He is risen!

Arabic: El Messieh kahm! Hakken kahm!

Greek: Christos anesti! Alithos anesti!

Russian: Khristos voskrese! Voistinu voskrese!

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>April 2017</h1>						1 St. Melito of Sardis, BC, 177 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
2 Passion Sunday; St. Mary of Egypt, Penitent, c. 421 <i>V</i>	3 St. Sixtus I, PM, 127	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; Seven Sorrows of the BVM	8 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
9 Palm Sunday <i>R/V</i>	10 Monday in Holy Week <i>Mass at 7:30pm V</i>	11 Tuesday in Holy Week; St. Leo the Great, PCD, 461 <i>Mass at 7:30pm V</i>	12 Wednesday in Holy Week <i>Mass at 7:30pm W</i>	13 Maundy Thursday (omit St. Herme-negild, C, 583) <i>Mass at 7:30pm W</i>	14 Good Friday (omit St. Justin, M, 167) <i>Liturgy at noon B</i>	15 Holy Saturday <i>Vigil at 9pm V/W</i>
16 Pascha: The Resurrection of Our Lord <i>W</i>	17 Monday in the Octave of Easter (omit St. Anicetus, PM, c. 168)	18 Tuesday in the Octave of Easter	19 Wednesday in the Octave of Easter; St. Alphege of Canterbury, BM, 1012	20 Thursday in the Octave of Easter	21 Friday in the Octave of Easter	22 Saturday in the Octave of Easter; Ss. Soter, & Caius, Bb, Mm <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
23 Low Sunday: First Sunday after Easter <i>W</i>	24 St. George, M, 303 (tr. from 4/23)	25 St. Mark the Evangelist, 1st c.	26 Ss. Cletus, BM, 89 & Marcellinus, BM, 304	27	28 St. Vitalis, M, 3 rd c.	29 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
30 Second Sunday after Easter <i>W</i>						<i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Sung Mass at 9:30AM</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.