

✠ 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. Leo the Great d. 461

The mystery of our salvation, Beloved, the which the Creator of all things deigned to accomplish at the price of his Own Blood, was, from the day of his corporal birth till the last moment of His Passion, steadfastly accomplished along a divinely

decreed path of humiliation. And though while in the form of a servant there shone forth many signs of His Divinity, yet everything He did throughout this time tended to confirm the truth of the humanity He had put on.

But after His Passion, and when He had destroyed the bonds of death, which had lost its power encountering Him in Whom there was no sin, infirmity changed to might, mortality to Immortality, humiliation to glory. This the Lord Jesus made clear to the eyes of many, by frequent and clear proofs, until He ended in heaven itself the triumph of the

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victory He had won over death. And as at Easter time the Resurrection of the Lord was then the cause of our joyful celebration, so His Ascension into heaven is the reason of this day's rejoicing, recalling to mind and fittingly honoring that day on which our poor lowly nature was in the Person of Christ raised above all the hosts of heaven, above the ranks of all the angels, above the sublimity of all the Powers, to the throne of God the Father.

In this order of divine evens we are rooted and founded, so that when That was withdrawn from man's sight Which was rightly felt of Itself to claim our reverence, God's grace became yet more wonderful, and faith did not fail, and hope did not falter, and love did not grow cold. For this is the power of worthy souls, this is the glory of those who truly believe, that they believe without faltering what is unseen by the eyes of the body, and there fasten their desires where sight cannot follow.

Where could this devotion arise in our hearts, or how should any man be justified by faith, if our salvation was rooted and founded in things we see with our eyes? It was because of this the Lord said to the man who seemed to doubt the Resurrection of Christ until by sight and touch he had examined the proofs of the Passion in His Flesh: *Because thou hast seen me, He says, thou hast believed; but blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed.* [John 20:29]

That we may therefore, Dearly Beloved, be made ready for this blessedness, Our Lord Jesus Christ, after He had disposed in

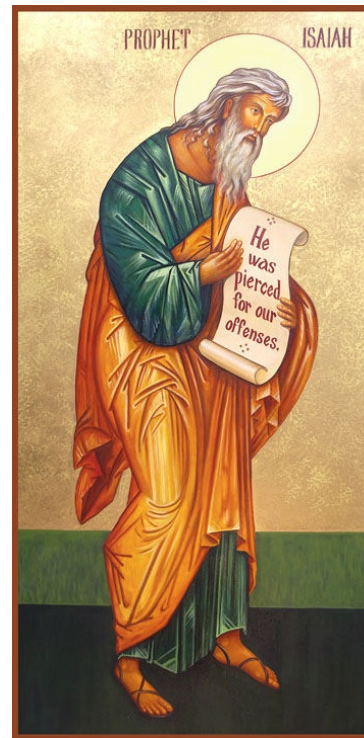
order all that related to the preaching of the Gospel and to the mysteries of the new Testament, was, in the presence of his disciples, and on the fortieth day after his Resurrection, raised up to heaven. He withdrew for a time His Bodily Presence, for He is to abide at the right hand of the Father, until the times which have been divinely decreed for the multiplication of the children of the Church are accomplished, and then in the same Body in Which He ascended He will come again to judge the living and the dead. And so what was visible in Christ is now veiled in mystery; and that faith might be more perfect and more steadfast, vision was succeeded by revealed truth, whose authority the hearts of the faithful, illumined by light from above, would now begin to follow.

Let us then exult, Beloved, with joy of soul, and rejoicing with fitting praise in God's presence, lift up the now free eyes of the soul to that place where Christ abides. Let not earthly things hold here the souls that are called above; let not perishable things fill the hearts that are chosen for eternal things. Let no false allurements hold back those who walk the way of truth.

The Holy Prophet Isaiah

Feast Day ~ May 9

In the readings which we heard at the Paschal Vigil, we were reminded that the Christian faith did not begin with the birth of Our Lord or His Resurrection, nor with the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Christ - and therefore, Christianity - is from before time; He was "*begotten of his Father before all worlds*". And from the creation of this world, as we heard in the first Vigil reading, man was being prepared for the coming of Christ and our redemption.



The setting apart of the Hebrews as a chosen people, their acknowledgment of One God, the giving of the Law, the saving of Noah from the flood - all these things were preparations for the coming of Christ, the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity. We were being prepared to receive God as he took on our human nature so that we could partake of his Divine Nature.

A major part of this preparation was the preaching of the Prophets whose stories we read in the Old Testament. They were the ones who, through prayer and fasting were able to see more clearly than others God's will for his people. They were able to see and tell about the

consequences of sin and unfaithfulness; they could foretell events in the future; and they knew and taught of God's mercy and forgiveness. In the Orthodox Church, we hold these Prophets up as saints of the Church, just as we do those who came after our Lord's earthly life. A feast day was added to the Western Rite calendar on November 8, the Octave of All Saints, to celebrate the witness of the Patriarchs and Prophets, but each of these ancestors in the faith have their own place on liturgical calendars. The Prophet Isaiah is celebrated on May 9.

Historical events were the setting for the prophecies of Isaiah, who was born around 720 BC into the royal family of King Uzziah. Shortly after his birth, the northern Kingdom of Israel was overrun by the Assyrians and he warned the southern Kingdom of Judah of the impending danger. He preached that God is active in

history, even using the enemies of God's people (the Persian King Cyrus) to accomplish his will.

Isaiah assured the chosen people that God would send a Messiah - an anointed one - to deliver them from their enemies and bring peace to his people. The prophet described in amazingly clear detail some of the events in the life of Christ. We hear his prophecies read in our liturgies and know their fulfillment in Christ. Jesus' conception and birth are predicted in chapter 7: *"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign: Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his name Immanuel."* [v. 14]; the preaching of St. John the Baptist is predicted in chapter 40: *"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.'" [v. 3].*

Our Lord quoted from Isaiah at the beginning of His earthly ministry, saying that the Prophet's prediction had been fulfilled in Him: *"The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives."* [61:1]. Our Lord's suffering is predicted in chapter 50: *"I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not away my face from the shame and spitting."* [v. 6] and chapter 53: *"Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."* [v. 4, 5].

The call of Isaiah to the role of prophet in chapter 6 describes worship in heaven as the angels sing *"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory"* [v. 3], a version of the Sanctus which we sing at every Mass. Most of us are not called by God to be prophets, but we are all called by God to witness to him in the world. Our response to this call should be that

of Isaiah the Prophet: *"Here am I; send me."* [v. 8] We give thanks for the work of the holy Prophets in preparing the world for Christ our God. [References: *Orthodox Saints*, Vol. 2 by George Poulos; *The Orthodox Study Bible; Prologue from Ochrid* by St. Nikolai;]

Parish News

As the exterior work required by the County is being finished on our parish property, the Council has called for a parish work weekend on May 13-14. If you can come for some time on Saturday or stay after church on Sunday to offer your help, there are numerous tasks to be accomplished, both inside the building and on the grounds. There are also some things which should be done before then, so please let Council chairman, Keivan Shahrakhi, or Fr. Nicholas know when you are available.

On May 21, his grace, Bishop JOHN, will be with us to dedicate our building. We will sing the Solemn Reception of the



Bishop after Matins that Sunday and he will ordain Reader Kevin (Keivan) to the sacred order of Subdeacon. The blessing of the church will begin outside with prayers and the sprinkling of holy water on the exterior of the building. We will then process inside, singing the Litany of Saints, and church will be dedicated. The Mass in honor of our patron saint, Gregory the Great, will follow and we will conclude the morning with a banquet to celebrate this joyous occasion. Bishop JOHN will remain here for several more days, as he

will be giving a retreat for the Washington area Clergy Council on Tuesday, May 23 at St. Nicholas Cathedral (OCA).



The Feast of the Ascension of our Lord will be celebrated on the Eve, Wednesday, May 24, with Mass at 7:30PM, preceded by Vespers at 7 and followed by a pot-luck supper.

We bid farewell to Joana Tasi and Pieter Dykhorst as they leave us at the end of the month and move to St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. We are grateful for their time with us and their contributions to the life of the parish through hospitality, bread

baking, Council service, and in many other ways. We wish them Godspeed.

The Dedication of Churches

The following is an excerpt from an article on our parish website from May, 2007, written when our chapel on Euclid Street in Washington was dedicated.

Since the beginning of time, men have instinctively recognized the presence of the holy and have set aside places and objects where that presence is particularly felt and acknowledged. Stonehenge, Aztec temples, sacred oaks and rivers – all attest to the innate human desire to reverence and worship God in dedicated places.

The ancient Hebrew people, our ancestors in the faith, were chosen for the special purpose of establishing a covenant with God and preparing the way for the coming of the Messiah. God gave them the law on a sacred mountain (Mt. Sinai) and they placed this law in a vessel consecrated for that special purpose (the Ark of the Covenant). King Solomon built a magnificent temple where God could be approached, using the finest materials to build, a structure worthy of giving honor to the one true God.

We read in the pages of the Old Testament of the utter despair of the Hebrews when the Temple was destroyed and they were conquered and taken into exile. But in 516 BC the Temple was rebuilt, and it was to this Temple that God himself came, when he took flesh and dwelt among us to save us and redeem us.

Christ was brought by his Blessed Mother and Saint Joseph to this Temple, and he was found here as a young boy talking with the elders. But later, he rebuked the Jews for their abuses in the Temple and he told them that the Temple would be destroyed again. It was the rulers of this Temple who delivered the Savior up to death on the Cross.

Those of us who follow Christ also set aside special places for worship. From the caves, catacombs and house churches of the earliest Christians to the most glorious cathedrals, Christians have dedicated houses of prayer where we partake of the Sacraments which Christ himself instituted.

The historian Eusebius described church dedications, speaking of the church at Tyre, rebuilt after the persecutions of Diocletian in 314 and the consecration of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem in 335. The Spanish nun, Egeria, who made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land sometime in the early 5th century, described in her diary (portions of which were discovered in the 19th century) the celebration of the anniversary of the dedication of the churches in Jerusalem.

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

Address Correction Requested

At first, churches were dedicated or consecrated through the celebration of the Liturgy and the placing of relics of the saints in the church, but more elaborate rituals gradually developed. The custom of re-dedicating profaned churches continued, especially after events such as the French Revolution.

The Psalms, antiphons, and other chant texts called for in the various dedication celebrations make use of scriptural references to worship and to holy places: “*O how awesome is this place. This is none other than the house of God and this is the gate of heaven*” from Genesis 28 is Jacob’s response to his dream of the ladder of ascent into heaven. “*Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people. And God himself shall be with them, and be their God*” from Revelation 21 is St. John’s reminder to persecuted Christians that God had sanctified earth by His presence and would return to restore heaven and earth.

The hymns which were written for dedication services refer to the earthly Jerusalem and the heavenly: “Blessed City, Heavenly Salem”(SAH #271), which dates from the 6th or 7th century, was designated during the Middle Ages to be sung at Vespers and its second half, which begins “Christ is Made the Sure Foundation” (SAH #275) for Lauds. “Only Begotten, Word of God eternal”(SAH #324), which is from a 9th century Mozarabic breviary, is a hymn of praise for the blessings received in the church. “Hail Thee, Festival Day”, composed by the 6th century poet Venantius Fortunatus for various festivals and celebrations in the church (Easter, Ascension, Pentecost) was adapted and expanded by others for additional occasions. The set of words for the dedication of a church (SAH #263) is from a York Processional for use at the anniversary celebrations of church dedications.

I was glad when they said unto me, we will go into the house of the Lord. [Psalm 122:1]

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>May 2017</h1>						<i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i>
	1 Ss. Philip & James, Apostles, 1 st c.	2 St. Athanasius, BCD, 373	3 Finding of the Holy Cross	4 St. Monica, Ma, 387	5	6 St. John before the Latin Gate, 95 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
7 Third Sunday after Easter; St. Alexis Toth, PrC, 1909; St. John of Beverly, BC, 721 <i>W</i>	8 Apparition of St. Michael of the Archangel	9 St. Gregory Nazianzen, BCD, 389	10 Ss. Gordian, 362 & Epimachus, 250, Mm	11	12 St. Epiphanius, BC, c. 403	13 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
14 Fourth Sunday after Easter; St. Boniface of Tarsus, M, 290 <i>W</i>	15 St. Pachomius, Ab, 346	16 St. Brendan the Navigator, 577, Ab	17	18 St. Venantius, M, 250; St. Theodotus & comp., Mm, c. 303	19 St. Dunstan, BC, 988; St. Pudentiana, V, c.160	20 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
21 Fifth Sunday after Easter; St. Constantine the Great, Emperor C, 337 <i>Dedication of the Church</i> <i>W</i>	22 Rogation Monday	23 Rogation Tuesday	24 Vigil of the Ascension; St. Vincent of Lerins, C, 450 <i>Mass at 7:30pm</i> <i>W</i>	25 Ascension Day (omit St. Urban, PM, 230; St. Aldhelm, BC, 709)	26 St. Augustine of Canterbury, BC, 605; St. Eleutherius, PM, c. 189; of the Octave of Ascension	27 St. Bede, CD, 735; St. John I, PM, 526; of the Octave of Ascension <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
28 Sunday after the Ascension; St. Germanus of Paris, BC, 576 <i>W</i>	29 of the Octave of Ascension <i>(Memorial Day)</i>	30 of the Octave of Ascension; St. Felix I, PM, 274	31 of the Octave of Ascension; 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.