

✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

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*St. Gregory the Great Orthodox Church
A Western Rite Congregation of the Antiochian Archdiocese
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*An excerpt from
a sermon of
St. Gregory the
Great
d. 604*

How great do you think were the temptations that Lazarus, a poor man beset with sores, bore in his heart? He lacked bread, and even more, good health, and in front of him he saw a rich man, healthy and enjoying his pleasures.

He was afflicted by pain and cold, and he saw the other with fine linen and purple clothing; he was burdened with sores, and he saw the other man abounding in possessions; he was in need, and he saw the other unwilling to give him anything.

How much turmoil did these temptations cause in the poor man's heart! His poverty would have brought him enough pain even if he had been well, and his illness would have been enough even if he had had people to help him. But to test the poor man more fully, poverty and illness together wore him down. Moreover he saw the rich man making his

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way through life surrounded by throngs of attentive friends, while no one visited him in his illness and his need. The dogs who were free to lick his wounds show us that there was no one there to visit him.



By allowing the poor man, Lazarus, to lie at the rich man's gate God was able to make two judgements: the rich man who was godless could increase his condemnation and

punishment, and the poor man who was tempted could add to his reward. The rich man looked every day on a person for whom he felt no compassion; the poor man saw one who was putting him to the test. Here on earth there were two hearts, but there was one looking down on them from above. God was preparing the poor man for glory by tempting him, and the rich man for punishment by bearing with him.

And it came to pass that Lazarus died and was carried by the angel to Abraham's bosom; the rich man also died and was buried in hell. [Luke 16] The rich man in his state of pain, the one who had refused to have compassion on Lazarus in this life, from his place in hell asked him to plead for him. *Father Abraham, have pity on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, since I am tormented in this flame.* From his place in hell the rich man, who had been unwilling to give even a little food from his table to the poor sick man, came seeking a little water. The one who had denied him a crumb of bread came seeking from him a drop of water.

We must ponder the answer Abraham gave to the rich man in the gospel when he asked to be given a drop of water from

Lazarus' finger. *Son, remember that you received good things in your lifetime, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; now he is being comforted here, while you are in anguish.* That sentence, my friends, clearly demands an anxious hearing. If any of you have received some material goods in this world, you ought to be very much frightened of them. Perhaps they were given you in return for some good you did, in which case the Judge who is paying you in this life with external goods may deprive you of interior ones; the honors and riches you receive here may be for you not an aid to virtue, but your payment for the work you've done... The fire of poverty cleansed Lazarus of his evil deeds, and happiness in this passing life rewarded the rich man's good deeds. Poverty afflicted the former and cleansed him; wealth rewarded the latter, and deprived him of everything else. Whenever you remember that you have received good things for the good you do, be afraid lest this prosperity which has been granted you may be your only reward... You must be solicitous for the poor, because poverty is their teacher, afflicting them until it leads them to righteousness.

The only true riches are the ones that make us rich in virtues. Therefore, my friends, if you want to be rich you must love true riches. If you seek genuine honors, reach out for the heavenly kingdom. If you love the glories of rank, hasten to be enrolled in the court of the angels on high.

St. Elizabeth

Feast Day ~ November 5

In our aggressively "feminized" secular world, the Orthodox Church is most often considered to be an oppressive, patriarchal, out-dated institution which does not give women their rightful place among the powerful.

This very negative perception completely disregards the fact that the Church holds a woman - the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Theotokos - as the "Mother of God", more highly venerated than any other saint. Holy Scripture gives us numerous examples of strong women who obeyed God and led others to the right way, and Christian history is full of the stories of women saints who have continued this tradition.

St. Elizabeth, the mother of St. John the Baptist and wife of St. Zacharias, lived at that intersection in time when God's preparation of his Chosen People for the coming of the Messiah was ending and when his Son - the Word of God - became man for our salvation. Elizabeth's part in God's plan is reported to us by St. Luke in his Gospel.



In the Gospel narrative, Elizabeth and Zacharias are described as "righteous", but they had no child, which in the Jewish culture of the time was considered a reproach by God. Being beyond what they thought were the fertile years for conceiving, Zacharias was surprised and skeptical when the angel Gabriel appeared to him as he was serving his turn as a priest of the Temple. Gabriel's announcement was full of information: Elizabeth would conceive and a son would be born who should be named "John";

the child would grow up to be filled with the Holy Spirit (not wine or other strong drink); and he would go before *Him* to make the people ready for the Lord. In his amazement, Zacharias asked for a sign and he got what he asked for - he was rendered mute, unable to speak, and remained that way until the birth of his son.

It happened just as the angel had said. Elizabeth became pregnant and stayed in her home out of the public eye for five months. About this time, as the Gospel continues, Gabriel also appeared to Elizabeth's teen-aged niece, Mary, to announce her conception of the Savior, through the action of the Holy Spirit, and Mary left Nazareth to visit with her older relative. At this crucial juncture in history, God had worked two miracles to bring about his purpose for mankind.

In St. Luke's words, we hear the continuation of the story and with it, several beautiful poetic texts which have remained a part of our liturgical heritage since then. Gabriel's words of greeting to Mary, coupled with Elizabeth's reaction at her baby's "leaping in the womb" when Mary arrived form the basis of the "Hail Mary" prayer which is on the lips of Christians throughout the world every day. Mary's response is the *Magnificat* which we sing at every Vespers service. The Gospel records that when John was born and his father was finally able to speak, Zacharias poured forth the words of the *Benedictus*, which is sung at Matins services.

We are told nothing else about John in Holy Scripture until he reappears at the beginning of Our Lord's earthly ministry, baptizing people in the Jordan River and calling them to repentance. As Gabriel had predicted, he was an ascetic, not eating and drinking as normal people but surviving on locusts and honey; wearing the skins of animals rather than normal clothes, and preaching as if he were Elijah himself, fulfilling the expectations of the people that the prophet would return before the appearance of the Messiah.

The tradition of the Church fills in the blanks: when Herod sent troops to kill all the babies under the age of two who he perceived as a threat to his power, Elizabeth took her child and fled into the mountains while Zacharias remained in the Temple and was martyred when he refused to divulge their whereabouts.



With this very slim outline of the person of St. Elizabeth, what can we learn for living our own lives? Was giving birth to an important male child enough to make her a saint? Is childbirth the only contribution of value that women can make? How do we respond to the criticisms of our secular society?

We can begin by considering the fact that Elizabeth and Zacharias continued to live righteous lives, obeying the commandments, despite the probable disparaging speculations by the town gossips about what they might have done to receive God's disfavor. Whatever criticisms we may receive from others, we must follow God's will for our lives.

Elizabeth also firmly went against cultural expectations when, at the circumcision, other members of the family gave the priest the baby's name as Zacharias for his father and she insisted on following the command given to her husband by the angel: "No, he shall be called John." [Luke 1:60] Whenever we are faced with a conflict between what our current culture considers acceptable and what we know to be right, we must always choose the right, according to the teachings of the Church.

We should emulate Elizabeth's (and her son's) reaction to the presence of our Savior, then in Mary's womb. We should "leap with joy", we should call Mary "blessed", we should worship in the presence of Christ. Like Elizabeth, we should also do all we can to cherish and protect children, both in the womb and after their births.

As Christians, we should heed the predictions and warnings given to us in Holy Scripture. Just as Elizabeth and Zacharias fully accepted that their child would fulfill the prophecy of

Malachi: *Behold, I will send my messenger; and he will prepare the way before me* [Mal. 3:1] and even be the personification of the prophet Elijah whose return would precede the coming of the Messiah, we have been told that Christ will come again [Acts 1:11]. Do we live our lives in repentance and preparation for the second coming of our Lord? Will we be ready when *He shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead?*

May we follow the example of this woman, whose role in our salvation story is so important, and may we ask for her intercessions as we endeavor to seek holiness in this fallen sinful world. *Holy Elizabeth, pray for us!*

The Origins of All Saints

by Kh. Rebecca Alford

The martyrs, who were so numerous in the first centuries of Christianity, were the first to be venerated with special observances. Local Christian communities held such celebrations for those of their number who had died, but after a time the numbers became so great that a general observance was needed. The recognition of holy lives which did not end in martyrdom brought about the desire for honoring other kinds of saints, and asking for the intercessions of the saints (which was consistent with Jewish belief; see 2 Maccabees 15:12-16) became common.

Feast days for the celebration of “All Saints” were observed in the East from the time of St. Ephrem the Syrian (d. 373). By the time of St. John Chrysostom (d. 407), the primary day for this observance had become the Sunday after Pentecost and this day was also observed in Rome until the 7th century.

The great building called the Pantheon, dedicated to all the Roman pagan gods, which had been built by Marcus Agrippa

(d. 12AD) and restored by Severus Augustus (d. 211AD), was reborn as a Christian church on May 13 in the year 609. On that day, Pope Boniface IV made a solemn procession to the catacombs, brought out the relics of the martyrs, and reverently transported them in twelve magnificently adorned chariots to the Pantheon, now consecrated as a church in honor of the martyrs. Abbot Prosper Gueranger, says of this day:

Thus, after six centuries of persecution and destruction, the martyrs had the last word; and it was a word of blessing, a signal of grace for the great city hitherto drunk with the blood of Christians. Rehabilitated by the reception she was giving to the witnesses of Christ... she now burned before the saints the incense they had refused to offer to her idols; their blood had flowed before the very altar on which she now invited them to rest...

May 13 continued to be the day on which an annual celebration of the saints occurred in this church, but the feast was moved to November 1 to coincide with that of an oratory in honor of all the saints dedicated at St. Peter’s in Rome in 732 by Pope Gregory III. In keeping with a custom in Spain and Gaul of days of fasting and penance at this time of year, a Vigil for All Saints on October 31 was added, and by the 10th century, November 2 had become a day for a general celebration of departed loved ones with a Requiem Mass. This formal observance began under the influence of Abbot Odilo of the Monastery of Cluny, and from there spread to other Benedictine monasteries and eventually to churches throughout the Western world.

May we, as Christians, use every opportunity to extol the virtues of the saints.

Resources: P. Brown: The Cult of the Saints; L. Cowie and J. Gummer: The Christian Calendar; F. Cross, ed.: The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church; Dom G. Dix: The Shape of the Liturgy; Abbot P. Gueranger: The Liturgical Year, Vol. 6; J. Meyendorff: The Church in History, Vol. II; Wikipedia articles.

Parish News



As is our custom, we will celebrate the feast of All Saints (which is actually on November 1) on the Sunday within the Octave, November 5, and we will have a Requiem Mass for All Souls Day on the Eve, Wednesday, November 1. Please provide the names of loved ones you wish to be remembered at the altar on All Souls. Also, please prepare to share the story of a favorite saint following the Liturgy on November 5.

We will also celebrate the feast of the Presentation of the Theotokos in the Temple on the eve, Monday, Nov. 20. All evening services are at 7:30, preceded by Vespers at 7 and followed by a pot-luck supper.

Fall work days have been scheduled for Saturday, November 4 and after church on Sunday, November 5. Volunteers are needed to prepare the church grounds for winter.

The Parish Council has asked Fr. Gregory Matthewes-Green to talk with us about evangelism. Fr. Gregory, who is the pastor of Holy Cross parish in Linthicum, MD, Diocesan Missions coordinator, and Dean of the local parishes of our Diocese, will speak after Vespers on Saturday, November 18. It is important that all who are able be here to discuss how we can make ourselves known in our new neighborhood and how we can be evangelists for Christ in our time and place. Please bring something to share for a pot-luck supper.

St. Gregory Orthodox Church
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Address Correction Requested

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--|---|--|---|--|--|---|
| <h1>November 2017</h1> | | | | | | <i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i> |
| | | | 1 All Saints Day <i>Mass at 7:30pm B</i> | 2 All Souls Day | 3 of the Octave of All Saints; St. Winifred, VM, c. 660; St. Silvia, Mother of St. Gregory, Ma, 592 | 4 of the Octave of All Saints; Ss. Vitalis & Agricola, Mm, c. 304 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i> |
| 5 Sunday in the Octave of All Saints; comm. 22nd Sunday after Pentecost; St. Elizabeth, Ma, 1st C. <i>W</i> | 6 of the Octave of All Saints; St. Leonard of Noblac, Ab, c. 559 | 7 of the Octave of All Saints; St. Wilibrod of Echternach, BC, 739 | 8 Patriarchs & Prophets of the Old Law; Four Crowned Martyrs | 9 Dedication of the Basilica of St. Savior in Rome, 324; St. Benignus, BC, c. 468 | 10 Ss. Tryphon, Respicus & Nympha Mm, c. 250 | 11 St. Martin of Tours, BC, 397; St. Theodore the Studite, Ab, 826 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i> |
| 12 23 rd Sunday after Pentecost; St. Martin I, PC, 655 <i>G</i> | 13 St. Britius of Tours, BC, 444 | 14 St. Gregory Palamas, BCD, 1359 | 15 | 16 | 17 St. Gregory the Wonder-worker, BC, c. 270; St. Gregory of Tours, BC, 594 | 18 Dedication of Basilica of Ss. Peter & Paul in Rome 4 th c.; St. Odo of Cluny, Ab, 942 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i> |
| 19 24 th Sunday after Pentecost; St. Pontianus, PM, 235 <i>G</i> | 20 St. Edmund, KM, 870 <i>Mass at 7:30pm W</i> | 21 Presentation of the BVM; St. Gelasius, PC, 496; St. Columbanus, Ab, c. | 22 St. Cecilia, VM, c. 230 | 23 St. Clement, PM, 96; St. Felicity of Rome, M, 165 <i>(Thanksgiving Day)</i> | 24 St. Chrysgonus of Aquileia, M., c. 304 | 25 St. Katherine of Alexandria VM, c. 4th c. <i>Vespers at 6pm</i> |
| 26 25 th & Last Sunday after Pentecost; St. Peter of Alexandria, BM, 311 <i>G</i> | 27 | 28 | 29 St. Saturninus, M, 309 | 30 St. Andrew the Apostle, 1st c. | | |

Confessions are heard after Vespers, during the Psalms at Matins, and by appointment.

*Coffee Hour follows Mass.
Sunday School is during Coffee Hour.*