

✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

March, 2018 - Volume XXIII, Issue 3

St. Gregory the Great Orthodox Church
A Western Rite Congregation of the Antiochian Archdiocese
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An excerpt from a Discourse of St. Cyprian of Carthage d. 258

The precepts of the Gospel, most beloved brethren, are other than divine teachings, foundations for building hope, supports for strengthening faith, nourishments for encouraging the heart, rudders for directing our course, helps for gaining salvation, which, as they instruct the docile minds of believers on earth, conduct them to the heavenly kingdom. God wished many things also to be said and heard through the prophets, His servants; but how much greater are the things which the Son speaks, which the Word of God, who was in the prophets, testifies with His own voice, no longer commanding that the way be prepared for his coming, He Himself coming and opening and showing the way to us, that we who thus far have been wandering in the shadows of death, improvident and blind, illumined by the light of grace, may hold to the way of life with the Lord as our leader and guide.

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He who, among His other salutary admonitions and divine precepts by which He counsels His people unto salvation, Himself also gave the form of praying, Himself advised and instructed us what to pray for. He who made us to live taught us also to pray, with the same benignity, namely by which He has deigned to give and bestow the other things, so that, while we speak to the Father with that prayer and supplication which the Son taught, we may more easily be heard...

So let us pray most beloved brethren, as God the Teacher has taught. It is a friendly and intimate prayer to beseech God with his own words, for the prayer of Christ to ascend to His ears. Let the Father acknowledge the words of His Son, when we make prayer. Let Him who dwells within our breast Himself be also in our voice, and since we have Him as the advocate for our sins before the Father, let us put forward the words of our Advocate. For since He says: *Whatsoever we shall ask the Father in his name, He will give us* [John 16:23], how much more effectively do we obtain what we seek in the name of Christ, if we ask with His own prayer?

Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors. [In the Lord's Prayer], after the subsistence of food, the pardon of sin is also asked so that he who is fed by God may live in God, and so that not only the present and temporal life may be provided for but also the eternal, to which we may come if our sins are forgiven, which the Lord calls debts, as he says in His Gospel: *I forgave thee all the debt because thou didst entreat me* [Matt. 18:32]. Moreover,

how necessarily, how providently and salutarily, are we admonished that we are sinners, who are compelled to plead for our sins, so that, while indulgence is sought from God, the soul is recalled to a consciousness of its guilt! Lest anyone be pleased with himself, as if innocent, and by exalting himself perish the more, he is instructed and taught that he sins daily, since he is ordered to pray daily for his sins. Thus finally John also in his epistle admonished in these words: *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we acknowledge our sins, the Lord is faithful and just to forgive us our sins* [I John 1:8, 9]...

He clearly appended and added the law, binding us by a condition and engagement, that accordingly we ask that our debts be forgiven us according as we ourselves also forgive our debtors, knowing that what we seek for our sins cannot be obtained, unless we ourselves shall have acted likewise toward those sinning against us. Therefore, in another place he says: *With what measure you measure, it shall be measured to you* [Matt. 7:2]. The servant who after all his debt was forgiven him by the Lord was himself unwilling to forgive his fellow servant is confined to prison. Because he was unwilling to forgive his fellow servant, he lost the forgiveness which had been granted him by the Lord. And these things Christ sets forth still more strongly in His precepts by the greater force of his censure. He says: *When you stand to pray, forgive whatever you have against anyone, that your Father who is in heaven, may forgive you your sins. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive you your sins* [Mark 11:25]. There remains no excuse for you on the day of judgement, when you are judged according to your sentence, and what you have done, this also you yourself suffer. For God has ordered us to be peace-makers and of one heart and of one mind in His house, and as He has made us, so reborn by a second birth He wishes to preserve us, that we who are the sons of God may remain in the peace of God, and that we who have one spirit may have one heart and mind. Thus neither does God receive

the sacrifice of the dissident, and He orders him to turn back from the altar and first be reconciled with his brother, so that by pacifying prayers God also can be pacified. The greater sacrifice to God is our peace and fraternal concord and a people united in the unity of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

St. Eudocia of Heliopolis, Martyr *Feast Day ~ March 1*

The world is obsessed with wealth, beauty, and power. The “heroes” that are most admired are athletes, entertainers, and successful business moguls. Popular magazines and even news broadcasts are filled with stories about people who receive the adulation - and envy - of others because of this wealth, beauty, and power. It has ever been thus.

Since these attributes are not among those considered spiritually beneficial by the Church, and virtues which are quite opposite - humility, generosity, purity - are to be practiced, one would think that it would be impossible for a wealthy, beautiful, and powerful person to become a saint. But Christianity teaches amendment of life, turning away from sin and toward the path to the Kingdom of God, the possibility of miracles. St. Eudocia of Heliopolis is a wonderful example of someone who gave up the wealth, beauty, and power that had consumed her life and became a saint as a result.

There are several accounts of Eudocia's story, but all share the same basic details. In the Roman Martyrology, a brief description tells only part of the story: *At Heliopolis, St. Eudocia, Martyr, who, after being baptized by Bishop Theodotus, and fortified for combat, was smitten with the sword by order of the governor Vincent, in Trajan's persecution, and received the crown of martyrdom.*



More detailed accounts report that she was an extremely clever woman who surpassed most men in her city with her financial expertise. She had many real estate holdings and had amassed a great fortune while still a young woman in her twenties. She was also extremely beautiful and, because of those two attributes, she was sought after by numerous men who wanted to share in her power and wealth. Eudocia did not succumb to any man's marriage proposals, but

rather enjoyed a licentious lifestyle with many men, reveling in the power which beauty and wealth had brought her.

One day, God sent a very different man into Eudocia's life - the monk Germanus (or Gerasimos) - and her life was never the same again. The elderly Germanus was visiting the home adjacent to Eudocia's and during the night, when he was praying and reciting the Psalter, she heard him through the wall connecting the houses. She was at first fascinated by the strange ideas presented to her for the first time and then was greatly moved by the effect that these ideas had on her heart and mind.

The next day, Eudocia sent a servant to bring this man to her so that she could hear more and ask questions about what he was saying. Germanus remained in her grand house, amidst her many possessions, and taught her of the love of God and of the many admonitions of our Savior to be charitable to the poor and needy. Eudocia soon saw that her life had been empty, despite her wealth, and she asked Germanus to help her change her life. The local bishop, Theodotus, baptized her and she began the long journey to the Kingdom of God.

Eudocia began to disperse her great wealth to help those in need and she gave her estate for a monastery, where the room formerly used for her orgies was converted to a chapel. Realizing that true beauty was in service to God, she began to lead the monastic life herself, giving up all her former ways.

Some accounts say that Eudocia's conversion to Christianity was reported to the Roman authorities by her former disgruntled lovers and that she was beheaded during the persecutions of either Trajan (98-117) or Hadrian (117-138). Other accounts report that she was given many more years to serve Christ as a monastic and was beheaded in old age during a later persecution.

Through either account, we can see that God had worked a miracle in this woman's life. We know that, through the mercy of God, we, too, can repent, amend our sinful lives, and journey toward the Kingdom.

Can a beautiful person not be a Christian? Is it impossible for a Christian to be wealthy? Are Christians only to be among the weak and insignificant in society? Through all the parables and teachings of Christ, we see that wealth, beauty, and power are not evil in themselves, but only if they stand between us and God, only if we treat them as idols. We are to share our wealth with those in need, we are to strive for true beauty of spirit, and if we hold any power, we are to use it for good. May the prayers of St. Eudocia help us in our efforts to do these things. Holy Eudocia, pray for us.

Parish News

On the Fridays in Lent, beginning on March 2, we will share a Lenten supper at 6:30PM, followed by a period of study on the *Our Father, the Hail Mary and the Apostle's Creed*, and ending

with Stations of the Cross. You are encouraged to participate in these events as a part of your Lenten discipline.

As our Lenten journey takes us closer to the celebration of our Lord's Resurrection at Pascha, we pass through Passion-tide, beginning on Sunday, March 25, when our liturgical practices become more austere. The crosses are veiled in purple, we omit the *Gloria Patri* in the Venite at Matins, and Office hymns which concentrate on the Cross and our Lord's suffering are sung.



As the Feast of the Annunciation falls on Sunday this year, the liturgical rules of precedence transfer the feast day to Monday, March 26. Our celebration on that evening will begin with Vespers at 7PM, Liturgy at 7:30, and end with a pot-luck Lenten supper.

On Sunday, February 18, a “new” organ for St. Gregory’s was blessed and used for the first time. This 120-year-old cabinet

organ was built by Franklin Roosevelt, and recently housed in the Henson Valley Christian Church in Fort Washington. We will be happy to use it in our worship until we are able to build a church which will accommodate our larger organ, currently in storage.

On Fasting in Great Lent

by Fr. Alexander Schmemmann

In the Orthodox teaching, sin is not only the transgression of a rule leading to punishment; it is always a mutilation of life given

to us by God. It is for this reason that the story of the original sin is presented to us as an act of eating. For food is means of life; it is that which keeps us alive. But here lies the whole question: what does it mean to be alive and what does “life” mean? For us today this term has a primarily biological meaning: life is precisely that which entirely depends on food, and more generally, on the physical world. But for the Holy Scripture and for Christian Tradition, this life “by bread alone” is identified with death because it is mortal life, because death is a principle always at work in it. God, we are told, “created no death.” He is the Giver of Life. How then did life become mortal? Why is death and death alone the only absolute condition of that which exists? The Church answers: because man rejected life as it was offered and given to him by God and preferred a life depending not on God alone but on “bread alone.”



Satan came to Adam in Paradise; he came to Christ in the desert. He came to two hungry men and said: eat, for your hunger is the proof that you depend entirely on food, that your life is in food. And Adam believed and ate; but Christ rejected that temptation and said: man shall not live by bread alone but by God. By doing this, Christ restored that relationship between food, life and God which

Adam broke, and which we still break every day.

What then is fasting for us Christians? It is our entrance and participation in that experience of Christ Himself by which He liberates us from the total dependence on food, matter, and the

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world. By no means is our liberation a full one. Living still in the fallen world, in the world of the Old Adam, being part of it, we still depend on food. But just as our death - through which we still must pass - has become by virtue of Christ's Death a passage into life, the food we eat and the life it sustains can be life in God and for good.

Part of our food has already become "food of immortality": - the body and blood of Christ Himself. But even the daily bread we receive from God can be in this life and in this world that which strengthens us, our communion with God, rather than that which separates us from God. Yet it is only fasting that can perform that transformation, giving us the existential proof that our dependence on food and matter is not total, not absolute, that united to prayer, grace, and adoration, it can itself be spiritual.

All this means that deeply understood, fasting is the only means by which man recovers his true spiritual nature. It is not a theoretical but truly a practical challenge to the great Liar who managed to convince us that we depend on bread alone and built all human knowledge, science, and existence on that lie. Fasting is a denunciation of that lie and also the proof that it is a lie.

It is highly significant that it was while fasting that Christ met Satan and that he said later that Satan cannot be overcome "but by fasting and prayer." Fasting is the real fight against the Devil because it is the challenge to that one all-embracing law which makes him the "Prince of this world." Yet if one is hungry and then discovers that he can truly be independent of that hunger, not be destroyed by it but just on the contrary, can transform it into a source of spiritual power and victory, then nothing remains of that great lie in which we have been living since Adam.

An excerpt from *Great Lent: Journey to Pascha*, published by St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1969

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>March 2018</h1>						<i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i>
				1 St. David of Wales, BC, 544	2 Ember Friday; St. Chad, BC, 672 <i>Lenten Supper & Stations of the Cross at 6:30pm</i>	3 Ember Saturday; St. Lucius, BM, 254 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
4 Second Sunday in Lent ✓	5	6 Ss. Perpetua & Felicitas, Mm, 203	7	8	9 St. Gregory of Nyssa, BCD, 394 <i>Lenten Supper & Stations of the Cross at 6:30pm</i>	10 Forty Martyrs of Sebaste, Mm, 320 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
11 Third Sunday in Lent; St. Sophrionius of Jerusalem, BC, c. 369 ✓	12 St. Gregory the Great, BCD, 604	13	14	15	16 <i>Lenten Supper & Stations of the Cross at 6:30pm</i>	17 St. Patrick, BC, 461; St. Joseph of Arimethea, C, 1st c. <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
18 Fourth Sunday in Lent; St. Cyril of Jerusalem, BCD, 386; St. Edward, KM 979 ✓	19 St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin; 1 st c.	20 St. Cuthbert, BC, 687	21 Repose of St. Benedict, c. 550	22	23 <i>Lenten Supper & Stations of the Cross at 6:30pm</i>	24 St. Gabriel the Archangel <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
25 Passion Sunday ✓	26 The Annun- ciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary (tr. From 3/25) <i>Mass at 7:30pm</i> W	27 St. John of Damascus, CD, 749	28	29	30 St. John of the Ladder, Ab, 649; Seven Sorrows of the BVM <i>Lenten Supper & Stations of the Cross at 6:30pm</i>	31 St. Innocent of Alaska, BC, 1879 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>

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

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