

# ✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

December, 2018 - Volume XXIII, Issue 11

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

*From a Homily  
by St. Jerome  
d. 420*

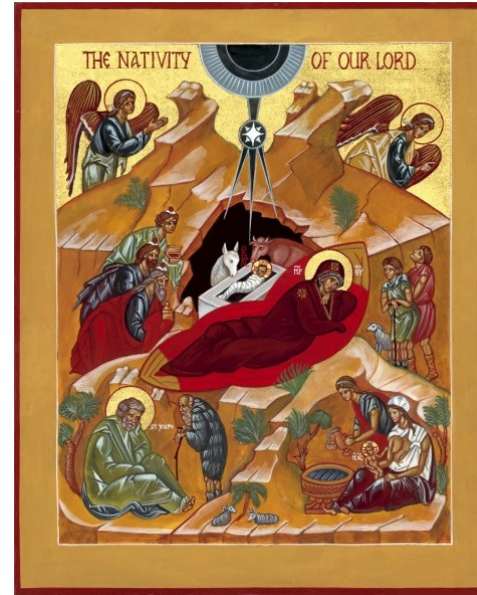
**S**he laid Him in a manger,  
because there was no room  
for them in the inn. Why in a  
manger? That the prophecy of  
Isaiah, the prophet, might be  
fulfilled: *An ox knows its owner,  
and an ass, its master's manger...*

**H**e found no room in the Holy of Holies that shone with  
gold, precious stones, pure silk, and silver. He is not born  
in the midst of gold and riches, but in the midst of dung, in a  
stable where our sins were more filthy than the dung. He is  
born on a dunghill in order to lift up those who come from it...

**T**here was no room for them in the inn. The poor should  
derive great comfort from this. Joseph and Mary, the  
mother of the Lord, had no servant boy, no maid servant.  
From Nazareth in Galilee, they come all alone; they own no  
draught-animal; they are their own masters and servants...

Inside:

<i>Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary</i> .....	4
<i>Songs of the Season</i> .....	6
<i>Parish News</i> .....	9
<i>Calendar</i> .....	11



There was no other place unoccupied for the birth of the Savior except a manger, a manger to which were tethered cattle and asses.

**O**, if only I were permitted to look upon that manger in which the Lord lay! Now, as an honor to Christ, we have taken away the manger of clay and have replaced it with crib of silver, but more precious to me is the one that has been removed...I do not find fault

with those who made the change in the cause of honor (nor do I look with disfavor upon those in the Temple who made vessels of gold), but I wonder at the Lord, the Creator of the universe, who is born, not surrounded by gold and silver, but by mud and clay.

**T**here were shepherds in the same district keeping watch. They will not find Christ unless they keep watch, as it is the shepherd's duty. Christ is not found except by the vigilant... *There were shepherds in the same district*. Herod was there; the high priests, the Pharisees were there; while they were sleeping, Christ is found in a lonely grotto. *Shepherds keeping watch over their flock by night*. They were guarding their flock lest the wolf attack while they slept. They were keeping careful watch; the threat to the flock from the treachery of beasts was reason enough. They were keeping watch, as it were, over the flock of the Lord, but they could not safeguard it; hence, they besought the Lord to come and save it.

**B**ehold, an angel of the Lord stood by them. They who were so vigilant deserved to have an angel come to them. *The glory of*

*God shone round about them, and they feared exceedingly. Human fear is unable to gaze upon a sublime and majestic vision. Because they were so thoroughly terrified, the angel speaks and like a healing salve applied to wounds, restores their confidence. Do not be afraid, for you cannot grasp what I am saying if you are paralyzed by fear. There has been born to you today in the town of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.*

**T**hese were weighty words. While they were so astonished: *Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: As one angel had announced the nativity of the Lord, and lest only one seem to bear witness, the entire host resounds in one song of praise: Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth among men of good will.*

**T**he shepherds said to one another, *“Let us go over to Bethlehem.”* Let us leave the deserted Temple and go over to Bethlehem... and see the Word which was made. *In the beginning was the Word and the Word was made flesh.* The Word that has always been, let us see how it was made for us. Because we could not see Him as long as He was the Word, let us see His flesh because it is flesh; let us see how the Word was made flesh. *So they went with haste.* Because they ran so eagerly, they find Him whom they sought.

**W**e have heard the Babe crying in the manger and have adored Him there... Let us pick Him up in our arms and adore Him as the Son of God. Mighty God who for so long a time thundered in heaven and did not redeem man, cries and as a babe redeems him. As long as the Son of God was in heaven, He was not adored; He descends to earth and is adored. He had beneath Him the sun, the moon, the angels, and He was not adored; on earth, He is born perfect man, a whole man, to heal the whole world.

## *Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary* *Feast Day ~December 8*

**O**ur eternal God has, through earthly time, prepared man - his highest creature, made in this image and likeness - to receive him as one of our own. God came to earth in human form at a particular time in history, in a particular place, taking his humanity from a particular woman in order to restore that image. Through the Incarnation of God the Son and His Resurrection from the dead, we have been shown the way to Heaven.

**T**he preparation for the Nativity of Christ took many years: the Hebrew people were chosen to be the ones to receive the Savior; their knowledge of One God, the Law he gave, the establishment of the royal line of King David, the prophecies of a Messiah - all these were part of God's preparation.

**I**n God's plan, it was necessary to prepare a young woman to become the Mother of his Son - the Mother of God - and this preparation began with the lives of her parents. According to Tradition, Joachim was a descendant of King David and Anna was the daughter of a priest of the tribe of Levi. Her sisters were Mary (the mother of Salome) and Zoia (the mother of Elizabeth who bore St. John the Baptist). Joachim and Anna were a devout couple who had longed for a child but who remained childless. When they went from their home in Nazareth to Jerusalem to make their offering in the Temple, Joachim was rebuked by the High Priest, Issachar, and told that he was unworthy because of his lack of children, a sign of God's disfavor.

**I**n their shame and grief, they returned home and prayed even more fervently for a child. An angel of the Lord appeared to each of them with the tidings that they would have a child. Just as God had given a child to Abraham and Sarah in their old age, Joachim and Anna would have a child who would bring blessings to whole



human race. Anna then conceived Mary and God's plan for man's salvation continued.

The Church established a feast day in honor of this wondrous event. It appeared on the liturgical calendar of the St. Sabas monastery before the 6<sup>th</sup> century. According to Dom Prosper Gueranger, the feast began to be celebrated in the West by the 8<sup>th</sup> century when it was established in Spain. An 8<sup>th</sup> century marble calendar

table in Naples includes the feast. In 1049, a Council in Germany sanctioned the feast day and in 1066 it was established in England and from there, throughout the Western world. It was not until 1854 that Pope Pius IX defined the dogma of the Immaculate Conception - that Mary had been born free from original sin.

We call Mary all holy and all pure, but we do not share the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. Our Antiochian Archdiocese provides the Orthodox perspective on this dogma:

The Orthodox Church does not accept the teaching that the Mother of God was exempted from the consequences of ancestral sin (death, corruption, sin, etc.) at the moment of her conception by virtue of the future merits of Her Son. Only Christ was born perfectly holy and sinless, as Saint Ambrose of Milan teaches in Chapter Two of his Commentary on Luke. The Holy Virgin was like everyone else in Her mortality, and in being subject to temptation, although She committed no personal sins. She was not a deified creature removed from the rest of humanity. If this were the case, She would not have been truly

human, and the nature that Christ took from Her would not have been truly human either. If Christ does not truly share our human nature, then the possibility of our salvation is in doubt.

In Western Rite Orthodoxy, we continue to celebrate this feast on the early Western date, December 8 (the Eastern date is December 9). With joy, we give thanks to Almighty God for the Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary as a part of his unfolding plan for our salvation.

## *Songs of the Season* by Kh. Rebecca Alford

We have been inundated with Christmas songs, popular melodies in numerous styles and arrangements, since Hallowe'en. Any trip to the mall or the grocery store provides us with the aural incentive to buy presents and food for feasting and to begin our celebrations early.

With the exception of an occasional rendition of "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" most of the songs we hear publicly during December are secular songs about winter, an elf named Santa and reindeer. But the Church offers beautiful songs for Advent and Christmas, to prepare for and properly celebrate the Nativity of Our Lord. Here are a few of the most ancient hymns:

*Word, that goest forth on high (Verbum supernum prodiens)* - This hymn was written by the followers of St. Ambrose of Milan (340-397), who created hymns to express Orthodox theology, and is thought to have been written in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The hymn is appointed as the Office hymn for Matins during Advent and speaks of the second coming of Christ as well as the first ("And when as judge, thou drawest nigh..."). The tune in *The St. Ambrose Hymnal* is the Sarum form of the melody, originating from the Cathedral of Salisbury in England.



**C**reator of the stars of night (*Conditor alme siderum*) - The Office hymn for Vespers during Advent, Ambrosian in origin (from the 9<sup>th</sup> century or earlier), is set to another Sarum tune and also speaks of the second coming of Christ.

**H**ark! *A Thrilling Voice is Sounding* (*Vox clara ecce intonat*) - This 6<sup>th</sup> century Ambrosian hymn for Lauds in Advent provides a summary of the Epistle (Romans 13:11-14) and Gospel (Luke 21:25-33) for the first Sunday of Advent. It bids us to “cast away the works of darkness” as we await the Second Coming of Christ in glory.

**O** *Come, O Come, Emmanuel* is an 18<sup>th</sup> century paraphrase of the 8<sup>th</sup> century “O” Antiphons, sung before and after the Magnificat at Vespers from December 16 to Christmas Eve. Each stanza reflects the antiphons’ references to Christ as “Wisdom from on high”, “Adonai, Lord of might”, “Rod of Jesse”, “Key of David”, “Dayspring from on high”, and “Desire of nations”. The last stanza, refers to the blessed Theotokos as “Virgin pure of virgin maids”. The tune to which these verses are sung was adapted in the 19<sup>th</sup> century from a plainsong melody of French origin for use with these words.

**C**ome, *Thou Redeemer of the Earth* (*Veni, Redemptor gentium*) - This Office hymn for Christmas Eve is attributed to St. Ambrose in a letter by St. Augustine (354-430) as well as by Pope Celestine (in a sermon in 430) and Bishop Faustus of Riez (in 455). The text makes clear that Christ is “begotten of no human will but of the Spirit”, and is the “Word of God in flesh arrayed”. While *The St. Ambrose Hymnal* has this text to its Sarum tune, the Roman tune (dating from the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> centuries) and the text

(*Nun Komm, der Heiden Heiland, or Savior of the nations, come*) were adapted by the Protestant reformer, Martin Luther, for use as a congregational chorale. This version of the hymn is also included in *The St. Ambrose Hymnal*.

**A** *Ima Redemptoris Mater* (*Gracious Mother of our Redeemer*), the Marian Antiphon which we sing following Vespers from Advent to the Presentation, describes the Blessed Virgin Mary as “heaven’s gateway” and “star of the ocean”. It is ascribed to the Benedictine monk Hermannus Contractus (1013-1054), who also wrote the *Salve, Regina* for Trinity Sunday to Advent.

**B**ehold *the Bridegroom cometh* is an adaptation from the Eastern Book of Hours, linking the parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins to our readiness for the coming of the Lord.

**W**hen Christmas finally arrives and the world has already put away the decorations and the sounds of “Frosty the Snowman” have melted away, the Church provides hymns for the celebration of the Nativity of Our Lord which allow us to meditate on the true meaning of the coming of the Messiah.

**T**he paradoxical themes of God coming to earth in human form but remaining eternal in the heavens and of the blessed Theotokos becoming a mother but remaining a virgin (as foretold in the Old Testament prophecies) are rendered in poetic form in ancient hymns by St. Germanus (*A Great and Mighty Wonder*, 8<sup>th</sup> century), the poet Sedulius (*From East to West, From Shore to Shore*, 5<sup>th</sup> c.), and the poet Prudentius (*Of the Father’s Love Begotten*, 5<sup>th</sup> c.).

**W**e are drawn into the Nativity story by the hymn *Every Creature, by Thee Made*, a paraphrase of a Byzantine text which tells what each of God’s creatures has offered: Angels their praise, Wise Men their gifts, shepherds their wonder, the beasts their manger, earth the cave, and humankind the Virgin Mary.

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

*Address Correction Requested*

In hymns from many different sources and ages - from St. Cosmas the Melodist in the 8<sup>th</sup> century (*The Shepherds Keep Their Flocks by Night*) to German 14<sup>th</sup> century carols (*Good Christian Men, Rejoice*), to English 18<sup>th</sup> century Latin hymns (*O Come, all Ye Faithful*) - we join our voices with the Angels in singing “Glory to God in the highest” and we run with the shepherds to see the Babe who was born for our salvation. May we lift our voices in joy this Advent and Christmas as we sing the true songs of the seasons.

## *Parish News*

On Saturday, December 15, at 6PM (in place of Vespers), we will offer our annual service of Advent Lessons and Carols. This service, which includes readings of the prophecies and hymns and other music for the season is a quiet way of preparing for the celebration of the Nativity of Our Lord. Also, as part of our Advent preparations, a booklet of devotions is available for use at home. Please remember the Food for the Hungry program in your Advent alms-giving. A collection bin is provided in the Parish Hall for canned goods which will be donated to a local food pantry.

Other December dates to remember: The Parish Council has called for a work day on Saturday, December 8, beginning at 10AM. There will be inside cleaning in preparation for the Christmas celebrations and putting up lights in the parking lot. We will need many hands to accomplish this work! Our weekly Bible studies on the Gospel of St. Mark continue on Wednesday evenings, December 5, 12, and 19, at 7:30PM.

On Christmas Eve, Confessions will be heard beginning at 8:30PM. We will sing carols at 9:30 and the first Mass of Christmas will begin at 10PM.

*Christ is born! Glorify Him!*

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>December 2018</h1>					<i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i>	<b>1</b> St. Eligius of Tournai, BC, 660  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>2</b> First Sunday in Advent; St. Peter Chrysologus, BCD, c. 450; St. Bibiana of Rome, VM, 363  ✓	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b> St. Barbara, VM, c. 306	<b>5</b> St. Sabbas of Palestine, Ab, 532	<b>6</b> St. Nicholas of Myra, BC, c. 342	<b>7</b> St. Ambrose of Milan, BCD, 397	<b>8</b> Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>9</b> Second Sunday of Advent  ✓	<b>10</b> St. Melchia- des, PM, 314	<b>11</b> St. Damasus, PC, 384	<b>12</b> St. Spiridon, BC, 348	<b>13</b> St. Lucy, VM, 304; St. Herman of Alaska, C, 1837	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> St. Maurus, Ab, 6th c.  <i>Lessons &amp; Carols at 6pm</i>
<b>16</b> Third Sunday of Advent; St. Eusebius of Vercelli, BM, 371 <i>O Sapientia</i>  ✓	<b>17</b> St. Lazarus of Bethany, BC, 1st c. <i>O Adonnay</i>	<b>18</b>  <i>O Radix Jesse</i>	<b>19</b> Ember Wednesday  <i>O Clavis David</i>	<b>20</b> St. John of Kronstadt, C, 1908  <i>O Oriens</i>	<b>21</b> St. Thomas, Apostle, 1st c.; Ember Friday  <i>O Rex gentium</i>	<b>22</b> Ember Saturday  <i>O Emmanuel Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>23</b> Fourth Sunday of Advent  <i>O Virgo virginum</i>  ✓	<b>24</b> Vigil of the Nativity  <i>Mass at 10pm</i> <i>W</i>	<b>25</b> The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ; St. Anastasia, VM., c. 304	<b>26</b> St. Stephen, Proto-martyr, 1st c.; of the Octave of the Nativity	<b>27</b> St. John, Evangelist & Apostle, 1st c.; of the Octave of the Nativity	<b>28</b> Holy Inno- cents, Mm, 1st c.; of the Octave of the Nativity	<b>29</b> of the Octave of the Nativity  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>30</b> The Sunday after the Nativity  <i>W</i>	<b>31</b> St. Sylvester, PC, 335					

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

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