

# ✠ 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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From a  
Homily by  
St. Gregory  
Palamas  
d. 1359

When David considered and reckoned up the multitude and greatness of God's gifts to us, and the fact that nobody has anything worthy to give Him in exchange, he said, *what shall I render unto the Lord for all that he hath rendered unto me?* [Ps. 116:11]. It is clear, however, to anyone who is at all attentive, that the

prophet is not calling to mind those gifts of God to us which were in existence before we were, but only those which came later. Which gifts are those which existed before man, which were given to him by God before he was made? Heaven, earth, this whole visible world, and everything above the earth was produced for our sake. For all these things, which existed prior to any human being, were brought from non-being for our sake and made ready in advance for love of mankind. They are immediately bestowed by God on every person born into the world for his sustenance and enjoyment, but they are

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not rendered to him in exchange for anything, nor as a reward, but are truly a gift from God, the great and bountiful Creator, who gives completely freely.

When David, having reflected on the matter, saw everything he had received, and everything given to those who went before him - for those gifts, too, were for his sake - he understood that the benefits bestowed by God are

immeasurable and that, whereas these really are bounties from God for us, the things men offer to God are nothing in comparison. Then it was that he cried out, *What shall I render unto the Lord for all that he hath rendered unto me?*

As he could find nothing to offer to God except his acknowledgment of the favors he had already received and his request for those still to come, he went on to say, *I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.* [Ps. 116:12]. He is not rendering anything in return, rather he is taking, asking to receive, but giving nothing. Someone who has received a gift from a king and made obeisance, then requests a further gift, has not given anything in exchange for what he was given. The cup of salvation refers to the drink-offerings made in gratitude to God for having been preserved. As a prophet, however, and speaking in the Spirit, he foresees what is to come. Making his own what belongs to grace, and regarding what is ours as his, since he is our forefather according to the faith, he says, *I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord*, showing forth beforehand our sacred participation and communion in the sacramental Cup, our boldness towards God in this respect, and our salvation by this means.

If we have nothing to render to God for His benefits to us except to call upon Him once again, what will we find to offer when we sin against Him and put ourselves in the wrong? None at all. Any good we may do, we were obliged to do before we sinned, and even then we were incapable of paying our debt. So the only way we have to remedy our wrongdoings is to glorify God's incomparable forbearance towards us and to invoke His divine mercies...

Although we have nothing to offer God, either for all the good we have experienced from Him or in respect of our offences against Him, we are also negligent about glorifying Him and making supplication... There are many who do not even wake up for the Sunday morning services of praise... What makes them like this? The fact that they consider they have nothing to gain from entreaties and praises to God, or from listening to the divine Scriptures and their counsel. Some feel that they are doing nothing. Certain of them are of the opinion that they are standing idle and consider that any time spent persevering in glorifying God and making supplications is wasted.

Anyone who thinks that the time set aside for prayer to God is unproductive, despises it and devotes himself entirely to physical activities, does not believe the one who says, *Without me ye can do nothing* [John 15:5]; nor does he realize that the Lord has power over life and death, health and sickness, and that it was He who made us, so our being alive, our ability to act and our entire existence depend on Him...

If every time we do anything we make our souls secure beforehand by means of hymns and prayers to God, our adversary [the devil] will find no place in us. Then the whole tribe of evils surrounding him will be driven away as well, and harmony, chastity, righteousness, meekness and humility will adorn our souls. Bound to one another by love, we shall live peaceful lives without discord, having Christ, the King of Peace, in our midst through continuous converse with Him.

## *St. Titus, Bishop and Confessor*

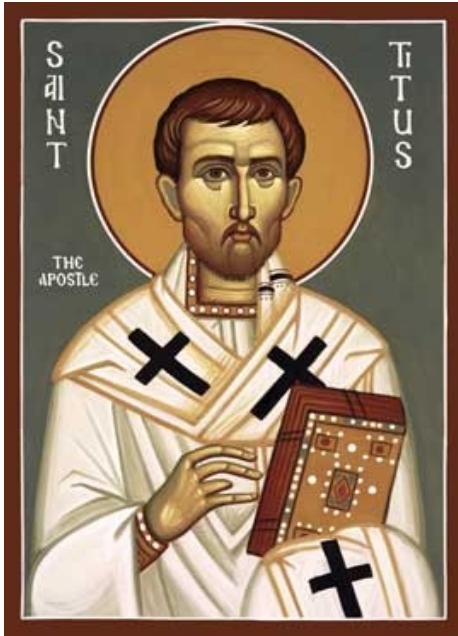
### *Feast Day ~ January 4*

In the early days of the Church, as the good news of the Gospel was being spread around the world, many different talents, abilities, and skills were needed. In order for the Church to survive and thrive, leaders were needed to accurately pass on the teachings of our Lord and to organize the new Christian communities.

Jesus Himself, as reported in Luke's Gospel (chapter 10), appointed seventy followers, in addition to the twelve Apostles, to precede Him to various towns and cities preparing the way for His message. To this number, others were added in time and St. Titus was among them.

Born into a ruling pagan family on the island of Crete, Titus was given a thorough education in Greek philosophy, poetry and science, but paying attention to his dreams altered the course of his life forever. In the first dream, Titus was informed that his education was of no effect because it did not address the salvation of his soul. This caused him to reconsider all the philosophies that he had read and the pagan religion of the Cretan people. A year later, another dream directed him to study the words of the prophets, which Titus correctly understood to mean the Hebrew prophets. He read the Book of Isaiah (especially chapter 41:9, 10) and felt that it was directed toward him.

Soon after this, the people of Crete heard reports of a new Prophet in Palestine who could work great miracles, and Titus asked for permission to go there to see and hear for himself. He arrived in Jerusalem in time to hear the words of the Savior, to witness His Crucifixion, to be told of His Resurrection and to hear the Apostles speaking his own Cretan language on the day of Pentecost. Titus was thoroughly convinced of the truth of this new faith.



After St. Paul's miraculous conversion, he chose the very capable and committed Titus (whom he had baptized) as one of his companions for his missionary travels and as one he could trust to carry on mission work alone. Titus therefore helped to smooth over some difficulties in the Corinthian church and he organized the collection of alms for the struggling Jerusalem church. When St. Paul visited Crete to preach to the pagans there, he decided to ordain Titus to be the bishop of that island, his native land.

Converting the people of Crete was not an easy task. Bishop Titus preached fervently, but many of the pagans were not open to the Christian message. St. Titus prayed for God to assist him in convincing the people, and God chose several dramatic ways in which to jolt the people out of their old way of thinking. As the people flocked to worship a statue of the goddess, Diana, the bishop prayed for a sign and the statue crumbled and fell at the feet of the worshipers. The people were further stunned when a new temple to the god, Zeus, still under construction, collapsed and the work was suspended. After these miraculous events, the bishop had much more success in his mission work on Crete.

St. Paul wrote an epistle to Titus with advice and encouragement, and when St. Paul was taken to Rome for his trial and execution, Bishop Titus went to Rome to provide comfort to his spiritual father. He was able to help arrange for a proper burial of the saint's body.

St. Titus spent the remainder of his long life faithfully serving God and the Church among the people of Crete. At the age of 97 (around the year 107), he passed quietly from this life to the next and it was reported that at the time of his death, his face shone like the sun. His relics, which were taken from Crete to Venice during the Turkish occupation, were returned in 1966 and are kept in the Church of St. Titus in Heraklion.

The ministry of St. Titus is even recognized by the United States Army Chaplain Corps in the form of the Order of Titus Award, presented to chaplains and chaplain assistants for outstanding work in "ensuring the delivery of prevailing religious support to the American soldier."

May St. Titus intercede for all who serve as missionaries and for all of us as we strive to show forth the love of Christ to others in our daily lives. Holy Titus, pray for us.

*Resources: A Cloud of Witnesses: Saints and Martyrs from the Holy Land by Bishop Demetri; Orthodox Saints, Vol. III by George Poulous; the website of the Orthodox Church in America and Wikipedia; the article on The Seventy in the Orthodox Study Bible.*

## Parish News

Thanks to all who helped to make our Christmas celebrations beautiful - to those who decorated, who sang, who served at the altar and who cooked for the bountiful feast. Despite a 'flu epidemic' in the parish, we managed to joyfully give thanks to God for coming into this world as a little Child to save us. *Christ is born! Glorify Him!*

We begin the month of January - and the calendar year - with the celebration of the Circumcision of Our Lord. On January 1, Matins will be sung at 9:30, Mass at 10AM, and a pot-luck



brunch and one of our parish family game days will follow.

At the direction of our Archdiocese, the feast of the Epiphany will be transferred to Sunday, January 5. The Epiphany Blessing of Water will take place on Saturday evening at 6PM in lieu of Vespers. On Sunday morning at the Mass for Epiphany, chalk will be blessed to be used for house blessings throughout the season. Please schedule your house blessing with either Fr. Nicholas or Fr. Raphael

sometime between January 6 and Saturday, February 15, when the pre-Lenten season begins.

Our annual Parish Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, January 19. On this occasion, we will elect members to the Parish Council and hear financial reports and reports of the building projects.

## The Holiness of Man

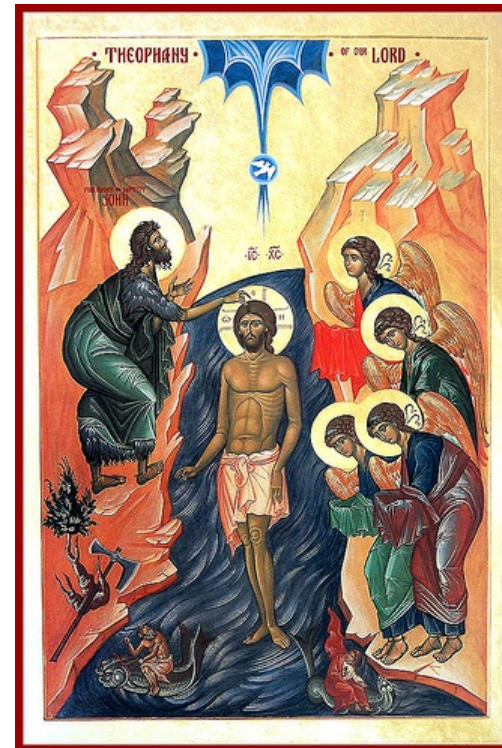
by Bishop Gerasimos Papadopoulos

The main purpose in the life of man is to become holy, to be sanctified by God and to acquire the quality of holiness. Holiness is the positive side of our salvation in Christ. Our forgiveness and reconciliation with God in Christ is the first step. After we have been forgiven and reconciled, we can begin to grow

in the Spirit of God toward holiness and *theosis*. Holiness or *theosis* is the final goal of man's life. From the beginning man was created in the image of God, and he was destined to reach the likeness of God. Man received the breath of God into his being, and he lives by his communion with God. This is what distinguishes man from all the other creatures. To live in a personal relationship and communion with God, who is absolutely holy, man must himself become holy; he must attain to the divine likeness...

Sanctification and salvation was enacted once for all time and for all mankind through the Cross of Christ [Heb. 9:12, 28; 10:10]. Our holiness however is not something static; it is a progressive life continued in the Holy Spirit throughout history. Our salvation begins with Baptism and continues throughout our entire life. Throughout our life we are ever becoming that which we received

in our Baptism; we are ever becoming holy. Our life is a journey to holiness, an ascent from earth to heaven, to God.



Essentially holiness is a gift of God in Christ for the faithful. But it needs our own contribution and cooperation to be completed. We neither become holy by ourselves with our insufficient works, nor does God make us holy without our will and our cooperation. God does not want us to be predetermined robots, nor "humanists", independent

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of divine grace. The spirit of independence from God is considered a *hybris*, an insult to God. And we have seen this in the progenitors, Adam and Eve, and we see it also in contemporary man.

The work of Christ is a movement against the evil that entered into the world and is contrary to nature. Christ conquered the “world” of evil with the Cross [John 16:36], and now wants man to be his co-worker, to continue His work. The sanctified faithful must work personally to make the sanctification they received from Christ at their Baptism a personal possession, and to help with their life and their words for the sanctification of the world. They are all athletes and combatants in the battle of life. In our Baptism we promise to fight against Satan. The prize will be received at the end [2 Tim 4:7, 8]. Salvation is given as a gift by faith and Baptism, but we have to grow in holiness. Holiness is our goal...

Man is not simply the summit of all creation. He stands between heaven and earth. He is created as a link between the physical and the spiritual world. Man is not only a *microcosm*, he is also a *microtheos*, a god by grace. Man lives on earth, but is seeking heaven. He is an image of God but desires the very archetype of that image. Man lives only to the extent that he knows and communicates with God; to the extent that he has God, who is life itself, in his own being. For Christian faith, knowledge and life is a spiritual experience of communion and participation in God [2 Pet. 1:4]. And we know and communicate with God only to the extent that we experience spiritual progress; only to the extent that we become in the likeness of God in virtues, in goodness and righteousness, in holiness and love.

*Excerpts from the book Reflections on our Christian Faith and Life, published by Holy Cross Orthodox Press.*

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>January 2020</h1>						
<i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Mass at 9:30AM</i>			<b>1</b> The Circumcision of Our Lord and Octave Day of the Nativity ( <i>New Years Day</i> ) <i>Mass at 10am</i> <b>W</b>	<b>2</b> Octave Day of St. Stephen; St. Fulgentius, BC, 533	<b>3</b> Octave Day of St. John, Ap. Ev.; St. Genevieve, V, 512	<b>4</b> Octave Day of the Holy Innocents, Mm; St. Titus, BC, c. 96  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>5</b> The Second Sunday after the Nativity  <b>W</b>	<b>6</b> The Epiphany of Our Lord	<b>7</b> of the Octave of Epiphany; St. Cedd, BC, 664	<b>8</b> of the Octave of Epiphany; St. Lucius & comp., Mm, c. 290; St. Severinus, Ab, 482	<b>9</b> of the Octave of Epiphany	<b>10</b> of the Oct. of Epiphany; St. Paul the First Hermit, C., c. 345	<b>11</b> of the Octave of Epiphany; St. Hyginus, PM, c. 142; St. Theodosius, Ab, c. 529  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>12</b> First Sunday after Epiphany; St. Benedict Biscop, Ab, 690  <b>W</b>	<b>13</b> Octave Day of Epiphany; St. Kentigern, BC, 603	<b>14</b> St. Hilary, BCD, 367; St. Nina, V, 335	<b>15</b> St. Maurus, Ab, 584	<b>16</b> St. Marcellus, PM, 309, St. Honoratus, BC, 429	<b>17</b> St. Anthony, Ab, 356	<b>18</b> Chair of St. Peter in Rome; St. Prisca, VM, c. 270  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>19</b> Second Sunday after Epiphany; St. Mark of Ephesus, BC, 144  <b>W</b>	<b>20</b> Ss. Fabian, BM & Sebastian, M, 3rd c.  <i>(MLK Birthday)</i>	<b>21</b> St. Agnes, VM, 304	<b>22</b> St. Vincent, M, 304; St. Anastasius, M, 628	<b>23</b> St. Emerentiana, VM, c. 304; St. John the Almoner, BC, c. 619	<b>24</b> St. Timothy, BM, 97	<b>25</b> Conversion of St. Paul  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>26</b> Third Sunday after Epiphany; St. Polycarp, BM, 156  <b>G</b>	<b>27</b> St. John Chrysostom, BCD, 407	<b>28</b> The Second Feast of St. Agnes, VM	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b> St. Martina, VM, 228; St. Bathildes, QMa, 680	<b>31</b>	

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

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