

✠ 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

From a
Homily by
St. John
Chrysostom
d. 407

If you say “And why in both the Old and the New Testaments are there so many dangers, so many trials, so many snares?” then learn the cause. Therefore, what is the cause?

The present life is a wrestling school, a training ground, an arena, a smelting furnace, a dye house of virtue. Just as leather-dressers, taking the hides, first work them, stretch them, strike them, dash them against walls and stones, and by countless other treatments make them fit to receive the dye - and thus they impart to them a prized color; just as goldsmiths, by putting the gold into the fire, deliver it over to the trial of the furnace, in order to make it exceedingly pure; just as teachers at the wrestling school train the contestants with a great deal of hard work, attacking them more violently than their opponents, so that by exercise their whole bodies

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will be set aright, and they will be ready for the contests, prepared for the holds of their adversaries, and will easily undo them - so also does God act in the present life. Wishing to make the soul fit for virtue, He works it, refines it, and gives it over to testing by trials, in order to strengthen those who have lost heart and are slack, and so that those who are worthy will become even more worthy, impregnable to the plots of the demons and the traps of the devil,

and preeminently fit to receive all the good things to come. For, as they say, a man who has not been tested is worthless. And Paul says: *Tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character.* [Rom. 5:3-4] Thus, since God wants to make men patient and enduring, He permits the coins to be tested in every way.

It was also for this reason that God allowed Job to go through the things he went through, so that he would appear even more worthy and would stop up the mouth of the devil. On this account, God also sent the apostles forth, that they might become more courageous and that, in this way, He might display His own strength. And in fact, this reason is of no small account. Thus, when Paul was searching for an abatement of the evils that afflicted him and to be released from them, God also said to him: *My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness.* [2 Cor. 12:9]

St. Seraphim of Uglich

Feast Day ~ November 4

The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and its aftermath caused chaos, not only in the country, but particularly in the Russian Orthodox Church. The militantly atheistic and anti-Christian views of those who came to power led to persecutions which began as ridicule of Christianity and restrictions on Church activities to destruction of church buildings, closing of monasteries, and martyrdom for clergy and monastics.

Bishops, priests, deacons, and monastics were killed (by torture, beheading, crucifixion, and burying alive); churches and monasteries were closed and many churches were desecrated. According to Nathaniel Davis in his book *A Long Walk to Church: A Contemporary History of Russian Orthodoxy* (as quoted in an online article from the Moscow Times, Nov. 2017) of the 50,000 Orthodox parishes in Russia before the Revolution, only 200-300 were active by 1939.

Church leaders had to make difficult decisions about how to respond to all this. What actions would best protect their flocks? How could they uphold Truth in the midst of a campaign of lies and terror? How could they continue the sacramental life of the Church surrounded by such chaos? Archbishop Seraphim of Uglich is one who had to make these decisions and the price was martyrdom.

The son of a parish priest, Simeon Samoiloitch was born in 1881 and started upon the normal path for one who would devote his life to work in the Church. He attended seminary, graduating in 1905. He chose to be a monk, was tonsured that same year (taking the name Seraphim), and was sent to serve in the Diocese of the Aleutians and North America under Bishop (St.) Tikhon (the patron saint of our Western Rite). The monk Seraphim



was ordained to the priesthood in 1906 and served as a teacher in Unalaska and Sitka before returning to Russia in 1908 due to health problems.

Fr. Seraphim next served in seminaries and monasteries and was made abbot of the Tolga Monastery by his old mentor and bishop, St. Tikhon, who had been recalled to Russia in 1907. When the 600th anniversary of the founding of the monastery in Tolga was celebrated, he wrote a

scholarly history of the monastery. He founded a bee-keeping school for orphan boys there and, when World War I began, he established a hospital at the monastery. In 1915, he became the abbot of the Holy Protection Monastery in Uglich and was consecrated as the Bishop of Uglich in 1920.

Shortly after the eruption of the Revolution in 1917, Church leaders re-established the Russian Orthodox Patriarchate, which had been abolished by Peter (the “Great”) in 1721. St. Tikhon was the choice to lead the Church in this difficult time. He attempted to be completely non-political, but the government leaders were intent on destroying the influence on society which the Church had held. In anticipation of even more difficulties to come, Patriarch Tikhon passed greater responsibility to diocesan bishops and he died under suspicious circumstance in 1925.

In 1922, a movement began within the Church, calling itself the “Renovated” or “Living” Church, whose purpose was to compromise and cooperate with the Communist government. Led by Metropolitan Sergius, this group weakened the Church from within. Those hierarchs and faithful who refused to recognize the

compromises became a “catacomb” church, having to do much in secret and always with the knowledge of danger to their lives.

For Bishop Seraphim, there was no question of compromising with the godless agents of Communism in the government. For this stand and his outspoken criticisms of Metropolitan Sergius, he was arrested and imprisoned first in 1922 and upon his release in 1924, Patriarch Tikhon elevated him to the rank of Archbishop. In 1928, the revisionist Metropolitan Sergius removed the Archbishop from his see and suspended him from serving. He was soon arrested again and incarcerated in a monastery-turned-prison.

In 1929, the suspended Metropolitan was sentenced to a five-year term in a labor camp in the Solovki Islands. While carrying bricks for construction work, he fell off scaffolding and the resulting multiple rib fractures rendered him an invalid. In 1932, he was released from the camp but sent into exile where he continued to provide spiritual counsel to those around him, ordaining priests and tonsuring monks who were intent on maintaining the purity of the Church’s tradition and beliefs. In 1934, Metropolitan Seraphim was arrested for the last time and sentenced to five years in another labor camp. On November 4, 1937, he was executed in this camp for the crime of establishing a “counter-revolutionary organization”. St. Seraphim was glorified by the Russian Church Outside Russia in 1981 and recognized as a New Martyr by the Moscow Patriarchate in 2000. In the Antiochian Western Rite, we include all the New Martyrs of Russia in an observance on February 4.

The stories of the persecutions and courage of St. Seraphim and others like him are so much like what the Christians of the early centuries endured. We in America are protected by our constitutional guarantee to the freedom of religion, but increasingly, that right is being interpreted in narrower ways and we are finding that the legal protection for the rights of some are

now infringing on the rights of Christians to live and work according to our beliefs. The lock-down of churches during the corona virus pandemic has given us a glimpse of how quickly and easily the government can restrict and even stop our freedom to worship together.

Our Lord warned us of persecutions. Will we be ready to stand up for Truth when the time comes? Will our faith be strong enough to help us to endure even to martyrdom? Holy Seraphim, pray that we may have strength to withstand the assaults of the enemy.

Dies Irae

Day of wrath! O day of mourning! So begins the sequence hymn for the Requiem Mass, which is celebrated on All Souls Day (November 2) and at all funerals, echoing the words of the prophet Zephaniah: *A mighty day of wrath has been appointed: a day of affliction and distress...* [Zeph. 1:15]. The prophet was speaking of the judgement of God against the people of Judah who had forgotten the one True God and were worshiping Baal, the god of their Assyrian overlords. But the Church recognizes God’s judgement of his people in every age and historical context. God will judge us, both at the time of our death and also in the Last Judgement at the end of time.

If this sounds like too much gloom and doom for Christians, listen to the words of our Lord: *Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light...Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will by no means pass away... Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.* [Matt. 24:29, 35, 42] In the Nicene Creed, we say that we believe that “he shall come again, with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead” so it is appropriate



to be in expectation of the Last Judgement.

Expectation for the Second Coming of Christ began at the beginning, as the first Christians thought it would happen in their lifetimes. But as the eye-

witnesses to Christ's life on earth began to die, the admonition of Jesus that "You do not know what hour your Lord is coming" became clearer - that all Christians in all ages must be ready, for it will happen at a time unknown to us.

In the *Dies Irae*, vivid descriptions of the day of judgement are contained in verses 1-6; in verses 7-12, we are reminded that God is merciful and in verses 13-18, that if we repent, we will be forgiven as were the sinful woman and the penitent thief and we will be numbered with the sheep rather than the goats [Matt. 25]; and in the final verse, we ask for eternal rest.

The text for this hymn is often attributed to the Franciscan monk, Thomas of Celano (1200-1265), and the earliest known copy is in a Franciscan missal dating from 1253-55. The form of a Mass used at the death of a Christian probably developed over many centuries, but the establishment of All Souls Day as an opportunity to offer a Mass for all the departed can be dated to the end of the 10th century, when Abbot Odilo of Cluny ordered its use, and from there it gradually began to be celebrated in all the West. The hymn *Dies Irae* as a part of the Requiem Mass was probably limited to the Franciscans in Italy at first but by the 15th century was sung in other places.

The 13th century when the *Dies Irae* was written - and every century before and since - saw many events that must have

affected this attention to the end times. Unstable weather conditions led to failed crops and famine; a major eruption of a volcano in 1257 spread so much ash across Europe that this was called a "dark year"; the initial enthusiasm for the Crusades led to disillusionment (from the terrible sack of Constantinople in 1204 and in all the conflicts throughout the century). These were days of wrath and mourning, but Christians still awaited the Second Coming of our Lord and the end of the world.

Another sign of the concern for the Last Judgement expressed in the Requiem hymn is reflected in Medieval church architecture. Many churches - from small village chapels to the great cathedrals of France, England and Germany - depicted the Last Judgement in paintings above the West door of the church, visible to all as they left Mass to go back into the workaday world. Sometimes the scene appears on a tympanum over the exterior of the west door and is carved in stone. In each case, the figures are the same: Christ is in the center, usually seated in judgement, with the apostles and angels near Him, and with the departed coming out of their graves below Him, His right hand directing some upward to Heaven and His left pointing downward, condemning some to Hell.

The plainsong (or Gregorian chant) melody for the *Dies Irae* is probably older than the text but has always been associated with it. The first eight notes are as familiar to the ear of the general public as the first four notes of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony! This theme has been used in secular compositions from Berlioz' *Symphonie Fantastique* to the opening theme for the movie *The Shining*.

Year after year, at every All Souls Day and in every funeral, we Christians continue to sing this hymn as a reminder of the Last Judgement. We pray for God's mercy and that we will be forgiven our many sins as Christ forgave the penitent thief. *Lord, all pitying, Jesu blest, grant them - and us - thine eternal rest. Amen.*

Resources: The St. Ambrose Hymnal; The Hymnal 1940 Companion; The Liturgical Year, Vol. 6 by Abbot Prosper Guéranger; The Orthodox Study Bible; *Wikipedia articles on the Dies Irae and the Crusades.*

Parish News



We begin the month of November with the celebration of All Saints on Sunday, November 1. On Monday, November 2, a Requiem Mass for all our loved ones who have passed away will be offered (Vespers of the Departed at 6:45 and Mass at 7PM). Other extra services this month will be on Wednesday, November 11 (at 7PM), celebrating St. Martin of Tours; Saturday, November 21 (at 10AM), the Entrance of the Theotokos in the

Temple; and Wednesday, November 25, St. Katherine's Day. It is hoped that, with these services in addition to Sunday morning masses, Saturday Vespers services, and Communion from the Reserved Sacrament by appointment, everyone will be given an opportunity to be in church. We are now allowed up to 20 people at a time, but "social distancing" is difficult in our small chapel. Please let Fr. Nicholas know in advance which services you would like to attend so that we can continue to comply with the rulings of our bishops and county officials. The church continues to be available for private prayer.

Advent, and the beginning of a new year in the church calendar for the Western Rite, begins on Sunday, November 29. A box will be provided for the collection of canned and packaged foods for the Food for Hungry People program. These donations, which are given to a local food bank, are even more needed this year as more people have lost jobs during this time of pandemic.

St. Gregory Orthodox Church
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Address Correction Requested

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>November 2020</h1>						
1 All Saints Day; comm. 21st Sunday after Pentecost <i>W</i>	2 All Souls Day <i>Mass at 7pm</i> <i>B</i>	3 of the Oct. of All Saints; St. Winifred, VM, c. 660	4 of the Oct. of All Saints; Ss. Vitalis & Agricola, Mm, c. 304	5 of the Oct. of All Saints; Ss. Zachariah, M, and Elizabeth, Ma, 1st C.	6 of the Oct. of All Saints; St. Leonard of Noblac, Ab, c. 559	7 of the Oct. of All Saints; St. Wilibrord of Echternach, BC, 739 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
8 22 nd Sunday after Pentecost; Patriarchs & Prophets of the Old Law; Four Crowned Martyrs <i>G</i>	9 Dedication of the Basilica of St. Savior in Rome, 324; St. Benignus, BC, c. 468	10 Ss. Tryphon, Respicius & Nympha Mm, c. 250	11 St. Martin of Tours, BC, 397; St. Theodore the Studite, Ab, 826 <i>(Veteran's Day)</i>	12 St. Martin I, PC, 655	13 St. Britius of Tours, BC, 444	14 St. Gregory Palamas, BCD, 1359 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
15 23 rd Sunday after Pentecost <i>G</i>	16	17 St. Gregory the Wonderworker, BC, c. 270; St. Gregory of Tours, BC, 594	18 Dedication of Basilica of Ss. Peter & Paul, 4 th c.; St. Odo of Cluny, Ab, 942	19 St. Pontianus, PM, 235	20 St. Edmund, KM, 870	21 Presentation of the BVM; St. Gelasius, PC, 496; St. Columbanus, Ab, c. <i>Mass at 10am</i> <i>W</i> <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
22 24 th & Last Sunday after Pentecost; St. Cecilia, VM, c. 230 <i>G</i>	23 St. Clement, PM, 96; St. Felicity of Rome, M, 165	24 St. Chrysogonus of Aquileia, M., c. 304	25 St. Katherine of Alexandria, VM, c. 4th c.	26 St. Peter of Alexandria, BM, 311 <i>(Thanksgiving Day)</i>	27	28 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
29 First Sunday in Advent; St. Saturninus, M, 309 <i>V</i>	30 St. Andrew the Apostle, 1st c.					<i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Mass at 9:30AM</i>