

# ✠ 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. Leo the Great d. 461*

Dear beloved, if we study diligently the history of the creation of our race, we shall find that man was made in the image of God, to the end that he might grow into his Maker's likeness. This is the natural dignity of human nature, that in us, as in a mirror, there can be a reflection of the goodness of the divine nature. To help us attain this dignity, we are daily offered the grace of our Savior, for as in the first Adam all men are fallen, so in the second Adam all men can be raised up again.

The cause of our restoration is the mercy of God, and nothing else. We could not love him unless he had first loved us, and scattered the darkness of our ignorance by the light of his truth. This the Lord promised by Isaiah, where he saith: *I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will*

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*lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight: these things will I do unto them and not forsake them. And again: I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.*

From the Apostle John we learn how this was fulfilled: *We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an under-standing, that we may know him that is true, and we are*

*in him that is true, even in his Son. And again: We love him, because he first loved us. And that he may find in us the likeness of his goodness, he giveth us grace to do his works. To this end he lighteth the soul as though it were a candle. And so it is that he doth enkindle in our hearts the first of his holy charity, in order that we may love both him and whatsoever he loveth.*

## *St. Agnes, Virgin & Martyr*

*Feast Day ~ January 21*

The world of 4<sup>th</sup> century Rome was much like our own: wealth was valued above honesty and integrity; rising to a position of power was much desired; physical beauty was prized above the beauty of the soul; sexual promiscuity was expected and virginity and chastity were ridiculed. Going against these attitudes was dangerous, especially if you were a 13-year-old Christian girl and Diocletian was the emperor. Especially if you were St. Agnes.

Agnes' family were Christian but were also of Roman nobility. They were wealthy and their daughter was particularly beautiful. Even though she was only 13, young Roman men were already vying for her, hoping to be betrothed to her and joined to her family's position and wealth. But none of these young men were Christian and Agnes had different ideas about the direction for her life. Rather than commit herself to marriage with someone who did not share her faith, she vowed to remain a virgin and to dedicate her life to Christ.

When the persecution of Christians by the Emperor Diocletian began in 303, all the Christians of Rome were in danger and Agnes and other girls like her were especially vulnerable. It was one of the young men whose offer of marriage Agnes had rejected who reported her to the authorities. The prefect first examined her gently, expecting to be able to persuade the desirable young girl to see how foolish it was to cling to such a strange - and illegal - religion. But Agnes was insistent in refusing to offer incense to the traditional Roman gods and deny Christ.

The prefect then changed tactics and decided to teach Agnes a lesson. He sentenced her to be taken to a brothel with the instructions that any man who desired to should be allowed to rape her. Agnes was dragged through the streets naked and taken to a well-known house of prostitution where most of the men who had earlier wanted her as a bride now hurried to ravage her.

God heard Agnes' prayers for protection and the first man who approached her was suddenly blinded. Other calamities happened to the next several men, including the son of the prefect, so Agnes was sent back to the authorities who bound her and tied her to a stake. The wood intended to burn the young woman alive would not light, but Agnes received the crown of martyrdom when the officer in charge took out his sword and beheaded her. Christians of the city buried her body and many miracles were reported as people began to pray at the site.



A homily of St. Ambrose (d. 397) indicates that Agnes was considered a saint by his time. Her heavenly birthday, January 21, began to be celebrated as her feast day. She is included in the list of martyrs which we hear in the Canon of every Mass. May we pray for the intercessions of St. Agnes, especially for young people who are attempting to abide by Christian precepts in un-Christian times. *Holy Agnes, pray for us.*

## Parish News

The feast day services which we will celebrate this month are the Circumcision of Our Lord on January 1, with Matins at 9:30AM and Mass at 10AM, and the Feast of the Epiphany on the Eve, January 5, with the Blessing of Water at 6:30PM and Mass at 7:00. Additional week-night services will be announced soon.

The annual Parish Meeting, at which new Council members are elected and reports are given on the finances and activities of the parish, will have to be in a "Zoom" meeting this year, the date to be announced.

Metropolitan Joseph has asked that house blessings that would normally occur in Epiphany be postponed until summer in areas where the number of COVID cases is high. Holy water that will be blessed at the Epiphany service will be available for any who would like to take some home (please bring your own container).

# *The Name of Jesus*

*God also has highly exalted Him and given Him a Name which is above every name, that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow...[Philippians 2:9, 10]*

**W**e see in Holy Scripture that, in the Name of Jesus devils are cast out, prayers are answered, the blind are given sight and the sick are healed. People are brought back to a right relationship with God in the Name of Jesus. People are fed by Word and Sacrament in the Name of Jesus. For two thousand years we have called upon His Name for mercy, life and salvation, guidance, comfort and peace. Jesus Himself said, “If you ask anything in my Name, I will do it.” [John 14:14] To truly ask “in the Name of Jesus” means that we unite our hearts, our minds, our wills to Him. When we call upon Him, as we strive to do this, He will hear us.

**T**oo often people have used the Name of Jesus casually, in vain, without any real intent - or even worse, as a way of swearing. We know how angry Muslims may get at what they take as ridicule or blasphemy of their prophet. Christians usually don't get so worked up, knowing that God, in his love for us, humbled himself far lower than our words could say - and we know that God can take care of himself. But the very least we can do - and should do as Christians - is to use the Name of God intentionally, carefully, respectfully and prayerfully.

**A**s the year 2020 is now passed, with all of its challenges, and we begin a new year, whatever it may bring, we can have no better resolution than to remember and faithfully call upon the Name of the Lord.

*A portion of Fr. Nicholas' sermon on the Feast of the Circumcision of Our Lord, January 1, 2021.*

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*Address Correction Requested*

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>January 2021</h1>					<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>2</b> Octave Day of St. Stephen; St. Fulgentius, BC, 533  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>3</b> The Second Sunday after the Nativity; Oct. Day of St. John, Ap. Ev.; St. Genevieve, V, 512  <i>W</i>	<b>4</b> Octave Day of the Holy Innocents, Mm; St. Titus, BC, c. 96	<b>5</b> Vigil of the Epiphany  <i>Blessing of Water &amp; Mass at 6:30</i> <i>W</i>	<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  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>10</b> First Sunday after Epiphany; St. Paul the First Hermit, 342  <i>W</i>	<b>11</b> of the Octave of Epiphany; St. Hyginus, PM, c.142; St. Theodosius, Ab, c. 529	<b>12</b> St. Benedict Biscop, Ab, 690	<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  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>17</b> Second Sunday after Epiphany; St. Anthony, Ab, 356  <i>W</i>	<b>18</b> Chair of St. Peter in Rome; St. Prisca, VM, c. 270  <i>(MLK Birthday)</i>	<b>19</b> St. Mark of Ephesus, BC, 144	<b>20</b> Ss. Fabian, BM & Sebastian, M, 3rd c.	<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  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>24</b> Third Sunday after Epiphany; St. Timothy, BM, 97  <i>G</i>	<b>25</b> Conversion of St. Paul	<b>26</b> St. Polycarp, BM, 156	<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  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>31</b> Fourth Sunday after Epiphany  <i>G</i>						<i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Mass at 9:30AM</i>