

✠ 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. Leo the Great d. 461

We must, dearly beloved, honor with special devotion the day on which Christ, the Savior of the world, first appeared to the nations. We must take into our own hearts today those same joys which were in the hearts of the three wise men. Roused by the signal of a new star that led them, they worshiped before their eyes the King of heaven and earth

- in whom they had believed when he was but promised. This day was not so limited that the power of its work (revealed back then) would have passed away and nothing would have come to us but the report of its occurrence - which faith would accept and memory celebrate. Rather - with God multiplying his gifts - even our own times experience from day to day whatever those first days held.

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Of course the narrative of the Gospel passage chiefly records those days when three men, whom neither prophetic preaching had taught nor the authority of law instructed, came from the most remote parts of the East to meet

God. Still, it is this same thing that we see happening more clearly now in the enlightening of all those who have been called. Isaiah's prophecy has been fulfilled, the one that said: *The Lord has revealed his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the nations of the earth will see the salvation which is from our God* [Is. 52:10]... Whatever new light appears in clouded hearts shines with the rays of this same star, so that souls touched with its brightness are both moved with wonder on account of it and drawn by its lead to adoration of the Lord.

If we are willing to look carefully with the mind into how that threefold splendor of gifts would be offered by all who come to Christ with the steps of faith, would not the same offering be celebrated in the hearts of those who have a correct faith? Whoever acknowledges Christ as King of the universe pulls gold from heart's coffer. Whoever believes that the Only-Begotten of God has united the true nature of humanity to himself gives an offering of myrrh. Whoever confesses that in nothing is the Son unequal to his Father's majesty worships him with a kind of incense...

The mystery of the present feast ought to be with us perpetually. It will undoubtedly be celebrated without end, if in all our actions the Lord Jesus Christ becomes manifest, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

St. Marcellus, Pope & Martyr

Feast Day ~ January 16

There is much concern for justice in our time - criminal justice, political justice, social justice. In an effort to provide fair legal decisions, this justice often resembles revenge, that of the Old Testament “eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth” response to wrong-doing which our Lord Jesus Christ refuted. God’s justice is very different and it often looks like great injustice when taken at face value. The ways of God are not the ways of man.

On January 16 in the Western liturgical calendar, we celebrate the martyrdom of Pope Marcellus, who lost his life but, with God’s justice, gained a place in heaven, prepared for those who remain steadfast in their faith.

When Marcellus became pope in 308, the church in Rome was in great turmoil. The places of worship (usually houses) and even the burial places of Christians had been confiscated or destroyed. There was also great dissension among the Christians regarding those who had denied Christ during the severe persecutions. Even Marcellus’ predecessor - Marcellinus - had offered sacrifice to idols when he was threatened with torture by Diocletian and had subsequently made a public and dramatic confession and was later martyred.

Within the Church during the persecutions, two reactions to apostasy developed. There were those who said that falling away after baptism meant that the person could never be readmitted to the Church. No amount of repentance could erase the fatal error of denying Christ or calling the emperor a god and offering him incense. The Church theologian Tertullian expressed this attitude and Novatian probably held the most uncompromising position. When (St.) Cornelius was elected bishop of Rome in 251 and immediately established penances for those who had lapsed,



Novatian even set up a rival church over this issue. In order to keep the Church “pure”, he refused to recognize that in God’s justice, forgiveness and mercy are paramount.

The controversy still existed when Marcellus became pope but now, some who had fallen away even demanded to be readmitted to Communion without any period of penance. The pope insisted that, while forgiveness could be received, penance was necessary for a return to full membership in the Church. For some, the penance was so severe that a return to Communion could only be granted at the point of death. For all, Pope Marcellus’ penances were considered to be very harsh and were met with great opposition by those for whom they were given.

During the persecutions, not all Christians were executed. When Maximian was co-emperor with Diocletian, he began building public baths at Rome and made use of the persecuted minority of the population to accomplish this. Christians were forced to work on the construction of the baths and many - including the deacon who had healed Diocletian’s daughter of an evil spirit, newly-baptized Roman soldiers, and wealthy women who had given money to provide graves for the martyred - perished under the harsh conditions imposed at this time. Now, Maxentius (who had succeeded his father, Maximian) sent the pope into exile in an effort to quell the rebellious Christians who were disrupting the peace over this issue of penances. The saint was seized and forced to care for cattle, a humiliation he was willing to accept, but the torture from soldiers and the hunger he suffered brought about his death in the year 309. God’s justice had been maintained in two ways: the mercy and forgiveness promised by Christ after repentance was maintained for those who had lapsed, and eternal life, promised by Christ to those who followed him even to death,

had been given to St. Marcellus and those courageous Christians like him. Holy Marcellus, pray for us that we may follow your example.

Parish News

Thank you to all who helped with preparations for our Christmas celebrations: to all who decorated the church and the parish hall, to those who served at the altar, to those who sang, to those who cooked and shared a bountiful feast, to those who prayed. We have been truly blessed to be together in this holy time.

The feast day services in the month of January are the Feast of the Circumcision of our Lord on Jan. 1, which we will celebrate on that Saturday morning with Matins at 9:30AM and Sung Mass at 10 (pot-luck brunch following). The Feast of the Epiphany will be celebrated on the Eve, Wednesday, January 5, with the Great Blessing of Water at 6:30PM and Mass at 7, followed by a pot-luck supper.

Our collection of canned and packaged food for the Archdiocesan Food for Hungry People program will continue until Sunday, January 8, when it will be weighed and donated to a local food bank.

Our annual Parish meeting will be postponed until March. At that time, Parish Council elections will be held, reports on various church projects will be given and the end-of-year parish donations to charity will be announced.

EpiphanY house blessings can now be scheduled with Fr. Nicholas or Fr. Raphael and can take place until Feb. 19, the beginning of the pre-Lent and Lenten seasons.

The new 2022 parish calendars, featuring icons of Western monastic saints, are now available.

St. Gregory Orthodox Church
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Address Correction Requested

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>January 2022</h1>						1 The Circumcision of Our Lord & Octave Day of the Nativity (New Years Day) <i>Mass at 10am</i> W
2 Second Sunday after the Nativity; Octave Day of St. Stephen; St. Fulgentius, BC, 533 W	3 Octave Day of St. John, Ap. Ev.; St. Genevieve, V, 512	4 Octave Day of the Holy Innocents, Mm; St. Titus, BC, c. 96	5 Vigil of the Epiphany <i>Mass at 7pm</i> W	6 The Epiphany of Our Lord	7 of the Octave of Epiphany; St. Cedd, BC, 664	8 of the Octave of Epiphany; St. Lucius & comp., Mm, c. 290; St. Severinus, Ab, 482 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
9 First Sunday after Epiphany W	10 St. Paul the First Hermit, 342	11 of the Octave of Epiphany; St. Hyginus, PM, c.142; St. Theodosius, Ab, c. 529	12 St. Benedict Biscop, Ab, 690	13 Octave Day of Epiphany; St. Kentigern, BC, 603	14 St. Hilary, BCD, 367; St. Nina, V, 335	15 St. Maurus, Ab, 584 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
16 Second Sunday after Epiphany; St. Marcellus, PM, 309, St. Honoratus, BC, 429 W	17 St. Anthony, Ab, 356 <i>(MLK Birthday)</i>	18 Chair of St. Peter in Rome; St. Prisca, VM, c. 270	19 St. Mark of Ephesus, BC, 144	20 Ss. Fabian, BM & Sebastian, M, 3rd c.	21 St. Agnes, VM, 304	22 St. Vincent, M, 304; St. Anastasius, M, 628 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
23 Third Sunday after Epiphany; St. Emerentiana, VM, c. 304; St. John the Almoner, BC, c. 619 G	24 St. Timothy, BM, 97	25 Conversion of St. Paul	26 St. Polycarp, BM, 156	27 St. John Chrysostom, BCD, 407	28 The Second Feast of St. Agnes, VM	29 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
30 Fourth Sunday after Epiphany; St. Martina, VM, 228; St. Bathildes, QMa, 680 G	31					