

✠ 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 of St. Basil the Great

d. 379

Ought we to pray without ceasing? Is it possible to obey such a commandment? Prayer is a petition for good addressed by the pious to God. But we do not rigidly confine our petition to words. Nor yet do we imagine that God requires to be reminded by speech. He knows our needs even though we ask Him not.

What do I say then? I say that we

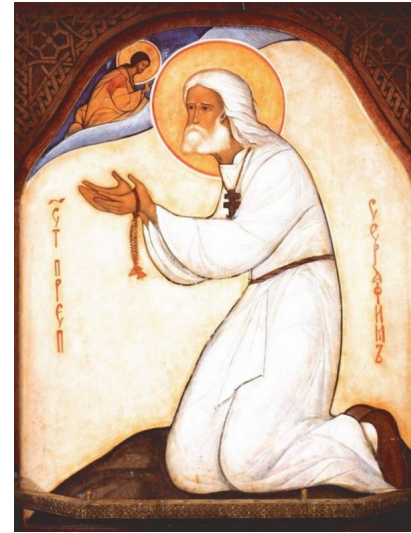
must not think to make our prayer complete by syllables. The strength of prayer lies rather in the purpose of our soul and in deeds of virtue reaching every part and moment of our life.

Whether ye eat, it is said, or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God. [I Cor. 10:31]

As you take your seat at table, pray. As you lift the loaf, offer thanks to the Giver. When you sustain your bodily

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weakness with wine, remember Him Who supplies you with this gift to make your heart glad and to comfort your infirmity. Has your need for taking food passed away? Let not the thought of your Benefactor pass away too.

As you are putting on your tunic, thank the Giver of it. As you wrap your cloak about you, feel yet greater love to God, Who alike in summer and winter has given us coverings convenient for us, at once to preserve our life,

and to cover what is unseemly.

Is the day done? Give thanks to Him Who has given us the sun for our daily work, and has provided for us a fire to light up the night, and to serve the rest of the needs of life.

Let night give the other occasions of prayer. When you look up to heaven and gaze at the beauty of the stars, pray to the Lord of the visible world; pray to God the Arch-artificer of the universe, Who in wisdom has made them all. When you see all nature sunk in sleep, then again worship Him Who gives us even against our wills release from the continuous strain of toil and by a short refreshment restores us once again to the vigor of our strength.

Let not night herself be all, as it were, the special and peculiar property of sleep. Let not half your life be useless through the senselessness of slumber. Divide the time of night between sleep and prayer. Nay, let your slumbers be themselves experience in piety; for it is only natural that our sleeping dreams should be for the most part echoes of the anxieties of the day. As have been our conduct and pursuits, so will inevitably be our dreams.

Thus will you pray without ceasing; if you pray not only in words, but unite yourself to God through all the course of life and so your life be made one ceaseless and uninterrupted prayer.

St. Kristo the Gardener

Feast Day ~ February 12

In the earliest days, many Christians received the crown of martyrdom for refusing to acknowledge the Roman gods. In later centuries, Christians have been martyred after being falsely charged of some crime. A common trumped-up charge for Christians living in lands ruled by Muslims was (and still is) to be accused of either disparaging the name of Mohammed or of refusing to convert to Islam. Both of these were used against St. Kristo, the gardener, to bring about his martyrdom.

Kristo was a vegetable and fruit grower in Albania. When his business opportunities began to fall off, Kristo decided to move to Constantinople. There, he obtained a position as gardener for the Turkish Sultan. Kristo considered his skills at tilling the soil and bringing forth healthy and delicious produce a gift from God and he praised Him constantly for his success.

That success brought about envy and hatred in others who worked in the household of the Sultan. They began to plot how they might destroy the gardener's good reputation. Even though it was not illegal for Christians to practice their faith in the Ottoman Empire at this time, Kristo's enemies knew that they could use his faith against him. One day, they engaged him in a conversation about religion, asking him questions about Christianity. Soon, they falsely accused him of ridiculing the Muslim faith and had him arrested for treason.



Against a Muslim's, so Kristo was thrown into prison where he endured torture over a period of two years. He was given the opportunity to return to his beloved garden if he would only convert to Islam. Kristo held fast to faith in our Lord and was beheaded for that faith on February 12, in 1748 according to some accounts or 1752 in others.

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, *Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven...* [Matt 5:11, 12] May we, like St. Kristo, remember this and be prepared. *Holy Kristo, pray for us.*

Resources: Website of the Orthodox Church in America; *Orthodox Saints* by George Poulos.

The Meaning of Suffering

By Archimandrite Seraphim Aleksiev

The question of suffering is one of the most sensitive questions. Many ask themselves: why has God created us to suffer in this world from different diseases, sorrows, calamities, troubles, and misfortunes; from passions on the inside, from bad people on the outside, from the envy of neighbors, from the menace of enemies? For those who do not believe in God, this world is a hopeless valley of sorrows; life for them is a sad symphony of wailing and weeping. Some in their despair even say that there is no other hell beyond the grave, that hell is here, on earth. In this way earthly

sorrows, not being lightened by the hopes of heavenly Revelation, lead to pessimism and despair. The worst thing in such cases is that suffering does not carry any meaning in itself that would soften it, making it doubly hard to bear...



Suffering in its nature is nothing else but a withdrawal from God. With God it would be well even in hell. It is known that before the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ not one of the righteous had access to Paradise. Consequently, the righteous ones from the old Testament who had died in faith were in hell where they awaited their salvation. Sorrow, however, did not touch them, because they were with God. In the book of

Solomon's Wisdom it is said: *But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and sorrow will not touch them. They seemed dead to the eyes of the foolish... but they abide in peace [3:1-3].* On the other hand, without God it would be terrible even in Paradise.

This is the secret of suffering - separation and withdrawal from God. If a man is with God, he is happy and he says, like the Psalmist: *For what have I in Heaven? And besides Thee, what have I desired upon earth? [Ps. 72:23]* God is the Source of joy, and the devil - the source of suffering. That is why even the sorrows which come to us according to God's will in this temporary life carry in themselves joy and lead to heavenly glory if they are endured with faith and trust in God's good providence. In contrast, the temporal sinful pleasures with which the devil tempts us carry poison in themselves, and their end is utter disappointment. Whoever follows God is happy even in suffering, as the holy Apostle Paul speaks: *sorrowful, yet always rejoicing [2 Cor. 6:10]*; but whoever follows the devil is unhappy even in his earthly joys. How many wicked

ones there are who seem to be prospering in this world, but take a peek into their hearts. You will see such suffering, such an emptiness there!

It is true that the righteous, too, are not left without sorrows in life. The Savior Himself has prophesied to his Apostles: *In the world ye shall have tribulation [John 16:33]*. The holy Apostle Paul says directly: *All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution [2 Tim 3:12]*. But how different those sorrows, persecutions, and sufferings for Christ and in Christ are from the sorrows of the wicked! Their sorrows lead to hopelessness and despair, and the ones in Christ - to hope and joy. The sorrows of the faithless are storms which ravage everything, but the tears of the faithful are a quiet, gracious rain which helps the beautiful flowers of virtue to grow and bloom in the soul. This is one of the extraordinary things in our precious Christian faith: it brings joy even in suffering. It transforms the sorrows into bliss.

When Jesus Christ was leaving this earthly life, He bequeathed to His beloved disciples sorrows and tears as if they were a most precious gift: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice [John 16:20]*... In His sermon He pronounced blessed those whom this sinful world considers to be the most wretched: *blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are the weeping, blessed are the meek, the hungry and thirsty for righteousness, the persecuted for righteousness sake, etc. To all those the Savior said: Rejoice, and be exceeding glad [Matt. 5:12]*

How strange! To rejoice when one is unhappy, poor, helpless, persecuted, insulted, despised, hated, slandered! Before Christ, the world did not know how to rejoice over such calamities, but now everything is reversed through the power of the God-Man. *All things work together for good to them that love God [Rom. 8:28]* For the believer, sorrow has lost its poisonous sting. Quiet hope has taken the place of the bitter despair of suffering, and suffering is not unbearably heavy any more, because it gives birth to sweet

fruit. Rejoice and be glad, because sorrows are a fiery furnace in which gold is purified... Rejoice and be glad! Jesus Christ Himself sanctified the road of suffering with His feet! Rejoice and be glad! The Word of God calls suffering a favor. It is the distinction of the chosen ones of God. It is a medal of honor for the beloved of Christ.

The Apostle James writes: *Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations* [James 1:2]. As St. Dimitry of Rostov teaches, the words “divers temptations” are to be understood as “all kinds of sorrows, griefs, misfortunes, persecutions, embittering diseases and adversities, impoverishment, and suffering which occur either by God’s permission or by human menace, or naturally, or by chance, or by an action of the devil.” In all such cases, the holy Apostles advised the Christians to rejoice and to lay their sorrow on God. What a deep and perfect understanding the first Christians had of suffering and its beneficial influence on the soul of the person who endures it patiently!

Archimandrite Seraphim Aleksiev was a monk of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, a professor of dogmatic theology, and a prolific writer on spiritual, theological, and moral issues.

Parish News



On Tuesday, February 1, we will celebrate the Eve of the Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple, also called the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and Candlemas. Mass will be at 7PM, preceded by Vespers at 6:30 and followed by a potluck supper. At the beginning of this Liturgy, prayers of blessing are made over the candles which we will use during this year, and at the end, throats will be blessed in honor of St. Blaise Day.

Each year, St. Gregory’s makes financial contributions for Outreach outside the parish. Continuing what we have done for a number of years, the parish council has voted to make these donations: to Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Ellwood City, PA (where our own Sr. Michele resides), Holy Assumption Monastery in Calistoga, CA (where our own Mother Macrina lives), Shady Grove Pregnancy Center in Gaithersburg, MD, Manna Food Center in Silver Spring (where we also donate our food collection), and the Eastern Dioceses (the Diocese of New York and Washington and the Diocese of Charleston, Oakland and the Mid-Atlantic, of which we are a part) Ministry Council. In addition, our parish has, from its beginning, participated in the Support a Mission Priest program of the Orthodox Christian Mission Center, sending aid to help mission work in many poorer countries around the world. Thank you for your generous contributions which enable our small parish to be generous also.

March for Life

The annual rally and March for Life, which is held near date of the tragic Supreme Court ruling in Roe vs. Wade, took place on Friday, January 21. After the necessity of a “virtual” march last year, this was an upbeat, positive event with more than one hundred thousand participants. Among the predominantly young people who marched were eleven Orthodox bishops and many priests, seminarians, and lay people, affirming the essential Orthodox belief that life is a gift from God which begins at conception. *Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and before you were born I sanctified you.* [Jer. 1:5]

Our bishops were present for a service in the Roman Catholic Shrine of the Immaculate Conception on Thursday evening, a Liturgy was served at St. Nicholas Cathedral on Friday morning, the Greek Archbishop Elpidiphoros gave the opening prayer for the March, and a prayer service was offered. Bishop JOHN represented

our Archdiocese at the March and Fr. Nicholas accompanied him to all events.

We hope that the prayers of so many people from different religious traditions and from all walks of life will help to bring about a change in our nation that will preserve the right to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” to all - born and not yet born.



St. Gregory Orthodox Church
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Address Correction Requested

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>February 2022</h1>						<i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Mass at 9:30AM</i>
		1 St. Ignatius of Antioch, BM, c. 107; St. Bridget, V, 523 <i>Mass at 7pm</i> <i>W</i>	2 Presentation of Our Lord: Candlemas	3 St. Blaise, BM, c. 316; St. Anskar of Hamburg, BC, 865	4 New Martyrs of Russia, 1917 and following; St. Joseph of Aleppo, M, 1686	5 St. Agatha, VM, c. 250 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
6 Fifth Sunday after Epiphany; St. Photius, BCD, 891; St. Dorothy, VM, c. 313 <i>G</i>	7 St. Romuald, Ab, 1027	8	9 St. Cyril of Alexandria, BCD, 444; St. Apollonia, VM, c. 248	10 St. Scholastica, V, 543	11 St. Gregory II, PC, 731; St. Benedict of Aniane, Ab, 821	12 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
13 Sixth Sunday after Epiphany <i>G</i>	14 St. Valentine, PrM, 3rd C	15 Ss. Faustinus & Jovita, Mm, 120	16 St. Nicholas of Japan, BC, 1912	17	18 St. Simeon of Jerusalem, BM, 1st c.	19 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
20 Septuagesima <i>V</i>	21 <i>(President's Day)</i>	22 Chair of St. Peter at Antioch	23 Vigil of St. Matthias	24 St. Matthias, Apostle, 1st c.	25 St. Walburga of Heidenheim, V, 779	26 St. Porphyrius of Gaza, BC, 420; St. Ethelbert, KC, 616 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
27 Sexagesima; St. Raphael of Brooklyn, BC, 1915; St. Alexander, BC, 326 <i>V</i>	28 St. Oswald of Worcester, BC, 992					