

# ✠ 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 of St. Leo the Great d. 461*

**I**n John's gospel the Lord says: *By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another*, and in the letter of the same apostle we read: *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God; he who does not love does not know God, for God is love.*

**L**et the faithful, therefore, examine their minds and subject the inmost thoughts of their hearts to a true scrutiny. If they find stored within their consciences anything of the fruits of charity, let them not doubt that God dwells in them; and in order that they may be more and more ready to receive such a guest, let them abound still more in works of unflinching compassion. For if God is love, charity must have no limit because God cannot be confined within any bounds.

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**A**nd so, beloved, although any time is suitable for the exercise of the virtue of charity, it is more especially urged on us by this present season. Thus, those who long to receive the Lord's Pasch with bodies and souls made holy must strive earnestly to acquire this grace which includes the sum of all the virtues and covers a multitude of sins.

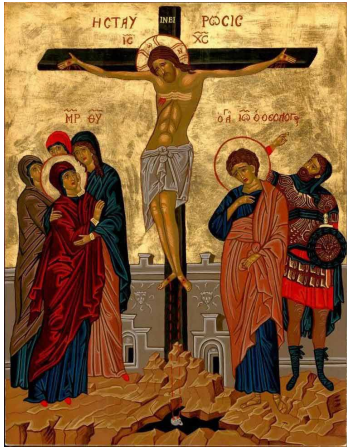
**T**herefore, as we are about to celebrate that most eminent of all mysteries, in which the blood of Jesus Christ has wiped away all our sins, let us first of all prepare to offer the sacrifice of mercy, so that what we have been given by the goodness of God we may ourselves show to those who have trespassed against us.

**W**e must show more liberal bounty towards the poor and those who suffer from all kinds of affliction in order that many voices may give thanks to God, and that the relief of those in need may support our fasts. Indeed, no other devotion of the faithful is more pleasing to the Lord than that which is directed towards his poor. Where he finds merciful concern he recognizes the reflection of his own kindness.

**L**et no one fear the failure of his wealth by such payments, for liberality itself is a great fortune, nor can one lack the means to practice that generosity whereby Christ feeds others and is himself fed in them. In all this work his hand intervenes to increase the quantity of bread as it is broken, and multiply it as it is distributed.

**L**et the almsgiver feel happy and secure, for he will have the greatest gain if he has saved the smallest amount for himself; as the blessed apostle Paul says: *He who supplies seed to the sower will both supply bread for food and will multiply your seed and increase the harvest of your righteousness* in Christ Jesus our Lord, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.

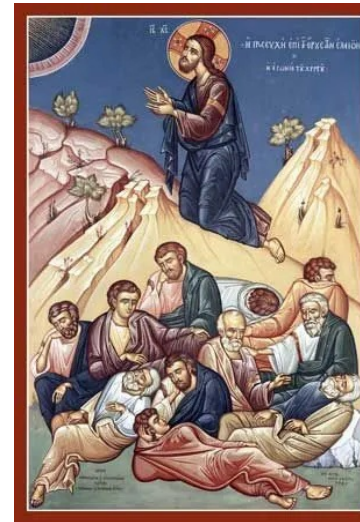
# Saints of the Passion



The Passion of our Lord as described in the Gospels is filled with vivid details. When we hear the Passion Gospel accounts chanted in church in Holy Week those details remain imprinted on our minds and hearts. We identify with the failings of each of the characters: when we should be keeping watch with Christ, we fall asleep as the disciples did; with Peter, we promise to follow Christ even to death and yet, also with Peter, we deny Him.

The Church rightly pays much attention to the major “players” in this great drama – the blessed Theotokos and the Apostles – but there are others whose scriptural roles are minor but who are also honored among the saints. As we pass through Holy Week and approach the great celebration of the Resurrection of our Lord, let us also remember these saints who were completely transformed by Christ.

St. Longinus is the name given to the Roman centurion, described in the synoptic Gospels as the one who supervised the crucifixion of Christ and the two thieves. He had overseen the entire process – the scourging, the long walk carrying the crosses to Golgotha, the nailing, the offer of vinegar on the sponge. But through all of this, as he was carrying out his responsibilities, doing his job, he had also witnessed our Lord’s compassion toward his persecutors (*Father, forgive them*); he had seen the devotion of His mother, the other women and of St. John; he had heard the promise to the penitent thief. Perhaps Longinus was already beginning to recognize the Truth when, at our Lord’s death, the sky darkened and the earth shook with an earthquake. Then,



acknowledging the One before him, Longinus said, *Surely this man was the Son of God*. His life was forever changed.

St. Mark [15:44] records that the Centurion’s duties continued as he was summoned before Pilate to confirm the death of Christ before the governor could allow the body to be taken away. Longinus then disappears from the scriptural record, but holy tradition provides the rest of the story. Longinus is believed to have left military service (deserted) in order to

be with the followers of Jesus and learn of His teachings. After the Resurrection and the events of Pentecost, Longinus went back to his homeland, Cappadocia, to tell his friends and relatives about Christ. It was here that he was captured by the military authorities and beheaded for his desertion. He is considered a martyr by the Church and his feast day is celebrated on October 16. May St. Longinus pray that our eyes and minds and hearts may be open to see the Truth before us and worship Him, no matter the cost.

St. Dismas, one of the two thieves crucified with our Lord, was a Scriminal, described in the Gospels as a robber and further identified by the Jewish historian Josephus as a militant nationalist (whose tactics were akin to that of the “terrorists” of our day). When his fellow criminal, Gestas, mocked Jesus as they hung on the crosses, Dismas rebuked him and reminded him that they were receiving the expected penalty for the crimes that they had committed. But, recognizing the divinity of Christ, who had willingly accepted this punishment, he cried out to Him: *Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom* [Luke 23:42], and Christ promised that Dismas would be with him in paradise. Our Lord’s parable of the workers in the vineyard [Matt. 20], in which

those who began at the 11th hour received the same pay as those who had labored all day, told us that in God's eyes, every repentant sinner will be forgiven. At the Paschal Liturgy, we will hear the sermon of St John Chrysostom which also reminds us that it is never too late to turn to Christ. St. Dismas is the most dramatic example of God's mercy and forgiveness – even to those whose repentance occurs at the “midnight hour” of their lives. At every Liturgy, we promise: “Like the thief will I confess thee: remember me, O Lord, in thy Kingdom.” We celebrate St. Dismas' feast day on March 25, which some in the early Church observed as the date of the crucifixion.

The Sanhedrin, the legal body for the Temple at Jerusalem, the group which brought Jesus before Pilate and demanded his execution, was not unanimous in its judgements. At least two members of this court were followers of Christ – Nichodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. Perhaps because of their influential position in the community, these men had not been very public in showing their interest in Jesus (Nichodemus had come to Christ under cover of darkness to ask him questions [John 3]), but their cowardice came to an end at this fateful time. They each protested against the accusers of Christ in the deliberations of the Sanhedrin and they argued against bringing Him before Pilate.

After the crucifixion, Joseph went to Pilate and asked to take Jesus' body to his own newly-carved tomb for burial. Scripture describes Joseph as a just man and a rich man and, in accordance with his concern for justice, he offered the fruits of his riches as a last resting place for our Lord. Nichodemus assisted Joseph with the burial and, according to tradition, is thought to have soon been baptized by St. Peter and to have been ousted from the Sanhedrin and forced to leave Jerusalem for his conversion to Christianity. St. Nichodemus is celebrated on August 3.

From extra-Biblical writings, we learn that after the Resurrection, Joseph became an ardent and public member of the Christian community, helping to found the church at Lydda. It

is believed that Joseph also traveled with the Apostle Philip to England, where he was instrumental in establishing the church at Glastonbury, which became a great place of pilgrimage. Other pious legends have persisted through many centuries and are celebrated in the English hymn “Jerusalem” (“and did those feet in ancient times...”, a reference to this Joseph bringing Mary and the Christ Child to England) and in the legend of the Glastonbury thorn (which grew from Joseph's staff). St. Joseph's feast day is celebrated on February 22. May Ss. Nichodemus and Joseph of Arimathea pray for us, that we may be able to justly defend what is right and offer our riches to God, proclaiming the good news of Christ our Savior.

There are other characters in the story who are even less well-known. Malchus, the servant of the High Priest, was healed by Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane after Peter cut off his ear with a sword. Simon of Cyrene (in modern Libya) was forced to carry the Cross for Jesus; he is noted as the father of Alexander and Rufus (who were probably known to the Church in Rome). While we know little about them, we can be certain that the events of our Lord's Passion touched them and changed their lives forever.

As we meditate on the mighty acts of God in Holy Week, may we too be healed and transformed by all that we hear and see.

*Revised and reprinted from our website*

## *Parish News*

Our Lenten offerings of Mass at 7:30AM on Wednesdays and Stations of the Cross and Litany of the Cross at 6:30PM on Fridays continue until Holy Week. The schedule for that most holy time of the liturgical year is as follows:



*Palm Sunday* (April 17) - Matins at 9AM; the blessing and distribution of Palms and procession around the church (weather permitting) at 9:30, followed by Mass with the singing of the Passion Gospel of St. Matthew.

*Monday in Holy Week* (April 18) - Vespers at 6:30PM; Mass at 7 with the singing of the Passion Gospel of St. Mark.

*Tuesday in Holy Week* (April 19) - Vespers at 6:30; Mass at 7 with the singing of the Passion Gospel of St. Luke.

*Wednesday in Holy Week* (April 20) - Vespers at 6:30; the Unction Mass with the blessing of oils at 7.

*Maundy Thursday* (April 21) - Vespers at 6:30; Mass with the Washing of Feet, procession to the Altar of Repose and the Stripping of the Altar at 7. A silent meal and Tenebrae will follow.

*Good Friday* (April 22) - Mass of the Pre-sanctified with the singing of the Passion Gospel of St. John at 12 noon. Confessions may be made following.

*Holy Saturday* (April 23) - Confessions may be made at 8PM. The Paschal Vigil will begin outside at 9PM with the lighting of the Paschal Fire, the singing of the Exultet during the procession into the church, the story of our redemption in scriptural readings, the Blessing of Water and renewal of Baptismal vows, the singing of the Litany of Saints, and the celebration of the Resurrection with the first Mass of Easter. A Paschal feast will follow.

*Easter Day* (April 24) - Mass will be celebrated at 11AM with the singing of the *Vidi Aquam* and the Paschal Sequence hymn, "Christians, to the Paschal Victim".

At our annual Parish Meeting on March 20, Tensaye Aynalem and Bernt Johnson were elected to serve on the Parish Council and reports were given on activities during the past year.

Please remember to include a Lenten offering for the poor through our Archdiocesan Food for Hungry People program.

## *We Shall Share in the Pasch*

by St. Gregory Nazianzen

We shall share in the pasch, for the present certainly in what is still a figure... In a short time, however, our sharing will be more perfect and less obscure, when the Word will drink the pasch with us new in the kingdom of his Father, revealing and teaching what he has now shown in a limited way. For what is now being made known is ever new.

What this drink is and what this enjoyment, is for us to learn and for him to teach and to share this teaching with his disciples. For the teaching is food even for the one who feeds others.

Come then, let us also share in the law, not in the letter but in the spirit of the gospel, perfectly and not incompletely, for eternity and not for a period of time only. For our capital let us take not the earthly Jerusalem but our mother city in heaven, not the city now trampled by armies but the one extolled by angels.

Let us not sacrifice young calves or lambs with horns and hoofs, which are for the most part dead, insensate things. But let us offer a sacrifice of praise to God on the altar on high along with the



choirs of heaven. Let us go through the first veil, let us come to the second, let us look into the holy of holies.

**T**o say something greater still, let us sacrifice ourselves to God, further, let us go on every day offering ourselves and all our activities. Let us accept everything literally, let us imitate the passion by our sufferings, let us reverence the blood by our blood, let us be eager to climb the cross.

**I**f you are Simon of Cyrene, take up the cross and follow. If you are crucified with him as a robber, have the honesty to acknowledge God. If he was numbered among the transgressors because of you and your sin, you must become righteous because of him. Adore him who hung upon the cross through your fault; and while he is hanging there, draw some advantage even from your own wickedness; buy salvation by his death, enter paradise with Jesus and learn what is the extent of your deprivation. Contemplate the glories there: let the murmurer die outside with his blasphemy.

**I**f you are Joseph of Arimathea, ask the executioner for the body; make your own the expiation of the world. If you are Nicodemus, the man who served God by night, prepare him for burial with perfumes.

**I**f you are one or other Mary, or Salome or Joanna, shed tears in the early morning. Be the first to see the stone removed, and perhaps the angels too, and even Jesus himself.

*Christ is risen! Indeed He is risen! Christos anesti! Alithos anesti!  
El Messieh kahm! Hakken kahm! Khristos voskrese! Voistinu voskrese!*

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>April 2022</h1>						
<i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Mass at 9:30AM</i>					1 St. Melito of Sardis, BC, 177  <i>Stations of the Cross &amp; Litany at 6:30pm</i>	2 St. Mary of Egypt, Penitent, c. 421  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
3 Fourth Sunday in Lent; St. Sixtus I, PM, 127  V	4	5	6 St. Notker, C, 912	7 St. Tikhon of Moscow, BC, Patron of the Western Rite, 1925	8  <i>Stations of the Cross &amp; Litany at 6:30pm</i>	9  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
10 Passion Sunday  V	11 St. Leo the Great, PCD, 461	12	13 St. Hermenegild, M, 583	14 St. Justin, M, 167	15  <i>Stations of the Cross &amp; Litany at 6:30pm</i>	16  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
17 Palm Sunday  R/V	18 Monday in Holy Week  <i>Mass at 7pm</i> V	19 Tuesday in Holy Week  <i>Mass at 7pm</i> V	20 Wednesday in Holy Week  <i>Mass at 7pm</i> V	21 Maundy Thursday  <i>Mass at 7pm</i> W	22 Good Friday  <i>Liturgy at Noon</i> B	23 Holy Saturday  <i>Vigil at 9pm</i> V/W
24 Pascha: The Resurrection of Our Lord  <i>Mass at 11AM</i> W	25 Monday in the Octave of Easter	26 Tuesday in the Octave of Easter	27 Wednesday in the Octave of Easter	28 Thursday in the Octave of Easter; St. Vitalis, M, 1 <sup>st</sup> c.	29 Friday in the Octave of Easter	30 Saturday in the Octave of Easter  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>