

✠ 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. Philaret of Moscow d. 1867

What do you see when you see God? Goodness and good itself, all-perfect and exclusive; wisdom and the very subject of wisdom; exalted and all-encompassing truth; limitless power and the power of powers; glory and beauty that no word can describe, that no imagination can conjure up. And what are the fruits of this

contemplation? Not only the exaltation of wonder, the ecstasy of love, the fulfillment of all hopes, and safety untroubled by any evil, which cannot approach the gracious presence of God. What you receive is actual communion with the fullness of the One contemplated. For, according to Apostle Paul, *We all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory.* [2 Cor. 3: 18]

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Do any of you desire to see God and to feel the blessedness of this contemplation? Then enter the path that leads to it. This path is indicated by Jesus Christ, who is Himself the way and the most trustworthy Guide. This path is the purity or purification of the heart. *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.* [Matt. 5:8]

Impurity of heart is more or less understandable to all, for everyone has experienced it, unfortunately, sometimes quite obviously. *For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man.* [Matt. 15:19-20] If evil thoughts proceeding from the heart visibly defile a man- where he blasphemes against God or slanders his neighbor, or whether he robs, fornicates, commits adultery or murder - then who will not recognize an impure heart in these vile deeds or words? This makes it obvious that when a person begins the process of his heart's purification, he must reject all deeds that defile a man, this is, all sinful and unlawful actions. Without this, there is no hope not only of seeing the face of God, but even of the smallest participation in the kingdom of God...

But here is something that some either do not notice or do not want to notice: even the heart of someone who does not defile himself with evil deeds and lawlessness is often impure. Let us repeat the words of the Knower of hearts: *For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts...* Notice how He reveals, in a single image, not only visible impurity, but invisible impurity as well? When evil thoughts come out of a heart and become actions, then they defile the whole man, both the inner and outer man, both his heart and his members, both his soul and his body. But what about when evil

thoughts do not come out of the heart to become actions, but remain nesting within the heart? What then?

Evidently, in this case, they defile the heart, the inner man, the soul. This internal impurity could be unnoticeable to others, as though it were nothing, when people only look at the face and actions of a man. However, for God, who sees the heart of man, this inner impurity is no less obvious or abhorrent than the external impurity of deeds.

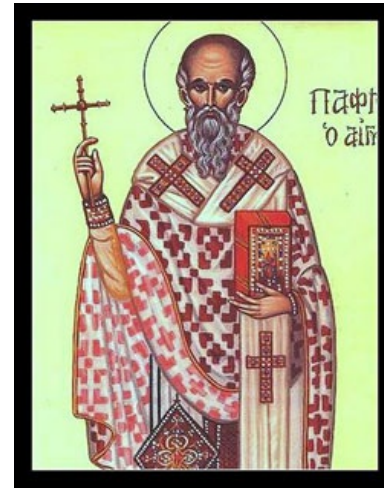
Perhaps you have not killed anyone, but have you desired in your heart that he would die? Listen. The Lord calls this evil thought murder. Your mouth has not opened to utter blasphemy against God. But has your heart been moved by brazen and ungrateful thoughts concerning God's judgements? Be careful! It is like that the Knower of hearts has already heard your blasphemy. From this, it becomes obvious that actual purification of the heart, which makes man capable of seeing God, must be accomplished not only by rejection of all evil and lawless deeds, but also the rejection of every evil thought, for in each such though an evil deed is concealed, like an embryo or seed.

As for the labor that accompanies this inner purification, I do not argue that it is heavy. If someone were to call it impossibly difficult, I would not argue either. However, the difficult is lessened and the impossibility removed as soon as we apply our faith to the words of the Word who created everything out of nothing: *The things which are impossible with men are possible with God, all things are possible to him who believes.* [Luke 18:27]

Let us not be lazy, brothers, and let us not fear labor. Let us stand fast in our asceticism, *let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit.* [2 Cor. 7:1] Even more so, He will *create in us a clean heart* [Ps. 50:12] by His grace. No matter how great or prolonged the labor of the purification of our heart, O God,

may Thou find us worthy at the end, through this purification, of seeing Thy glory in Thy kingdom. Amen.

St. Paphnutius of Thebes



Those who are revered in the Church as saints fall into several different categories, based on the manner of their deaths (martyrs), their order in the Church (bishops, priests, deacons), their manner of living (monastics, rulers), and many others. The category of “confessor” denotes one who has suffered for the faith in a time of persecution. St. Paphnutius, a fourth-century bishop, suffered severely before the “Peace of the Church” in 313.

Nothing is known of the early life of Paphnutius until he became a disciple of St. Anthony the Great and lived as a monk in the Egyptian desert. During the persecution of Christians under the Emperor Maximinus (235-8), Paphnutius was tortured and injured by the enemies of Christ, who removed his right eye and damaged his hamstring muscles on the left leg before condemning him to work in the mines.

Never wavering in his steadfast faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, Paphnutius was eventually made bishop of a city in the Upper Thebaid and, in this capacity, he attended the First Ecumenical Council - the Council of Nicaea - in 325. Those in attendance who had been injured in the persecutions were greatly honored by the Emperor Constantine, who had called the Council.

One of the issues under consideration by this first Council of the Church was that of clergy marriage. Some attendees (especially those from the West) argued for celibacy for any man in orders - from Subdeacon to Bishop. Others argued that a man who had been united to a wife before his ordination should not be required to leave her. Bishop Paphnutius favored this side of the issue; even though he had led a life of strict chastity himself, he believed that the work of a cleric would not be hindered by his commitment to marriage. The Council voted for this view but it was several more centuries before the Church finally agreed that bishops should adhere to celibacy but lower clergy could be married before ordination.

Bishop Paphnutius was also one who defended the Orthodox understanding of Christ as human and divine - the second Person of the Trinity - in opposition to the Arian heresy.

Some of those who study the events and people in the history of the Church from a scholarly, academic standpoint doubt the existence of St. Paphnutius because there are no “reliable” written records to prove it. The faithful in the Church, however, have venerated St. Paphnutius since the fourth century as one who gave us an example of fortitude in the face of persecution and adherence to the proper understanding of Jesus Christ. We do well to ask for his intercessions. *Holy Paphnutius, pray for us.*

Parish News

Mass for special feast days this month will be held on Wednesday, September 7, the Eve of the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, and on Tuesday, September 13, the Eve of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, and on Wednesday, September 28, the Eve of the Feast of Dedication of St. Michael the Archangel. On each of these occasions, Vespers will be offered at 6:30PM, Mass will be at 7, and pot-luck suppers will follow.



During the summer, several improvements to our church grounds have been made. Roxbury Road has been paved, making the entrance to the church from that direction more comfortable, and the parking lot has been increased and connected to the driveway of our priest’s residence, allowing for entry to the church from Randolph Road. We will now use 800 E. Randolph Road as the address for the church.

A new shrine has been erected with an icon of the Transfiguration of Our Lord. On the Feast of the Transfiguration, a procession was made to this shrine which was then blessed. A bench has been placed nearby to provide a beautiful, peaceful place to spend time in meditation. A procession was also made to the shrine of the Blessed Virgin Mary at the Mary garden, while we sang the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, on the Feast of the Dormition, and another will be made to the Holy Cross shrine, as we sing the Litany of the Cross, on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross.

Lord, Have Mercy

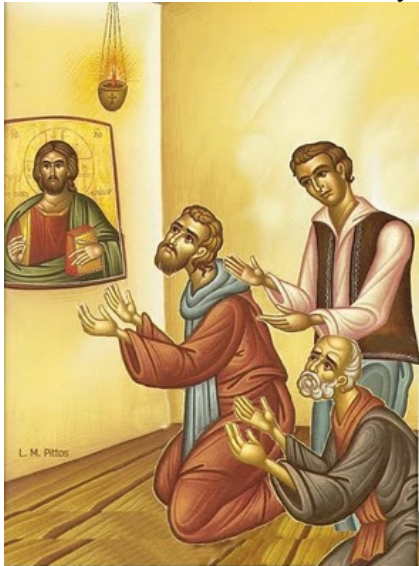
Next to the Lord’s Prayer, the simple phrase, “Lord, have mercy” and its many variations is perhaps the most frequent prayer of Christians.

We find it first in Holy Scripture: The Psalmist cries out in time of trouble “*have mercy upon me and hearken unto my*

prayer;” [Ps. 4:1] “Turn thee unto me and have mercy upon me” [Ps. 25:15]. In the great Psalm of repentance, King David cries unto the Lord, “Have mercy upon me, O God, after thy great goodness; according to the multitude of thy mercies do away mine offenses.” [Ps. 51:1]

The phrase is also heard in the New Testament stories of our Lord’s healing miracles: of the blind, “Son of David, have mercy on us” [Matt. 9:27 and 20:30; Mark 10:47; and Luke 18:38]; of the demon-possessed daughter of the woman of Canaan, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David!” [Matt. 15:22]; and of the ten lepers, “Jesus, Master, have mercy upon us!” [Luke 17:13]. Christ points us to this humble prayer in the story of the Pharisee and the Publican, who prayed, *God be merciful to me a sinner.* [Luke 18:13]

This heartfelt plea for the compassion and forgiveness of God is heard in our services: in Matins, Vespers, and Compline and, most prominently, at the beginning of every Mass when we sing *Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison* nine times. In the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, the response to every petition in the litanies is “Lord, have mercy.”



The Jesus Prayer presents us with another way of calling upon our Lord for forgiveness and healing: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me, a sinner.” The Jesus Prayer has its origins with the early monastics of the Egyptian desert and was particularly practiced in the Hesychistic movement of such Orthodox fathers as St. Gregory Palamas in the 14th century. Whether prayed silently “from the heart” or with the use

of a prayer rope, this petition can serve as a way of praying “without ceasing” [I Thess. 5:17].

Our Lord Jesus Christ has promised, “Ask, and it will be given to you” [Luke 11:9]. If we call upon him with the fervent prayer, “Lord, have mercy”, we will always receive His compassion, forgiveness and healing. *Kyrie eleison.*

Evangelism

by Fr. Thomas Hopko

Those who believe in the gospel die with Christ to this age and are sealed with God’s Holy Spirit. They know God’s coming kingdom as the Lord’s very presence in their midst, in the face of which they continually repent, in function of which they continually work, and whose appearance in power they continually anticipate and petition.

Although some who believe in the gospel are called to be “evangelists” in the strict sense of the word, having the specific ministry to preach the good news, all who believe in the gospel evangelize by their very being. Their presence, with their words and deeds, are a heralding of God’s words and deeds, a testimony to God’s truth and love, and an answer for the hope that is in them, which is God’s victory for all who accept salvation on the Day of the Lord.

Christian believers, and those called to evangelical ministry, are not concerned with results. They know that the fruit of their evangelism is in God’s gracious hands. Their pure, joyful proclamation of God’s wonderful work in Christ and the Holy Spirit heralds eternal life, divine peace and joy, and the gifts of God’s goodness, beauty, and truth, freely bestowed and freely received. They are, in this sense, disinterested in the number of converts produced; their concern is not conversion at all. Surely, they hope to *make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the*

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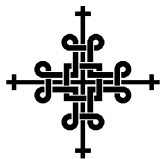
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name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things [Matt. 28] that Christ has commanded. But they know, as the great missionary St. Innocent of Alaska constantly affirmed that no one comes to Father except through Christ and that no one comes to Christ unless they are given and drawn by the Father who sent him. The only task of genuine evangelists is to sow God's word. Results are up to God...

When teaching those who have not heard the gospel, or have heard it wrongly, or in a distorted form, Scripture requires evangelists to respond to questions and objections “with love” - putting away bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, and all malice [Eph. 4:15, 31]. Christians are to make their *apologia* with “gentleness and reverence.” They are told to keep their *conscience clear so that when [they] are abused, those who revile [their] good behavior in Christ may be put to shame* [1 Peter 3:15-16].

Effective evangelism requires not only dialogue but also tolerance, the willingness and ability to endure the presence and practices of disagreeing and disagreeable others with patience and peace... Tolerant people are neither indifferent nor relativistic; they neither sanction injustice nor permit evil, since injustice is intolerable and evil has no rights. The only weapons that Christians may use against injustice and evil are personal persuasion and political legislation, both of which are to be enacted in an atmosphere of freedom and respect... They may not obey evil laws nor resort to evil actions for any reason, certainly not in the alleged defense of good. This means that Christians are inevitably called to suffer in this age, and perhaps even to die. This is our gospel, our confession, our witness, and our defense.

An excerpt reprinted from *Speaking the Truth in Love*



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>September 2022</h1>						
<i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Mass at 9:30AM</i>				1 St. Giles, Ab, 708; Twelve Holy Brothers, Mm, c. 303	2 St. Stephen of Hungary, KC, 1038	3 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
4 12 th Sunday after Pentecost; St. Gorazde of Prague, BM, 1942 <i>G</i>	5 (<i>Labor Day</i>)	6	7 St. Cloud, C, 560; St. Sergius I, PC, 701 <i>Mass at 7pm W</i>	8 Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary	9 St. Gorgonius, M, 304	10 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
11 13 th Sun. after Pentecost; Ss. Protus & Hyacinth, Mm, c. 257; St. Paphnutius, BC, 4th c. <i>G</i>	12	13 <i>Mass at 7pm R</i>	14 Exaltation of the Holy Cross	15 St. Nicomedes, M, 4th c.	16 Ss. Cornelius, PM, 254 & Cyprian, BM 258; St. Ninian, BC, 5 th c.	17 St. Lambert, BM, 705 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
18 14 th Sunday after Pentecost <i>G</i>	19 St. Theodore of Canter-bury, BC, 690; Ss. Januarius & comp., Mm, c. 305	20 Ss. Eustace & comp., Mm, c. 118	21 St. Matthew, Evangelist & Apostle, 1st c.; Ember Wednesday	22 St. Maurice & comp., Mm, 3rd c.	23 Ember Friday; St. Thecla of Iconium, VM, 1st c.; St. Linus, PM, c. 80	24 Ember Saturday Ss. Juvenaly, PrM, 1796 & Peter the Aleut, M, 1815 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
25 15 th Sunday after Pentecost <i>G</i>	26 Ss. Cyprian, BM & Justina, VM, c. 303	27 Ss. Cosmas & Damian, Mm, c. 303	28 St. Wenceslas, M, 938 ; St. Lioba of Mainz, V, 781 <i>Mass at 7pm W</i>	29 Dedication of St. Michael the Archangel	30 St. Jerome PrCD, 420; St. Gregory the Illumi- nator, BC, c. 323	