

✠ 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. Caesarius of Arles d. 542

Our Lord has deigned to give us a great assurance when He says in the Gospel: *Where two or three are gathered together for my sake, there am I in the midst of them.* [Matt. 18:20]. If He condescends to be present among two or three, how much more so when all the people are gathered in church

with pious devotion, the body of the Church united with Christ its Head in a society of harmonious members?

In order to pray to God a man should enter wholly, not only with the exterior senses, but also the interior ones, with holy desires, faith, and good works. For if anyone is kept inside of a church with his body only, while he is occupied outside of church with all his heart, he enters with his exterior separated and distinct from his spirit. Then, what is the more precious part of man travels far away from the divine service; while

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only his earthly part is kept in the presence of God, his soul is captivated by passing delights and is distracted by manifold preoccupations... How will God be in the midst of you if you yourself are not there? If the one who is asking is missing, how will the one to whom you are praying be there? How will the judge be aroused if the advocate is asleep? For this reason it is imperative that affectionate zeal obtain what the sound of the voice entreats.

Therefore, as we consider these truths, dearest brethren, and as often as we chant the psalms or prostrate in prayer, let us continually meditate on what the Apostle says: *Be assiduous in prayer, being wakeful therein* [Col. 4:2]; and again: *I will sing with the spirit, but I will sing with the understanding also* [I Cor. 14:15]. For if while we sing or are engaged in prayer worldly thoughts divert the attention of our soul from the meaning of divine contemplation, they captivate our senses and make us run here and there without any fruit of the soul.

With the help of Christ we will be able to avoid this condition at once if we are willing to think rather carefully about the multitude of our sins. For if we make supplication for our sins, that is, whatever evil thoughts we have had or whatever we have spoken unjustly, and do so with much crying and groaning as we should, useless thoughts either do not occur to us or, if they do insinuate themselves, they immediately blush and depart when we do not give consent to them. For what should be the object of man's thought when he speaks with God, except to look intently at His mercy with all the attention of his mind?

Now if we carefully examine our consciences, we recognize that spiritual battles take place there... Moreover, we feel that in the arena of this world we are continually fighting against all sins and faults as against the most cruel beasts... I entreat you, brethren, look and notice carefully, because we have within ourselves a spiritual amphitheater, and the wild forest which is depicted in

spectacles we daily experience in the movement of our heart. ..

Since we recognize that we are surrounded by such great dangers, we should pray more devoutly to the Lord for each other. O blessed brothers and helpers and fellow-servants in the Lord, may our hands come to the Lord, that is, holy prayers along with good works. Then, when we are brought to the exceedingly dangerous contest in the theater of this world, in which: *No one is crowned unless he has competed according to the rules* [2 Tim. 2:5], we may afford a joyous spectacle to God and the angels.

After our adversaries have been overcome and laid low with the help of God, we may journey in triumph to the eternal land and merit to hear that happy and desirable word: *Come, blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom which was prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* [Matt. 25:34]

St. Raphael the Archangel

Feast Day ~ October 24



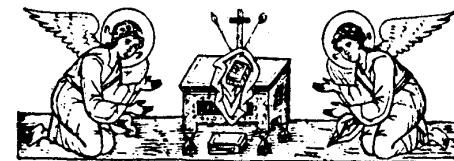
Christianity has always recognized the presence of angels and pays special tribute to them in festivals of the liturgical year. We acknowledge that God uses the bodiless spirits as his messengers: Gabriel announced to Mary her conception of our Lord; an angel reassured Joseph that his pregnant betrothed was still a pure virgin and worthy to be his wife; an angel announced the Resurrection of Christ to the myrrh-bearing women.

In God's plan for man's salvation, when he chose the Jewish people to prepare the world for the coming of the Messiah, he made awareness of the angels as part of that preparation. Angels appear in the Old Testament stories: Three angels visited and were entertained by Abraham, predicting the improbable birth of Isaac; Jacob wrestled with an angel in the wilderness.

After the Babylonian Exile, when the Jews were carried off as a conquered nation, Jewish writings began to give names to the angels and to designate a hierarchy of angels. Centuries later, our parish patron, St. Gregory the Great, would name the nine categories of angels: Angels, Archangels, Virtues, Powers, Principalities, Dominations, Thrones, Cherubim, and Seraphim.

The book of Tobit, written between the time of the Old Testament writings and the birth of Christ, tells a wonderful story about the Archangel Raphael appearing as a man and performing acts of healing and exorcism. Incredibly, with the use of the organs of a large fish, he stopped the work of a devil with a young woman whose husbands had died immediately after marriage and cured the blindness of Tobit. In the New Testament, we hear only of Gabriel and Michael (who leads the "heavenly army" in the battle of good over evil), but Raphael is usually associated with the unnamed angel who stirs the waters at the Pool of Bethesda bringing healing to the sick.

Just as with those saints who lived earthly, bodily lives, we may offer prayers for aid from these heavenly spirits. To St. Raphael, the Archangel, we pray for healing of our illnesses, both physical and spiritual. *Holy Raphael, pray for us.*



Parish News

A parish picnic has been planned for Sunday, October 23, in lieu of coffee hour. Everyone is invited to stay after church for food, fellowship, and games.

Our several outreach projects continue: we are still collecting items to add to those at St. Andrew's Cathedral for aid in Ukraine; and we are helping to provide winter clothing for several Afghan refugees living in our area.

What is the Will of God?

by Fr. Anthony Coniaris

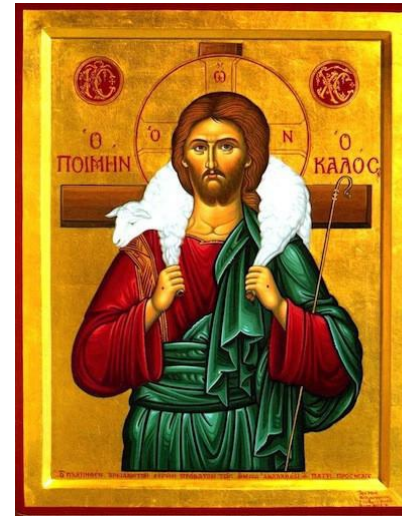


What is the will of God? Why is it so often associated with calamities? Why are earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes and floods called “acts of God,” while sunshine, spring flowers and the rainbow called works of “Mother Nature”?

Could it be that we have a totally distorted view of God as a stern judge, a divine punisher, who does nothing but send calamities to punish us for our sins? Is not this the view Jesus came to correct by

revealing a God Who *so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him might not perish but have eternal life* [John 3:16]?

Did not Jesus spend His life healing the sick? Did He not say once that the sickness of a certain woman was not the will of God but the will of Satan? Did He not weep before the tomb of Lazarus, His friend? Did He not say about the man born blind: *Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the work of God should be revealed in him.* [John 9:3]



If we are to identify the will of God with anything why not identify it with the words of Jesus, *Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom* [Luke 12:32]? If we are to identify the will of God with anything, why not identify it with the words of St. Paul, *God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth* [I Tim. 2:4]? Or his words, *He Who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, will He not also give us all things with Him* [Rom.

8:32]?... God's will is to be identified always with that which is best for us, most loving, most generous, most noble. For God wants all to be saved, to share His divine nature, to spend eternity with Him.

God came into the world in the person of Jesus not to inflict evil, suffering and death upon us but to overcome them. *In the world you have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world*, said Jesus [John 16:33] Call many things evil, call them inevitable because of sin, but don't call them the will of God.

We could understand God's will better if we did not always expect Him to do things our way. *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For*

as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts [Is.55:8, 9]
 God does not and will not follow our advice. His is far wiser.

We can say that when we suffer, God shares our sorrow and grief...[and] we can say that Jesus Who overcame death for us has it in His power to make it up to those who are taken away too soon by death. This is not the only life. There is eternity ahead of us. There is more life ahead - much more! The life that is taken away too soon will get its chance to blossom and flourish. God will redress the wrongs of this world. He will balance the books. *If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied.* [I Cor. 15:19]



We can say that God is powerful enough to help us use even the evil things that happen to us for our good, just as He took the worst that man could do to Him - suffering and death on the cross - and turned it into the best that ever happened to us - our salvation. *We know that in everything God works for good with those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose* [Rom. 8:28].

We can say that although much sorrow and suffering are traceable to human error and human sin, there still remains much that we simply cannot explain. We simply have to say, “I don’t know why this happened, but I do know and believe that no matter what happens God loves me. He will not leave me or forsake me. He will give me the power to bear this cross and even to transform it so that the tragedy becomes a crown.”

Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Reprinted from Sermons for the Church Year: A Light Unto My Path.

The Canticles of the Church

From the earliest days of the Church, Christians have worshiped through song as well as the spoken word. Just as our Lord and his Apostles sang a hymn at the Last Supper, we continue to sing God’s praises when we meet together.

Holy Scripture gives us many glimpses of worship in the early Church, often in the songs which we call canticles. The *Benedictus Dominus*, one of these canticles which we sing every Sunday at Matins, is presented to us in the story of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, which we celebrate on June 24. At John’s birth and after St. Zachariah (the father of St. John and husband of St. Elizabeth) recovered his voice which had been taken away when he doubted the word of the angel Gabriel in announcing John’s conception, he sings a beautiful song acknowledging the



fulfillment of God’s promise to his people and calling his son the “prophet of the Highest” who would “go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways.” [Luke 1:68-79]

This entire story, as told in the Gospel of St. Luke, contains another beautiful canticle, the *Magnificat* [Luke 1:46-55], which we sing at every Vespers service. This song was exclaimed by the Blessed Virgin Mary after the child in her cousin Elizabeth’s womb leapt at their greeting. Further along in the story, at the

Presentation of the child Jesus in the Temple forty days after his birth, we are given the canticle *Nunc Dimittis*, the song which was sung by the old priest Simeon as he held the Messiah in his arms [Luke 2:29-32]. This canticle is also sung at Vespers.

The *Venite*, the first canticle at Matins is the first seven verses of Psalm 95 (except in penitential seasons and the 19th day of each month when the entire Psalm is sung), to which are added verses from Psalm 96.

A legend about the canticle *Te Deum* is that it was extemporized by St. Ambrose and St. Augustine as the elder bishop was baptizing the younger penitent. It is now thought, however, that authorship was by St. Niceta of Remesiana (c. 335-414). This canticle was widely known and sung by the 6th century.

Both the *Benedictus es, Domine* and the *Benedicite, omnia opera*, sung at Matins, are from the song of the three young men who were thrown into the fiery furnace by King Nebuchadnezzar, as described in the book of Daniel [3:26-90].

Come, let us sing unto the Lord; let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and show ourselves glad in him with psalms.



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>October 2022</h1>						1 St. Remigius of Rheims, BC, c. 530; St. Bavo, C, 659 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
2 16 th Sunday after Pentecost; Holy Guardian Angels <i>G</i>	3	4	5 St. Placid & his Companions, Mm, 6 th c.	6 St. Faith of Agen, VM, c. 303	7 St. Mark, PC, 336; Ss. Sergius & Bacchus, Mm, 303	8 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
9 17 th Sunday after Pentecost ; Ss. Denys, BM, Rusticus, & Eleutherius, Mm, 3 rd c. <i>G</i>	10 St. Paulinus of York, BC, 644	11 St. Kenneth, Ab, 599	12 St. Wilfred of York, BC, 709; St. Edwin, KM, 633	13 St. Edward the Confessor, KC, 1066	14 St. Callistus, PM, c. 222	15 Our Lady of Walsingham <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
16 18 th Sunday after Pentecost; St. Gall, Ab., 646 <i>G</i>	17	18 St. Luke the Evangelist, 1 st c.	19 St. Frideswide of Oxford, V, 735; St. Laura of Cordoba, VM, 864	20 St. Andrew of Crete, BC, 740	21 St. Hilarion of Gaza, Ab., c. 371; Ss. Ursula & comp., Mm, 453	22 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
23 19 th Sunday after Pentecost <i>G</i>	24 St. Raphael the Archangel	25 Ss. Crysanthus & Daria, Mm, 283	26 St. Evaristus, PM, c. 197	27 St. Frumentius of Ethiopia, BC, 4 th c.	28 Ss. Simon & Jude, Apostles, 1 st c.	29 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
30 Christ the King; comm. 20 th Sunday after Pentecost <i>W</i>	31 Vigil of All Saints					<i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Mass at 9:30AM</i>