

✠ 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. Cyril of
Jerusalem
d. 386*

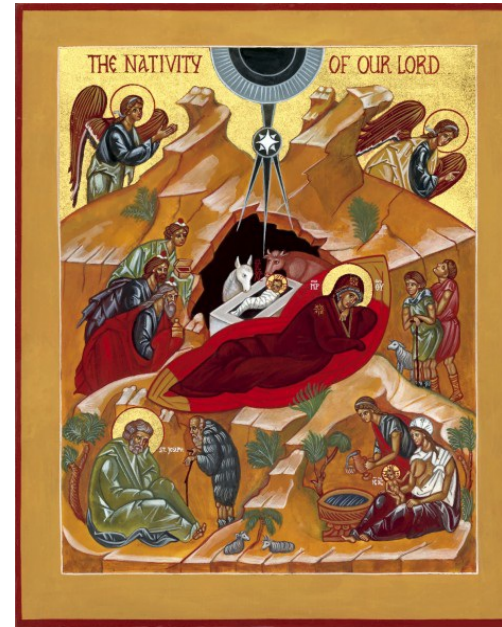
We preach not one coming only of Christ, but a second also, far more glorious than the first. The first revealed the meaning of his patient endurance; the second brings with it the crown of the divine kingdom.

Generally speaking, everything that concerns our Lord Jesus Christ is twofold. His birth is twofold; one, of God before time began; the other, of the Virgin in the fulness of time. His descent is twofold: one, unperceived, like the dew falling on the fleece; the other, before the eyes of all, is yet to happen.

In his first coming he was wrapped in swaddling clothes in the manger. In his second coming he is clothed with light as with a garment. In his first coming he bore the cross,

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despising its shame; he will come a second time in glory accompanied by the hosts of angels.

It is not enough for us, then, to be content with his first coming; we must wait in hope of his second coming. What we said at his first coming, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord”, we shall repeat at his last coming. Running out with the angels to meet the Master we shall cry out in

adoration, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.”

The Savior will come not to be judged again but to call to judgement those who called him to judgment. He who was silent when he was first judged, will indict the malefactors who dared to perpetrate the outrage of the cross, and say, “These things you did and I was silent.”

He first came in the order of divine providence to teach men by gentle persuasion; but when he comes again they will, whether they wish it or not, be subjected to his kingship.

The prophet Malachi has something to say about each of these comings. *The Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple.* [Mal. 3:1] That is the first coming.

Again, of the second coming he says, *And the angel of the covenant whom you seek. Behold, the Lord almighty will come: but who can endure the day of his coming, and who can*

stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap; he will sit like a refiner and a purifier. [Mal. 3:2, 3]

Paul pointed to the two comings when he wrote to Titus, *The grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men, training us to renounce irreligion and worldly passions, and to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world, awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. [Titus 2:11-13]* You see how he has spoken of the first coming for which he gives thanks, and of the second to which we look forward.

Hence it is that by the faith we profess, which has just been handed on to you, we believe in him *who ascended into heaven and took his seat at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead; and his kingdom will have no end.*

Our Lord Jesus Christ will, then, come from heaven. He will come in glory at the end of this world on the last day. Then there will be an end to this world, and this created world will be made new.

St. Cassian of Tangier

Feast Day ~ December 3

In our world today, it seems that moral issues must be decided through litigation. The courts of law are where protection (or destruction) of all life is determined, where the practice of one's faith in business is either protected or rejected, where even the legal definition of genders (though part of God's creation) is debated and re-defined. The most basic moral issues are now placed in the hands of lawyers and politicians.



For centuries Christians have been confident that our faith provided the parameters for life in the public as well as private lives of people. Murder, the taking of a life, was considered a sin; prayer, even in public, was a good thing; male and female were accepted as the natural division of mankind and could be scientifically proved. As all such things are now challenged, we turn to the legal system for answers.

Two thousand years ago, the legal system was also used to determine what was morally acceptable, and Christians usually lost in the courts of law. The story of St. Cassian is one case among many.

Cassian appears on the pages of history as a court recorder in the city of Tangier (in modern-day Morocco). His duties were to make a written record of all the arrests, trials, and sentences imposed as part of the highly organized bureaucracy of the Roman Empire. As this was in the late 3rd century during the reign of Emperor Diocletian, many of the records which Cassian meticulously kept were of Christians who were accused of disobeying the laws regarding sacrifice to the Roman gods, blasphemy, insurrection, and many other anti-social acts. Cassian would have heard over and over again the simple responses of Christians: "I am a follower of Jesus Christ, Son of the One True God". The Christians would not acknowledge the Emperor as a god and would not offer incense to a false god. They would give up their own lives in defending their faith.

When the Centurion Marcellus was brought to court for deserting his army duties, Aurelius Agricola, the deputy

prefect for North Africa who was assigned to preside over the trial, was determined to use the full extent of the law in his determination. In his defense, Marcellus declared that if being a Roman soldier required offering incense to a pagan god, then he could no longer be a soldier. The deputy prefect quickly imposed the death sentence - death by beheading.

Cassian had had enough! The Christians whose trials he had recorded were not hardened criminals. They were not a threat to the Empire. They were simply strong in their beliefs and had expressed themselves, not in the angry voice of revolutionaries, but quietly and with sincere determination. Cassian had also had time to study the teachings of the Christians and was now ready to embrace this faith himself.

At the judge's sentence, the court recorder threw down his pen and declared himself a Christian. For his disobedience, Cassian was also arrested, and with very little trial, condemned to death. He was beheaded, like Marcellus, who had been the final agent for his conversion, on December 3, in the year 298.

As was true of others like him (such as St. Alban in Roman Britain and St. Porphyrius the Actor), a sudden decision made in a dramatic moment brought the crown of martyrdom to someone who had not even been baptized. St. Cassian's willingness to defend the Christian faith - even at the risk of his own death - was enough for the Church to embrace his memory and include him in the martyrology.

May St. Cassian intercede for us in our time, when once again issues of faith are tried in courts of law. *Holy Cassian, pray for us.*

Resources: New Advent website; The Prologue from Ochrid; A Western Rite Orthodox Martyrology; Wikipedia article.

Parish News



During the season of Advent at St. Gregory's, a number of ways are offered for preparing for the coming of the Saviour as we are called by the Church to pay special attention to prayer, fasting, confession, and almsgiving.

Weekday low masses will be offered at 7AM on St. Andrew's day (Wednesday, November 30); on St. Nicholas' day (Tuesday, December 6); on St. Lucy's day (Tuesday, December 13); and on St. Thomas' day (Wednesday, December 21).

At Vespers during the season of Advent, we sing the Advent Prose, a hymn (attributed to the 4th century poet Prudentius), based on verses from the book of Isaiah, which emphasize our repentance and longing for God's salvation. The refrain is also used as the Versicle and Response at Vespers and in the Introit for the 4th Sunday of Advent: *Drop down ye heavens from heaven, and let the skies pour down righteous; let the earth open and send forth a Savior.*

The color of vestments for Advent is purple, indicating that this season is a penitential one as is Lent. But on the Third Sunday of Advent, "Gaudete Sunday", the color rose is used to reflect the more joyful words of the Introit and Epistle of St. Paul to the Philippians: *Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice.*

Our annual para-liturgical service of Advent Lessons and Carols will be offered on Saturday, December 17, at 6PM in place of Vespers. You are encouraged to invite your friends and family to this opportunity to prepare for the celebration of Christmas with quiet reflection through readings of the prophecies about the coming of the Messiah and hymns of the season.

The Food for Hungry People collection begins in Advent and will continue until Epiphany (January 6). This annual collection of canned and packaged food will be distributed to the needy through a local food bank.

Vespers will be offered for the Novena (nine days) before Christmas beginning (in the English tradition) on Friday, December 16 at 6PM. The antiphons on the Magnificat at these services are called the Great “O” Antiphons, as each begins with the word “O”. They recall many of the titles given to our Lord Jesus Christ: O Wisdom; O Adonai; O Root of Jesse; O Key of David; O Dayspring; O King of nations; O Emmanuel; and the last one, O Virgin of virgins, is addressed to the Mother of God.

On Christmas Eve (Saturday, December 24), Vespers will be at 6PM, confessions will be heard beginning at 8PM, carols and other music will be offered at 8:45, and the first Mass of Christmas will begin at 9PM. A bountiful pot-luck dinner will follow! On Christmas Day, Matins will be at 9:30AM and Mass at 10.

Christ is born! Glorify Him!

And the Word Was Made Flesh

by St. Nikolai of Ochrid

Here, my brethren, is a new beginning, a blessed and saving beginning for us. This is the beginning of our salvation. Adam

was in the flesh when he fell under the power of sin and death. The Son of God - the Word, Wisdom, Light and Life - came down among men in human flesh and with a human soul, taking flesh while remaining undivided from His divinity, from His Father. Keeping all that He was and had from all eternity, He received something new: human nature. His eternal attributes were not lessened by His incarnation, nor was His relationship with the Father and the Spirit changed.



Lo, the Father witnesses at the Jordan and on Tabor: *This is My beloved Son!* The Holy Spirit was with Him at His taking of flesh, and every day to the end of His service on earth. Divine and human nature were in Him united, but not confused. How? Don't ask; you who cannot explain yourself to yourself, and cannot say how your body and soul are united. Know only that God came to sojourn on earth, and brought to men unspeakably

rich gifts, royal gifts that are not subject to corruption, that do not pass away, and that are beyond all assessment and all price. Know this, and let your heart dance for joy. Strive to cleanse your hands, to purify all your senses, to calm your soul, to make your heart white, to set aright your mind - that you may receive these royal gifts, for they are not given to the unclean.

Lord Jesus Christ, help us to purify ourselves by Thy Blood and Thy Spirit, that we may be made worthy of Thy royal gifts. To Thee be glory and praise for ever. Amen.

St. Gregory Orthodox Church
c/o 804 E Randolph Rd
Silver Spring, MD 20904

Address Correction Requested

From the Martyrology:

In the 5199th year of the creation of the world, from the time when God in the beginning created the heaven and earth; the 2957th year after the flood; the 2015th year from the birth of Abraham; the 1510th year from Moses, and the going forth of the people of Israel from Egypt; the 1032nd year from the anointing of David King; in the 65th week according to the prophecy of Daniel; in the 194th Olympiad; the 752nd year from the foundation of the City of Rome; the 42nd year of the rule of Octavian Augustus, all the earth being at peace, Jesus Christ, the Eternal God, and the Son of the Eternal Father, desirous to sanctify the world by His most merciful coming, being conceived by the Holy Spirit, nine months after His conception was born in Bethlehem of Juda, made Man of the Virgin Mary, the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the Flesh... *Thanks be to God.*



| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--|--|---|---|--|---|--|
| <h1>December 2022</h1> | | | | | | <i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Mass at 9:30AM</i> |
| | | | | 1 St. Eligius of Tournai, BC, 660 | 2 St. Peter Chrysologus, BCD, c. 450; St. Bibiana of Rome, VM, 363 | 3 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i> |
| 4 Second Sunday in Advent; St. Barbara, VM, c. 306 ✓ | 5 St. Sabbas of Palestine, Ab, 532 | 6 St. Nicholas of Myra, BC, c. 342 <i>Mass at 7am</i> | 7 St. Ambrose of Milan, BCD, 397 <i>Mass at 7pm</i> | 8 Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary | 9 | 10 St. Melchiades, PM, 314 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i> |
| 11 Third Sunday in Advent; St. Damasus, PC, 384 ✓ | 12 St. Spiridon, BC, 348 | 13 St. Lucy, VM, 304; St. Herman of Alaska, C, 1837 <i>Mass at 7am</i> | 14 Ember Wednesday | 15 St. Maurus, Ab, 6th c. | 16 Ember Friday; St. Eusebius of Vercelli, BM, 371 <i>Vespers at 6pm O Sapientia</i> | 17 Ember Saturday; St. Lazarus of Bethany, BC, 1st c. <i>Lessons & Carols at 6pm O Adonay</i> |
| 18 Fourth Sunday in Advent ✓ <i>Vespers at 6pm O Radix Jesse</i> | 19 <i>Vespers at 6pm O Clavis David</i> | 20 St. John of Kronstadt, C, 1908 <i>Vespers at 6pm O Oriens</i> | 21 St. Thomas, Apostle, 1st c. <i>Mass at 7am Vespers at 6pm O Rex gentium</i> | 22 <i>Vespers at 6pm O Emmanuel</i> | 23 <i>Vespers at 6pm O Virgo virginum</i> | 24 Vigil of the Nativity <i>Vespers at 6pm Mass at 10pm</i> W |
| 25 The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ; St. Anastasia, VM., c. 304 <i>Mass at 10am</i> W | 26 St. Stephen, Proto-martyr, 1st c.; Sun. after the Nativity; of the Oct. of the Nativity | 27 St. John, Evangelist & Apostle, 1st c.; of the Octave of the Nativity | 28 Holy Innocents, Mm, 1st c.; of the Octave of the Nativity | 29 of the Octave of the Nativity | 30 of the Octave of the Nativity | 31 St. Sylvester, PC, 335; of the Octave of the Nativity <i>Vespers at 6pm</i> |