

# ✠ 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. Augustine of Hippo

d. 430

it, with deep longing, who cried to Jesus: *Son of David, have mercy on me.* [Luke 18:38]

The blind man cries out, as Jesus was passing by. He feared He might pass by, and not heal him. And how earnestly he cried? Though the crowd rebuked him, he would not be silent. He overcame his rebukers, and held our Savior. While the crowd clamored against him, and forbade him cry out, Jesus stands, and

**L**ove God. You will not find anything more worthy of love. You love silver, because it is more precious than iron or bronze. You love gold still more, because it is more precious than silver. Still more precious stones, for they are prized above gold. Last, you love this light; which all who dread death fear to leave. You love light, I say, as he loved

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called him, and said: What wilt thou that I do to thee? Lord, he said, that I may see. Receive thy sight; thy faith hath made thee whole. [Luke 18:42-42]

**L**ove Christ: Seek ye the light that is Christ. If he longed for the light of the body, how much the more ought you to long for the light of the soul? Let us cry out to Him, not with

words, but with virtuous living. Let us live in virtue, and esteem not the world: all that is transitory to us is nothing. They will rebuke us should we live as worthy men, and lovers of ourselves, and lovers of the earth, delighting in the games, drawing nothing from heaven, unbridled in heart, and testing all delights: they will, and without any doubt, rebuke: and should they see us despise what is human, what is earthly, they will say: why do you wish to suffer? Why are you foolish?

**T**he crowd clamors, that the blind man shall not cry out. There are not a few Christians who seek to hinder us from living as Christians: like the crowd that walked with Christ, and hindered the man crying out to Christ, and hungering for light from the kindness of Christ. There are such Christians: but let us overcome them, and live in virtue: and our life shall be the voice of our cry to Christ.

**F**or here is a great mystery. He was passing by when this man began to cry out; when He healed him He stood still. Let Christ's passing by make us prepared to cry out. What is Christ's passing by? Whatsoever He has endured for us here is His passing by. He was born, He passed by; for is He yet being born? He grew up, He passed by; is He yet growing up? He was suckled; is He yet suckled? When weary He slept; does He yet sleep? He ate and He drank; does He yet do this? At the last He was seized, He was

bound with ropes, He was beaten; He was crowned with thorns, He was struck by blows, He was defiled with spittle, He was hung on a Cross, He was put to death, He was pierced by a lance, He was buried, He rose again. Till then He passes by.

**H**e ascended into heaven, He sits at the right hand of the Father; He stands still. Cry out all you can: now He will give thee light. For that in Him the *Word was with God; and the Word was made Flesh*. The Flesh has wrought many things through passing by, and suffered many. The Word has stood still. By this Word the soul is enlightened; as by this Word the flesh which He took on is adorned. Take away the Word, what then of the flesh? It is as yours. That the flesh of Christ be honored, *the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us*. Let us live virtuously, and so cry out to Him.

*Luke 18:31-43 is the Gospel for Quinquagesima Sunday.*

## St. Valentine

*Feast Day ~ February 14*

**T**o the world, Valentine's Day - February 14 - is all about love. It is a day for gifts of flowers and candy, cards expressing love, special dates, and often, proposals for marriage. In the Church, St. Valentine's Day is also about love - love of Christ and His Church and the sacrificial love that led to martyrdom.

**T**here are two saints by the name Valentine who may be the same person or two whose stories have been conflated. One tradition is that he was a priest of Rome and the other that he was a bishop of the city of Terni. Both stories relate that Valentine was known to be active as an evangelist for the Christian faith and that, during this time of persecution of Christians, he ministered to those



who were facing the choice of denying their Savior or submitting to torture and execution.

**I**nevitably, the authorities soon came after Valentine and he was placed under house arrest. Awaiting his sentence, Fr. Valentine began persuasively talking about Christ to the judge, who challenged him to prove the power of the Savior by healing his blind daughter. Through St.

Valentine's prayer, the miracle of healing occurred and the judge and his whole family were baptized after destroying their idols, repenting, and fasting.

**T**he saint was then sent to the prefect of Rome and presented before the Emperor Claudius. The emperor was impressed with Valentine until the priest began attempting to convert him, and then he sentenced him to be beheaded on February 14 around the year 269.

**H**ow did the story of Valentine become associated with romantic love? One legend tells that Fr. Valentine performed Christian marriages against the orders of Emperor Claudius and another reports that, after healing the judge's daughter, Fr. Valentine sent a card "from your Valentine" to the young woman; others speculate that Christians' celebration of St. Valentine's Day was an effort to replace a pagan festival for lovers. Whatever the source, this connection between St. Valentine and romance was thoroughly established in the West through the stories of courtly love in the Middle Ages.

**S**t. Valentine began to be included in the martyrology of the saints in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Relics of St. Valentine are in Madrid, Dublin, Prague, Chelmno (Poland), and Mytilene (Greece).

Those who are in love and contemplating marriage would do well to ask for the intercessions of St. Valentine that their romantic love be transformed by the love of Christ, and we can all be inspired to be faithful in our love of Christ by the example of St. Valentine. *Holy Valentine, pray for us.*

## Parish News

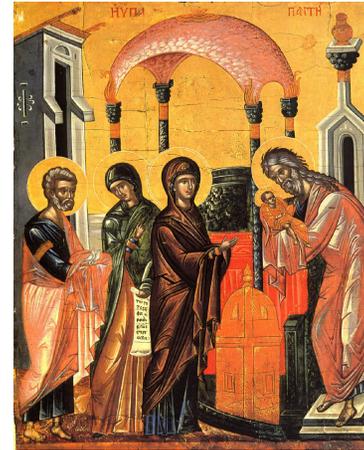
At our Annual Parish meeting on January 22, Dave Caldwell was re-elected for another term on the Parish Council and Monica Burnett was elected as a new Council member replacing Keivan Shahrahki, Council president for the last several years, whose term of office has finished. Thanks to all Council members for their good work in keeping the practical affairs of our parish in order.

Thanks to all who generously contributed to the Food for Hungry People collection. The Caldwell family delivered 185 pounds of canned and packaged food to the Manna Food Center.

The last three Sundays in this month form the little season of Pre-Lent - a preparation for Lent, which is a preparation for Pascha - Septuagesima (February 12), Sexagesima (February 19), and Quinquagesima (February 26), leading up to Ash Wednesday, which is March 1 in the liturgical calendar this year.

We continue to pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit upon the Holy Synod of Antioch as they choose a new Metropolitan for the United States and Canada. It is expected that a decision will be made at the meeting of the Synod in Balamand, Lebanon which begins on February 22.

## The Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple



We begin the month of February with the celebration of the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple forty days after His birth. As told in Luke 2:22-40, this feast is also called the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary (required by Mosaic law following childbirth), and it is also called Candlemas, as the Church has chosen this day - in acknowledging Jesus as the light of the world - to bless candles for use throughout the year.

In his *Prologue From Ochrid*, St. Nikolai of Ochrid relates something of the history of this celebration in the Byzantine Empire:

This day was commemorated among Christians from the beginning, but its solemn celebration began in the time of the great Emperor Justinian. At that time, Constantinople and its surroundings were struck by an epidemic, with five thousand or more people dying every day. At the same time there was a terrible earthquake in Antioch. Seeing the powerlessness of men to avert these catastrophes, the Emperor and the Patriarch together decided to call for fasting and prayer throughout the whole empire. On the day of the Presentation itself, they arranged processions through the towns and villages to implore the Lord to have mercy on His people. And the Lord did have mercy, the epidemic and the earthquake ceasing instantly. This happened in the year 544. As a result, the Presentation came to be celebrated as a great feast of the Lord.

The feast day is February 2 and we will celebrate it on the Eve (Wednesday, February 1) with the Blessing of Candles and procession at 6:30PM and Mass at 7, followed by a pot-luck supper.

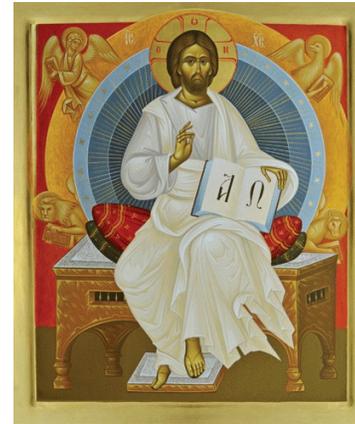
## *The Motivation of Love*

*Commentary on 1 Corinthians 13 by Fr. Lawrence Farley*

In extolling love as the motivation for using any of [our] gifts, St. Paul says that without love, none of the spiritual gifts has any value. If he speaks in tongues - and even the exalted and celestial tongues of angels - and yet does not have love, it is mere noise. Like the loud percussion of a brass gong or a cymbal that wails (Greek *alalazon* - the word is onomatopoeic and is used for the wailing of mourning women; see Mark 5:38), all of his speaking in tongues is simply meaningless and tuneless cacophony unless accompanied by love. If through the great gift of prophecy he is able to know all mysteries and all knowledge (see Elisha's supernatural knowledge in 2 Kings 5:26); if he has the gift of faith so as to remove mountains from one place to another (see Mark 11:22-23) and still lacks love, he is nothing.

Not only are manifestations of the Spirit worthless to him without love, but also external acts of charity profit him nothing without it. Should he take all his living, all that he has to exist on, all of his possessions and convert them to money to feed the hungry, even this act of extraordinary renunciation will win him no reward on the Last Day. More than that, even if he were to deliver his body to be burned, making himself a complete kind of burnt offering for the sake of others, throwing himself on the pyre, as it were, as the ultimate sacrifice - even this act of heroism is worthless apart from love.

What then is this love? It is patient, suffering the wrong done to it without turning to bitterness. It is kind, caring compassionately for others, seeking ways to heal. It is not jealous or envious, does not grudge the joy and success of others. It does not brag, boasting and crowing about its own self-important, and is not puffed up, vaunting itself like a conceited windbag, but remains in the hidden quietness of humility.



This love knows nothing of selfish anger. It does not lash out when its will is crossed, acting unseemly with loud protestations. It does not seek its own, insisting on its supposed rights when treated unjustly. When faced with outrageous injustice against itself, it is not incited, does not have a fit (Greek *paroxuno* - from which we derive our English word "paroxysm"). Rather, it refuses to keep score of wrongs suffered, and does not reckon the wicked act against it. But although it is meek, this love maintains inner purity of heart. Though it does not strike out against evil, yet it never condones it. It never rejoices in unrighteousness, delighting to discover human wrong (as we often do, to make ourselves feel the more righteous). Rather it co-rejoices in the truth. When God's truth and righteousness are vindicated, love rejoices in that, looking to find what is best in the children of men.

This love is ever triumphant. It bears all things, covering over sins with silence, enduring slights and insults. It has faith in all things, forgiving the wrongs of the past, daring to trust the offender time and again. It hopes all things, looking to the final reward from God. It perseveres in all things, not resting from its holy labors until all is accomplished.

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As St. Paul describes this love, we cannot but see in it a description of the Lord Jesus Himself. He and He alone has fully embodied this irresistible and victorious love. From the shadowed Garden in Gethsemane, to Pilate's judgement hall, down the dreadful *Via Dolorosa* and up to the final Golgotha, the Lord has shone on the world with the radiance of this unique and eternal love. In all His life and in His final life-giving death, He has revealed to us the Father's Name as a name of triumphant love.

## *The Love of God and Our Neighbor*

Excerpts from *Spiritual Counsels* by St. John of Kronstadt

Love for God begins to manifest itself, and to act in us, when we begin to love our neighbor as ourselves, and not to spare ourselves or anything belonging to us for him, as he is the image of God...

To love your neighbor as yourself, to sympathize with him in his joy and his sorrow, to feed, to clothe him, if he is in need of food and clothing; to breathe, so to say, the same air with him - look upon all this as the same thing as feeding and warming yourself, and do not count these as virtues or as works of love to your neighbor, lest you grow proud of them...

The love of God is so great, so immeasurable, that beside it all human dislike, enmity and hatred become insignificant, and seem to vanish entirely. It is because God's love for us is boundless, and human enmity so insignificant that the Lord commanded us all to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, to do good to them that use us spitefully and persecute us. We abide in the love of God; does it greatly matter if men are not well-disposed toward us? What can they do against us when God has so loved us?

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>February 2023</h1>						<i>Sunday services: Matins at 9am Sung Mass at 9:30</i>
			<b>1</b> St. Ignatius of Antioch, BM, c. 107; St. Bridget, V, 523  <i>Mass at 7pm</i>	<b>2</b> Presentation of Our Lord: Candlemas  <i>W</i>	<b>3</b> St. Blaise, BM, c. 316; St. Anskar of Hamburg, BC, 865	<b>4</b> New Martyrs of Russia, 1917 and following; St. Joseph of Aleppo, M, 1686  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>5</b> Fifth Sunday after Epiphany; St. Agatha, VM, c. 250  <i>G</i>	<b>6</b> St. Photius, BCD, 891; St. Dorothy, VM, c. 313	<b>7</b> St. Romuald, Ab, 1027	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b> St. Cyril of Alexandria, BCD, 444; St. Apollonia, VM, c. 248	<b>10</b> St. Scholastica, V, 543	<b>11</b> St. Gregory II, PC, 731; St. Benedict of Aniane, Ab, 821  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>12</b> Septuagesima  <i>V</i>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> St. Valentine, PrM, 3rd C	<b>15</b> Ss. Faustinus & Jovita, Mm, 120	<b>16</b> St. Nicholas of Japan, BC, 1912	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> St. Simeon of Jerusalem, BM, 1st c.; St. Flavian, BM, 449  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>19</b> Sexagesima  <i>V</i>	<b>20</b>  <i>(President's Day)</i>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b> Chair of St. Peter at Antioch	<b>23</b> Vigil of St. Matthias	<b>24</b> St. Matthias, Apostle, 1st C	<b>25</b> St. Walburga of Heidenheim, V, 779  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>26</b> Quinquagesima; St. Porphyrius of Gaza, BC, 420; St. Ethelbert, KC, 616  <i>V</i>	<b>27</b> St. Raphael of Brooklyn, BC, 1915; St. Leander of Seville, BC, c. 600	<b>28</b> St. Oswald of Worcester, BC, 992				