

✠ 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. Gregory the Great d. 603

The kingdom of God has no assessed value. It is worth everything you have. To Zacchaeus it was worth half his possessions; the other half he kept back in order to restore fourfold anything that he had unjustly taken. To Peter and Andrew it was worth their nets and boat. To the widow it was worth two small coins. To someone else it is worth a cup of cold water. As I said, the kingdom of God is worth everything you have. Think about it, my friends. There's nothing cheaper when you go to buy it, and nothing more valuable once you have it.

But suppose you don't even have a cup of cold water to offer to someone who needs it. Even then God's Word reassures us. When our Redeemer was born heavenly voices cried out, *Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to people of good will!* In God's sight no hand is ever empty of a gift if the heart is filled with good will. The

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Psalmist says, *The offerings of praise I will make to you, O God, are in me* [Ps. 56:12]. He means that although you may have no outward gift to offer, you can find within yourself something to place on the altar of God's praise. God has no need of anything we can give, and is better pleased with the offering of our hearts.

There is nothing we can offer to God more precious than good will. But what is good will? To have good will is to experience concern for someone else's adversities as if they were our own; to give thanks for our neighbor's prosperity as for our own; to believe that another person's loss is our own, and also that another's gain is ours; to love a friend in God, and bear with an enemy out of love; to do to no one what we do not want to suffer ourselves, and to refuse to no one what we rightly want for ourselves; to choose to help a neighbor who is in need not only to the whole extent of our ability, but even beyond our means. What offering is richer, what offering is more substantial than this one? What we are offering to God on the altar of our hearts is the sacrifice of ourselves!

But we never fully accomplish this offering of our good will unless we leave completely behind our cravings for the things of this world. If we crave anything in the world then surely we envy our neighbors who possess it. Doesn't it always seem that we are lacking what someone else has gained? Envy is so much opposed to good will that once it invades our hearts, good will disappears. Holy people, who want to be able to love their neighbors completely, have always striven to love nothing in this world, to seek nothing, to possess and even to desire nothing.

St. Procla

Feast Day ~ October 27

What if you had only one chance to attempt something that would alter the course of events forever? What if you were compelled by a dream or a vision to plead for a particular decision by someone in authority? Would you seize the opportunity and make the plea?

Such was the situation that a nearly-invisible saint of the Church found herself in. A brief mention of her in the Gospel of Matthew is the only scriptural evidence we have of her: *While [Pilate] was sitting on the judgement seat, his wife sent to him, saying, "Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him."* [27:19] The Church has named Pilate's wife as Procla and has considered her a saint for her heroic last-ditch effort to defend Jesus.

There has been much speculation about Procla in the centuries since. Some of the early apocryphal writings take her story further and the early Church theologians Origen (185-253) and Tertullian (155-220) both speak of her converting to Christianity, whether before the Crucifixion or after. There have even been depictions of her in theatrical performances, from the Medieval York Mystery plays to modern films such as "The Passion of Christ" (2004). Her story captures the imagination and can inspire us in our attempts to live as Christians in a hostile world.

The first thing to consider about Procla is her dream. Was it just a REM-sleep occurrence or was it a vivid message for her to consider? St. Bede, a Western father of the Church, and others have speculated that the dream was sent from the devil as an attempt to thwart Christ's sacrifice for our salvation, while others, such as St. Augustine and St. Jerome, interpret the dream as of divine origin. Whatever its source, the dream greatly affected



St. Procla. Could God speak to us in dreams? Would we pay this much attention to a revelation that came to us in sleep or at prayer? Perhaps we should not be so rational as to discount something like a memorable dream.

The second thing about Procla is that, when she acknowledged the importance of the dream, she took action immediately and went to her husband with a warning and a request: this is a just man; don't send him to his death. Pilate was a consummate politician. Put in the position of having to make a life or death decision about an accused man, he vacillated between wanting to avoid giving Jesus the death penalty and just dismissing the case and wanting to placate the angry crowd clamoring for it. In St. Luke's Gospel, we learn that Pilate even passed Jesus off to Herod for him to make the judgement [23:6-12], but to no avail.

He then offered Barabbas, a well-known murderer, in place of Jesus, but finally caved to the demands of the mob. Procla's impassioned plea was ignored, but God had certainly awakened her to who the man Jesus was and perhaps this is what led her to follow Jesus, who died for our sins.

If we saw someone being wrongly accused or witnessed a crowd demanding violence, would we speak up? Would we be brave enough to try to go against the shouts for blood and ask for compassion or would we simply "wash our hands" of the whole affair?

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Address Correction Requested

St. Procla did what she could to prevent an injustice, but God's plan for man's salvation was carried out and the course of the world's events was changed forever. Thanks be to God!

Resources: *Ancient Faith Radio* podcast by Fr. Steve Ritter; *A Cloud of Witnesses: Saints and Martyrs from the Holy Land* by Bp. Demetri Khoury; *Prologue from Ochrid* by St. Nikolai Velimirovic; websites of *Orthodox Christianity Then and Now*, *Orthodox Church in America*, *Wikipedia*.

The Kingly Ministry

St. Gregory of Sinai notes that "all the faithful are truly anointed priests and kings in the spiritual renewal brought about through baptism, just as priests and kings were anointed figuratively in former times." We are accustomed to hearing how we are made part of the kingdom of God where God rules and we are his subjects. However, the concept of our being anointed kings may seem a bit incongruous.

In the story of creation, God said to Adam and Eve: *Be fruitful and multiply...have dominion over...every living thing that moves upon the earth.* [Gen 2:6] In other less symbolic terms, man is to govern everything in the whole world. This vocation was the one God intended man to fulfill: to take care of the whole world, to do good to and for it, to be its benefactor - in short, to be its king...

Man failed in this vocation, not realizing that to be king of creation required him to obey and be subject to the Creator King...In Christ, this fallen king is redeemed by the rebirth of water and the Spirit. The world revealed in the blessing of the waters is transfigured in Christ, ready once again to receive the dominion of the recreated king...

An excerpt from *Thy Will Be Done* by Protodeacon Peter Danilchick

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>October 2023</h1>						<i>Sunday services: Matins at 9am Sung Mass at 9:30</i>
1 17 th Sunday after Pentecost ; St. Remigius of Rheims, BC, c. 530; St. Bavo, C, 659 <i>G</i>	2 Holy Guardian Angels	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 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
8 18 th Sunday after Pentecost <i>G</i>	9 Ss. Denys, BM, Rusticus, & Eleutherius, Mm, 3 rd C	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 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
15 19 th Sunday after Pentecost; Our Lady of Walsingham <i>G</i>	16 St. Gall, Ab., c. 646	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; St. Artemius of Antioch, M, 362	21 St. Hilarion of Gaza, Ab., c. 371; Ss. Ursula & comp., Mm, 453 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
22 20 th Sunday after Pentecost <i>G</i>	23	24 St. Raphael the Archangel	25 Ss. Crysanthus & Daria, Mm, 283	26 St. Evaristus, PM, c. 197	27 Vigil of Ss. Simon & Jude; St. Frumentius of Ethiopia, BC, 4 th C	28 Ss. Simon & Jude, Apostles, 1 st C <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
29 Christ the King; comm. 21 st Sun. after Pentecost <i>W</i>	30	31 Vigil of All Saints				