

✠ 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 the Spiritual Meditations of St. Tikhon of Zadonsk d. 1783

You look at the sky, so wondrous, high, and vast, adorned with various stars; at the sun and moon shining and enlightening the world; at the clouds going to and fro like waterskins in the air, exuding rain and giving drink to our fields. Your senses and reason present to you the earth and the fullness thereof, the trees,

grasses, cattle, beasts, seas, lakes, rivers, springs, and other adornments. Cross with your mind from the visible things to the invisible, from the created world to the Creator.

This will be the occasion for you to marvel at the following: 1) The *omnipotence* of our God, Who created all this from nothing by one word; 2) His Wisdom, for He created all these things so wisely; 3) His *goodness*, for He created all these things for our sake.

Inside:

St. Alexander of Alexandria	3
Parish News	6
Presentation of Our Lord	7
Antiphons for Candlemas	9
Calendar	11

Pondering thus, and learning the power, Wisdom, and goodness of the Creator through creation, one will be joyfully caught up in the spirit with the Psalmist and sing: *How great are Thy works, O Lord! In wisdom hast Thou wrought them all.* [Ps. 104:24]



You see the sun shining pleasantly, enlightening the whole earth, and making us glad. From this sensory sun, raise your mind to the eternal noetic Sun of righteousness, to Christ the Son of God Who wondrously enlightens the faithful, and Who will eternally enlighten and gladden them so that they will *shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father* [Matt. 13:43], according to His true promise. From this visible world, shining with the radiance of sunbeams, cross with your mind to that city

described in Revelation, to the Jerusalem on high that has *no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it and the Lamb is the light thereof* [Rev. 21:23]. *And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever* [Rev. 22:5].

You see the sun rising on a clear morning, making everyone glad. Ponder what great joy is felt by those souls in whom Christ the Son of God, the eternal Sun of Righteousness, will shine forth. Let this occasion teach you to pray to Him fervently that the joyful light of His grace may shine forth in your heart as well.

St. Alexander, Patriarch of Alexandria

Feast Day ~ February 26

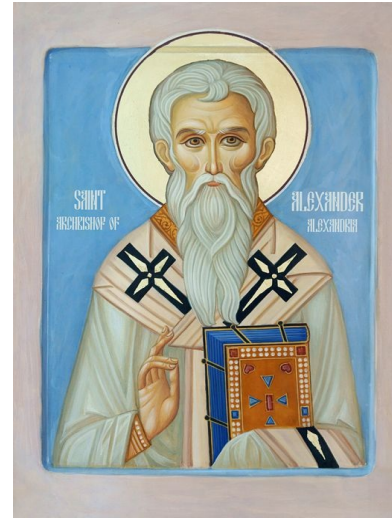
Conflict resolution is a tool much used today, both in the corporate world, in the political arena, in institutions of higher learning - and even in parish councils. The ability to help diverse sides with opposing views reach some sort of agreement to end the conflict is much needed. Diplomats are struggling to bring the conflict between Israel and the Palestinian people to an end; disagreements on the issues of abortion, the economy, and many other social issues all need the help of those skilled in conflict resolution in our world today.

The fourth century was no different from the twenty-first, especially in the Church, which was just beginning to recover from the severe persecutions which had produced many martyrs before the Edict of Milan in 313 gave the Christians a legal status in the Roman Empire.

In that same year, Alexander, a bishop of the diocese of Alexandria, became its Patriarch on the death of Achillas. If ever there was a person in need of skilled conflict resolution, it was Patriarch Alexander! He inherited - and had to find a way of dealing with - several major areas of contention which threatened to cause schism in the Church of Alexandria.

One dispute was about the dating of Pascha and the contentious arguments led Patriarch Alexander to write a treatise on the subject. This treatise helped to defuse some of the dissension until the controversy was finally settled at the Council of Nicaea in 325.

The second conflict was with Bishop Meletius of Lycopolis, who argued strenuously against receiving Christians back into the Church who had lapsed during the persecutions. Even though this issue had been addressed in the previous century and return to



the Church after a period of repentance had been advocated, particularly by St. Cyprian of Carthage (210-258), Meletius continued to publically disagree with the Patriarch, who accepted the path of mercy, and he gathered a following of priests with like-minded rigorous ideas.

The third - and most dangerous - of conflicts which Patriarch Alexander faced was with Arius, a priest of Alexandria who developed the theory that Christ was not co-eternal with God the Father. Arius preached this heresy with such zeal that he also accumulated a following. The Patriarch's attempts to curtail the spread of this heresy were hampered by the fact that his predecessor, despite Arius' heretical teachings, had allowed the priest to continue his duties in a prominent Alexandrian church. Patriarch Alexander was a humble, mild-mannered man who sought first to resolve conflicts through gentle reasoning, but this method was unsuccessful with a fiery and defiant person like Arius. After repeated admonitions to Arius, Alexander called two meetings of the local clergy to condemn Arius' actions. This did not stop Arius and so, in 320, a general synod of the church of Alexandria was called and Arius was put under *anathema* until he would recant his heretical teachings. Instead, Arius left Alexandria for Palestine, where his influence spread further.

This unresolved conflict became so serious that it threatened the peace of the Church and of the Empire. Emperor Constantine ordered Alexander and Arius to come to an agreement but, of course, this did not happen and so the Emperor called the great Council of Nicaea - the first of the Ecumenical (Church-wide) councils which settled the Christological issues permanently. At

the Council, Arius' excommunication was confirmed, Patriarch Alexander's right to determine the date of Pascha and to communicate that to the whole Church was recognized, and Bishop Meletius was allowed to maintain his title but without the privilege of exercising any episcopal duties.

Finally, the conflicts which had beset Alexander during his time as Patriarch were resolved. Only five months after his return from the Council in Nicaea, St. Alexander fell asleep in the Lord. He designated his deacon, Athanasius, to be his successor. The Patriarch had been a mentor for Athanasius since he observed the boy and some friends "playing church" at the seaside. Pretending to be a bishop, Athanasius had acted out a baptism, using the exact words of the liturgy. From that time on, the Patriarch took charge of his religious education and eventually ordained him to the diaconate. Athanasius had accompanied him to the Council of Nicaea and had spoken eloquently against the Arian heresy.

St. Alexander gives us an example of how to respond to conflicts: at first, he was patient in attempting to bring together those involved in the conflicts and to try to reach a resolution, but he did not compromise when the conflict was about something that affected the basic doctrines of the Church. May we, too, try to resolve our conflicts with others with patience and talking through differences. But may we hold firm on matters of faith which are at the heart of our Christian beliefs. *St. Alexander of Alexandria, pray for us.*

Resources: *The Church of the Ancient Councils* by Archbishop Peter L'Huillier; *Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs, and Other Saints* by Alban Butler; Orthodoxwiki; *Prologue From Ochrid* by St. Nikolai; *stsophiadc.org* (the website of St. Sophia Cathedral in Washington DC); *A Western Rite Orthodox Martyrology*; Wikipedia.

Parish News

On the weekend of January 20-21, we were blessed with a visit from Bishop JOHN, who is the bishop for the Western Rite parishes of our Archdiocese. His grace was here for the annual March for Life, where he gave the opening speech and invocation. He decided to remain with us for Saturday Vespers and the Sunday services and even helped to shovel the snow that fell on Friday! It is always an honor to have our bishop with us.

We begin the month of February with the Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple (or the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, or Candlemas). Vespers will be at 6:30PM and Mass at 7, followed by a pot-luck supper. Candles to be used throughout the year will be blessed at this service and, at the end, throats will be blessed anticipating the Feast of St. Blaise (February 3).

The Annual Parish Meeting, which was postponed due to the unexpected visit of Bishop JOHN on January 21, will be held on February 4. After a pot-luck brunch, we will hear reports on various aspects of parish life, a financial report from our treasurer, and we will have election of new members to the Parish Council.

Our collection of canned food for the Food For Hungry People project of the Archdiocese weighed in at 120 pounds! Thanks to all who donated and to the Caldwell family for delivering our collected food to the Manna Food Bank.

The season of Epiphany (and therefore, of house blessings) will continue through this month. On the last Sunday (February 25), we will also celebrate the Feast of St. Matthias, the Apostle elected to replace Judas among the Twelve.

The Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple



The feast day which we celebrate on February 2 contains three observances: the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary following childbirth, the Presentation of the Christchild in the Temple, and the blessing of candles (hence the name “Candlemas”) to be used in worship throughout the church year.

The first two of these observances were required under the law of Moses - that a woman who had been delivered of a child should, after forty days, come to the Temple to offer a sacrifice for her purification from the defilement of childbirth (the sacrifice was to be a lamb and a dove or two doves if the woman were too poor to offer a lamb). The law also stated that a first-born son belonged to God and had to be “redeemed” or “ransomed” at the Temple by a money offering.

Mary, the Temple of the Lord, and Jesus, the Redeemer of the world, should not have had to comply with these laws. But in the words of Dom Prosper Guéranger:

The Divine Will was dear to Mary in this as in every circumstance of her life. The Holy Virgin knew, that by seeking this external rite of Purification, she was in no wise risking the honor of her Child, or failing in the respect due to her own Virginity. She was in the Temple

of Jerusalem what she was in the house of Nazareth, when she received the Archangel’s visit - she was the Handmaid of the Lord. She obeyed the Law, because she seemed to come under the Law. Her God and her Son submitted to the ransom as humbly as the poorest Hebrew would have to do; He had already obeyed the edict of the emperor Augustus, in the general census; He was to be obedient even unto death, even to the death of the Cross. The Mother and the child, both humbled themselves in the Purification, and man’s pride received, on that day, one of the greatest lessons ever given it.

Just as the Savior had been revealed to only a few at his birth - several shepherds and three Wise Men - so at his presentation, only two others in the Temple saw the child for what he really was, the longed for Messiah.

Both the aged Simeon and the prophetess Anna had spent their lives waiting and praying for the Messiah and now, in His presence, they recognized Him and worshiped Him. Simeon was moved to sing a canticle, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace...for mine eyes have seen thy salvation....a light to enlighten the Gentiles and the glory of thy people, Israel” [Luke 2:29-32].

Echoing Simeon’s description of our Lord as “a light to enlighten the Gentiles”, we also sing his canticle and bless the candles which the Church uses to honor and to represent this light. We make a procession with lighted candles in imitation of that first procession in the Temple.

This procession of lights is described in Butler’s *Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs, and Other Principal Saints*: “We... hold these lights in our hands to honor Christ, and to acknowledge him as the true light, whom they represent under this character, and who is called by holy Simeon in this mystery “a light for the enlightening of the Gentiles,” for he

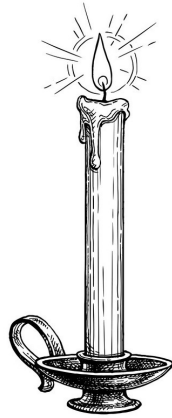
came to dispel our spiritual darkness. The candles likewise express that by faith his light shines in our souls, and also that we are to prepare his way by good works, by which we are to be a light to men.”

Reprinted from the 2006 St. Gregory's Journal

Antiphons for the Ceremonies of Candlemas

For the Nunc dimittis at the distribution of candles: *A light to enlighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.*

For the procession: *O Sion, adorn thy bride-chamber, and receive Christ the King: greet Mary, who is the gate of heaven: for she beareth the King of the glory of the new light: she remaineth a Virgin, yet beareth in her hands a Son begotten before the morning star: whom Simeon took into his arms, declaring to the nations that he is the Lord of life and death, and Savior of the world.*



It was revealed unto Simeon by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ: and when they brought the Child into the temple, then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said: Lord, now letttest thou thy servant depart in peace. [Luke 2:26-29]

When the days of Mary's purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought Jesus to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, as it is written in the law of the Lord.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>February 2024</h1>						<i>Sunday services: Matins at 9am Sung Mass at 9:30</i>
				1 St. Ignatius of Antioch, BM, c. 107; St. Bridget, V, 523 <i>Mass at 7pm</i>	2 Presentation of Our Lord: Candlemas <i>W</i>	3 St. Blaise, BM, c. 316; St. Anskar of Hamburg, BC, 865 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
4 Fifth Sunday after Epiphany; New Martyrs of Russia, 1917 and following; St. Joseph of Aleppo, M, 1686 <i>G</i>	5 St. Agatha, VM, c. 250	6 St. Photius, BCD, 891; St. Dorothy, VM, c. 313	7 St. Romuald, Ab, 1027	8	9 St. Cyril of Alexandria, BCD, 444; St. Apollonia, VM, c. 248	10 St. Scholastica, V, 543 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
11 Sixth Sunday after Epiphany; St. Gregory II, PC, 731; St. Benedict of Aniane, Ab, 821 <i>G</i>	12	13	14 St. Valentine, PrM, 3rd C	15 Ss. Faustinus & Jovita, Mm, 120	16 St. Nicholas of Japan, BC, 1912	17 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
18 Seventh Sunday after Epiphany; St. Simeon of Jerusalem, BM, 1st C; St. Flavian, BM, 449 <i>G</i>	19 <i>(President's Day)</i>	20	21	22 Chair of St. Peter at Antioch	23	24 Vigil of St. Matthias <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
25 St. Matthias, Apostle, 1st C; Eighth Sunday after Epiphany <i>R</i>	26 St. Walburga of Heidenheim, V, 779	27 St. Porphyrius of Gaza, BC, 420; St. Ethelbert, KC, 616	28 St. Raphael of Brooklyn, BC, 1915; St. Leander of Seville, BC, c. 600	29 St. Oswald of Worcester, BC, 992		<i>Note: in Leap Years, feast days from 2/24 onward are moved forward one day.</i>