

# ✠ 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 by  
St. Maximus  
of Turin  
d. 465*

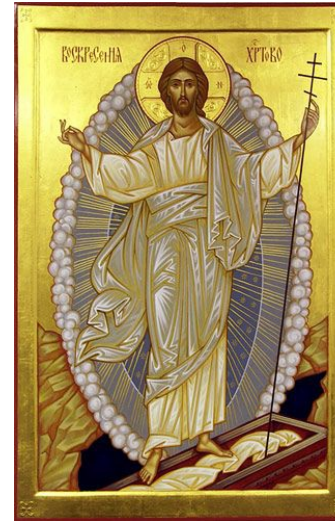
**T**hrough Christ's resurrection, the underworld is opened; through the neophytes of the Church the earth is renewed; heaven is unlocked through the Holy Spirit. For the underworld is opened and gives back the dead; earth is renewed and from it springs the crop of those who are risen; heaven is unlocked and receives them as they ascend.

**S**o the good thief ascends to paradise; the bodies of the saints enter the holy city; the dead return to the living; and sharing, as it were, in Christ's resurrection, all the elements tend upwards.

**T**he underworld gives back those that it holds to the upper world; earth sends its dead to heaven; heaven presents

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those that it receives to the Lord. By a single process the Savior's passion raises from the depths, lifts up from earth and places on high.

**F**or Christ's resurrection is life for the dead, pardon for sinners, glory for the saints. And so the holy prophet invites every creature to the celebration of Christ's resurrection: we should rejoice, he says, and be glad on this day which the Lord has made.

**T**he light of Christ is day without night, day without end. Understanding that day to be Christ, Saint Paul says: *The night is far gone, the day is at hand. The night is far gone*, he says, it is not approaching; for he wishes you to understand that when Christ's light draws near, the darkness of the devil is put to flight, and the shadows of sin do not approach; the old gloom is dispelled by the endless brightness, and the insidious approach of wrongdoing is halted.

**C**hrist is the Son-day, to whom the Father-day has whispered the secret of his divinity. He is the day who says through the mouth of Solomon: *I have made an undying light rise in the heavens.*

**J**ust as there is no night at all to follow the heavenly day, so too the darkness of sin does not follow the justice of Christ. For the brightness and the luminous splendor of the heavenly day last for ever, and there are no shadows which can put an end to it; and so too the brilliance and the flashing radiance of Christ's light never cease, and there is no darkness of sin which can overcome them. This is why Saint John the Evangelist says: *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

And so, my brethren, we ought all to rejoice on this holy day. No one should separate himself from the general rejoicing because he has sins on his conscience; no one should refuse to take part in the public worship because of the burden of his misdeeds. However great a sinner he may be, on this day he should not despair of pardon, for the privileges granted by this day are great. If a thief was thought worthy of paradise, why should not a Christian be thought worthy of forgiveness?

## *The Paschal Triduum*

Maundy Thursday, May 2: Vespers at 6:40PM, Mass at 7PM,  
Tenebrae following a silent Lenten meal

At the foot-washing: *Where charity and love are, there is God.*

At the stripping of the altar: *They part my garments among them:  
and upon my vesture they cast lots.*

At Tenebrae: *Jerusalem, Jerusalem, return unto the Lord thy God.*

Good Friday, May 3: Liturgy and Mass of the Presanctified at  
12noon

As the cross is unveiled: *Behold the wood of the Cross, whereon  
was hung the world's salvation. O come, let us worship..*

At the veneration of the cross: *Faithful Cross, above all others,  
one and only noble tree.*

As the reserved Sacrament is brought to the altar: *The royal  
banners forward go; the cross shines forth in mystic glow.*

The Paschal Vigil, Saturday, May 4, 9PM

As the Paschal Candle is brought into the church: *The light of  
Christ! Thanks be to God!*



At the readings: *We will sing unto the Lord for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.*

Before the Gloria is sung: *Christ is risen! Indeed He is risen!*

Easter Day, May 5: Mass at 11AM

The Vidi Aquam: *I beheld water...*

The Paschal Sequence: *Christians, to the Paschal victim offer your thankful praises.*

At Communion: *Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, alleluia: therefore let us keep the feast.*

## *St. Constantine, Confessor*

*Feast Day ~ May 21*

It may be surprising to some to discover that many of the people who are venerated as saints were not always holy people. Some, before turning toward God, led immoral lives (such as the former prostitute St. Mary of Egypt); some were engaged in illegal activities (the former thief and gang leader St. Moses the Black); some had even committed murder (mass murderer and convert to Orthodoxy St. Olga of Kiev). But through the mercy and forgiveness of God, these sinners became saints of the Church.

It may also come as a surprise that there are many saints who were rulers of kingdoms. With the constant scrutiny that presidents, monarchs, and other national leaders receive in our day - and all the faults that this scrutiny reveals - it is hard to imagine that any public figure could become a saint. But with God, all things are possible. Such a ruler was Constantine "the Great".

**B**orn in what is now Serbia in 274, Constantine was the son of Constantius, one of the several rulers of parts of the vast Roman Empire, and Helen, who was of humble birth. Constantine grew up to be a great soldier, making a name for himself in the Roman army for his courage in battle. When his father died in Constantine's thirty-first year, the army in Britain where his father had ruled proclaimed Constantine as Emperor. From that time, he led soldiers in constant conflicts against his rivals for power until he became emperor in the west and then, finally, sole ruler of the entire Roman Empire.

**A**long the way, several things happened that began to change Constantine's life as well as the course of history. Before he faced his rival, Maxentius, at the Milvian Bridge over the River Tiber in the year 312, he had a vision of a cross and heard Christ say, "In this sign, conquer." Constantine knew about Christianity, a religion his father had been lenient toward. Even though his parents had divorced when his father rose in power, Constantine had remained close to his mother who had become a Christian herself. Taking the vision seriously, Constantine had banners made with the sign of the Cross which his army carried into battle - a battle which they won.

**C**onstantine decided on a course of tolerance for the Christian religion and the following year, he and co-ruler (at the time) Licinius issued the Edict of Milan, making Christianity legal in the West and restoring confiscated church property. By 324, when he became the sole emperor, favor was being shown to Christianity. When heresies against the faith threatened the stability and peace of the empire, the emperor called the first Ecumenical Council, the Council of Nicaea, which began formulating the creed, outlining the tenets of our faith. The conciliar approach, begun by the Apostles at the Council of Jerusalem, was now set for dealing with matters of theology and practice in the Church.

**W**ith the freedom to openly practice Christianity, a great period of building churches began and Emperor Constantine played



an important role in this. He assisted his mother in her desire to travel to the Jerusalem where she discovered the relics of the true Cross and at her direction, her son had churches built over the holy sites. The emperor moved the capital city from Rome to Byzantium ("New Rome"), later called Constantinople, and there more churches were built.

**O**ne of the blackest events in Constantine's life was his decision to have his own wife and son executed in 326. That decision was based on the legal penalty for rape of an Empress. Fausta had accused his son (and her step-son), Crispus, of rape. Constantine, soon after the execution of Crispus, found out that Fausta had fabricated the story and had actually tried to seduce Crispus, so he had her executed for her treachery. No matter what the reason, Constantine was guilty of the sin of murder.

**A**lthough presenting himself as a Christian and crediting the protection of the Christian God for his successes, Constantine had put off baptism until a time when he felt "ready" and that time finally came when he became ill in 337. He received the Sacrament of baptism and the Eucharist and fell asleep in the Lord - a repentant sinner - during the season of Pentecost.

**R**emember not the sins and offenses of my youth; but according to thy mercy think thou upon me, O Lord, for thy goodness. [Ps. 25:6] Whatever the sins this ruler may have committed, we know that any sin can be forgiven by God and that God can work through all sorts of people. In the Church, we venerate Constantine as a saint for what he did to protect Christianity and allow it to change the direction of the world. In his

role as emperor, St. Constantine ended the violent persecutions that Christians had endured for three centuries; he helped with the building of churches and with continuing the conciliar approach to settling theological disputes; and because of him, Christians were able to continue the Great Commission, given to the apostles by Christ: *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. [Matt. 28:16-20]* We give thanks for this work of St. Constantine. *Holy Constantine, pray for us.*

Resources: websites of Greek Orthodox Church in America, Orthodox Church in America, Orthodoxwiki, *Rulers of Nations: Servants of Christ* by S. Bobulsky

## The Constant Pascha

by Metropolitan SABA

Christ's Resurrection loads us up with hope, strength, action, steadfastness, and the best life, which is always to come! It provides us with the strength to rise after every time we fall, to start building after every collapse, to once again spread the joyful spirit of life after every catastrophe - and there are so many in our tormented world! You live the resurrection every time you realize that you are a child of life - not passing, temporary life, but eternal, lasting life - a child of the life that brings tenacity out of pain, patience out of trials, strength out of weakness, joy out of sorrow, and hope out of despair.

Believing in Christ's resurrection from the dead means that you believe in your own resurrection and also in the resurrection of the world from every death. Or rather, you translate it in your life into resurrectional action, and because you are not happy to remain as you are, you continue the struggle, seeking what is higher and better, striving for the good portion which will not be taken from you [cf. Luke 10:42]. A Christian is a person of the resurrection in



the sense that he lives the resurrection at every moment. Otherwise, he has not yet stepped onto the threshold of Christianity. If he languishes under death, then he will quickly perceive his weakness and return to raise himself up by the grace of the resurrection of his Lord, to remain in the mystery of the resurrection, despite the many forms of death that may surround him. He receives from his risen Christ the pulse of life, hope, optimism and especially a correction of vision toward the highest and most fundamental purpose of his life.

These are nice words, but how are they lived? How are they realized in daily life? We have memorized the golden answers to this by heart. Most of the time, we repeat them without any internal awareness. We say: Christ rose to grant salvation to humankind and to open to them the way to the second life, which had been closed by Adam and Eve's departure from living in the shelter of God. He rose to grant us the power to live eternal life, which had been constantly forgotten by humankind. He rose because God cannot die. And we have other correct answers that we have become accustomed to repeating. But we often forget that their living and demonstrable activity within us is the most important thing.

A person is aware of the activity of the resurrection and lives it when he realizes that he is created for eternal life and arranges his life on the basis of that conscious realization. He sees that he will not live upon this earth more than a number of years that, no matter how long, will not be more than a hundred in the best of circumstances, most of which are labor and sorrow, as the Psalm

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*Address Correction Requested*

says (Ps. 90:10). He is aware that he is created for unending life and not to pass away with the passing away of his earthly life, but that life only starts in its fullness at that moment.

This consciousness grants him a new reading of his earthly life, its pains and difficulties. He sees in it what he did not see before and realizes that through his resurrectional faith he is able to derive benefit for himself and for others. The words of the Apostle Paul become true in him, *All things work together for good to those who love God.* [Romans 8:28] In the cross, he sees joy and consolation because it makes it possible for him to struggle and ascend. He learns patience, kindness, mercy and sensitivity to those in pain, those suffering, those who are abandoned, and acquires from his Lord an inexhaustible wellspring of tender compassion that can only be acquired through sincere suffering. He experiences the serene joy that wells forth from the presence of his Lord within him, where he had prepared a place for Him and where He will come to him and make a home with him (cf. John 14:23). He tastes the peace that no evil, no matter how great, can take away from him (cf. John 14:27).

The best sign that we have attained this level of faith is the degree to which we have been freed from that which binds us in this world and its lusts. Seeking eternal life requires of us constant change and an experience of God's presence in our life. So let us love simplicity of life. Let us seek what is essential and not give any importance to showy material gain. Let us be strangers to extravagance and spectacle, and instead be disgusted by them. Let us feel the suffering of others and be delighted to share in it with them. Let us sit, like Mary, at the feet of the Lord because our joy at that point is indescribable. Those who have touched it experience the grace of the resurrection and have truly known a change of mind and thus a change of their entire being.

An excerpt from *Spiritual Guidance: An Anthology of Writings and Teachings* by His Eminence Metropolitan Saba.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>May 2024</h1>						<i>Sunday services: Matins at 9am Sung Mass at 9:30</i>
			<b>1</b> Wednesday in Holy Week  <i>Mass at 7pm</i> <b>V</b>	<b>2</b> Maundy Thursday  <i>Mass at 7pm</i> <b>W</b>	<b>3</b> Good Friday  <i>Liturgy at Noon</i> <b>B</b>	<b>4</b> Holy Saturday  <i>Vigil at 9pm</i> <b>V/W</b>
<b>5</b> Pascha: The Resurrection of Our Lord  <i>Mass at 11am</i> <b>W</b>	<b>6</b> Monday in the Octave of Easter; St. John before the Latin Gate	<b>7</b> Tuesday in the Octave of Easter	<b>8</b> Wednesday in the Octave of Easter; Apparition of St. Michael, 492	<b>9</b> Thursday in the Octave of Easter; St. Gregory Nazianzus, BCD, 390	<b>10</b> Friday in the Octave of Easter; Ss. Gordian, 362 & Epimachus, 250, Mm	<b>11</b> Saturday in the Octave of Easter  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>12</b> Low Sunday: First Sunday after Easter  <b>W</b>	<b>13</b> Ss. Philip & James, Apostles, 1 <sup>st</sup> C, (tr.)	<b>14</b> Finding of the Holy Cross (tr.); St. Boniface of Tarsus, M, 290	<b>15</b> St. Pachomius, Ab, 348	<b>16</b> St. Brendan the Navigator, Ab, 577	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> St. Venantius, M, 250; St. Theodotus & comp., Mm, c. 303  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>19</b> Second Sunday after Easter; St. Dunstan, BC, 988; St. Pudentiana, V, 2 <sup>nd</sup> C  <b>W</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> Dedication of St. Gregory's; St. Constantine, C, 337	<b>22</b> St. Romanus of Subiaco, Ab, 560	<b>23</b> St. Julia, VM, 439	<b>24</b> St. Vincent of Lerins, C, 450	<b>25</b> St. Urban, PM, 230; St. Aldhelm, BC, 709  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>26</b> Third Sunday after Easter; St. Augustine of Canterbury, BC, 605  <b>W</b>	<b>27</b> St. Bede, CD, 735; St. John I, PM, 526  <i>(Memorial Day)</i>	<b>28</b> St. Germanus of Paris, BC, 576	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b> St. Felix I, PM, 274	<b>31</b> St. Petronilla, VM, c. 100	