

✠ 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. Maximus the Confessor d. 662

Most fittingly does the world rejoice, with great gladness, upon this day; for with Christ returning from the dead the hope of resurrection has everywhere been awakened in the hearts of men. For it is but right that the Lord of creation triumphs, the creatures He has made should also rejoice. This day the heavens rejoice, for now at length they see the earth, defiled by sin, made clean in the Blood of the Lord. The multitudes of the hosts of heaven rejoice, for their king has overthrown in battle the hosts of the prince of evil. The sun rejoices, and now with unceasing thankfulness holds back by its joyful beams that woeful darkness that overshadowed it as Christ was dying. And together with them we too above all others must rejoice, for whom the Only-Begotten Son of God, Who also is True God, clothes Himself in our flesh, that

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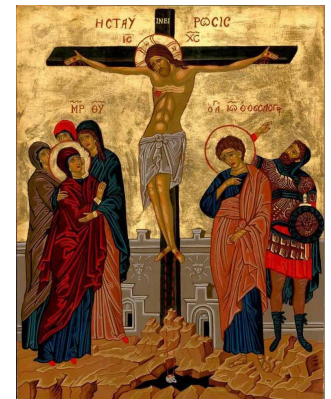
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through that flesh He might come to the Cross, by the Cross suffer death, and through death despoil the kingdom of hell. Should we not rejoice: we whose sins the mystery of this new sacrament has taken away, to whom heaven is given, paradise restored?

And as He drew near His end, the Lord Himself says to the thief then hanging on his cross: he whose faith, neither Christ's torment, nor his own, had weakened: *this day thou shalt be with me in paradise*. For the thief had said to Him: *Lord, remember me when thou shalt come into thy kingdom*. How admirable this faith, brethren: that a thief who had been judged unworthy of this life, should amid his torments nourish the hope of life eternal, and believe, that this could be given to him by One Who also was being crucified? And how justly does the believing thief receive the favor of such a promise: he who, in that hour when the Apostles scattered in fear, had confessed the Kingdom of God? And the merit of this one confession wipes away all his past sins; in that brief moment whatever crimes he had committed, throughout all the years of his life, were now forgiven.

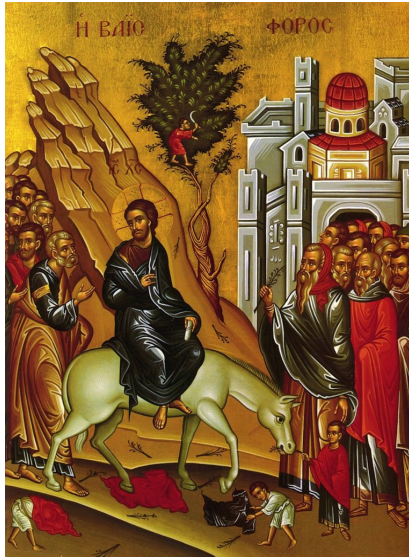
Nor did the blood he shed in his robberies condemn him before God: for he believed that the Blood of Christ was shed for a kingdom, not for a punishment. And that this death was a gain for all men, there can, beloved brethren, be no possible doubt. For who can despair of God's grace, when the thief was forgiven; should he unite the faith of the thief with his own humble prayer for pardon?

Because of this, brethren, let us rejoice in Christ, now risen from the dead. Let us hold firmly, that He has recalled this Flesh from the sepulchre that we may merit to have part in that wondrous common heritage: namely, the grace of the Apostles, and the Resurrection of the Lord, by the help of this same Lord Who with the Father and the Holy Ghost lives and reigns world without end. Amen.



Palm Sunday

by Metropolitan Nicolae



As we enter the final week of our Lenten journey, we begin by taking part in the celebration of Christ's entrance into Jerusalem. Our Lord entered the Holy City in meekness, sitting on the back of a beast, as cries of "Hosanna!" greeted Him from all directions. The people, for a brief moment, recognized their Lord, and rejoiced that He had come to dwell among them.

We also rejoice at Christ's coming, but our joy is just as short lived, as we embark on the procession toward the Cross. We witness as Christ establishes Holy Communion with His disciples, blessing bread and wine, we witness His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, His prayer and His isolation, we witness His betrayal at the hands of Judas, His defense before the Pharisees, we witness His terrible Passion, His ascent to Golgotha, and ultimately, His Crucifixion.

Though He is painfully misunderstood by so many around Him, nevertheless, at every moment, Christ pours forth His love and care. We are blessed to share in this love during the dark days of Holy Week, experiencing its profound beauty even if we cannot grasp its depths.

And finally, as we approach the crucial moment of Christ's Resurrection on Great and Holy Pascha our mourning gives way to joy, and we behold that the grave truly cannot hold the Creator of life. May the sweetness of Our Lord's victory over

death stay with us all through the Paschal season, as we join together to shout in jubilation: *Christ is Risen! Truly! Truly He is Risen!*

Metropolitan Nicolae is Metropolitan of the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Americas. Reprinted from a pamphlet published by International Orthodox Christian Charities.

St. Galla of Rome

Feast Day ~ April 6

A young, wealthy, noble widow in 6th century Rome was a very desirable candidate for a second marriage. Galla found herself in that situation when her husband of less than a year died, leaving her with a fortune and many overtures for re-marriage.

The loss of her husband had not been the only tragedy that the young woman had experienced. In 525, just before her husband died, Galla's father, the consul Symmachus, was unjustly condemned to death by King Theodoric. These tragedies no doubt caused Galla to seriously consider what other paths her life might take. She had also heard the Gospel story of Christ's encounter with the rich young man who was told to *go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven* [Matt. 19:21]. As a devout Christian, Galla made the decision to follow Christ's command and spend the rest of her life in service to God.

Galla began giving away her earthly treasures to help the poor and those in need. She entered a convent near the Basilica of St. Peter and there, for nearly twenty-five years, she spent her time in constant prayer. With her inheritance, she founded a hospital where she could help the sick. Having received the gift of healing, she cured a deaf and mute girl by giving her blessed water to drink.



St. Gregory the Great wrote about Galla in his *Dialogues* about fifty years after her death. He had himself done as Galla did and gave away the fortune he had inherited, turning his family's properties into monasteries. He relates the story of Galla's experience as she was nearing death. She was suffering from breast cancer and because she disliked darkness, she kept two candles burning at the foot of her bed as she slept. One night, she had

a vision of St. Peter standing between the two candles, assuring her that her sins had been forgiven and that she should "come." Galla asked that another nun who was also near death accompany her on this final journey. St. Peter told her that the nun, St. Benedicta, would follow her in thirty days, and that is what happened.

St. Galla passed from this life into the next in the year 550 and, as was the custom in that time, she was immediately declared a saint by those who had known her. May we, like St. Galla, be willing to give of our treasure to help those in need. *Holy Galla, pray for us.*

Sources: websites of The American Catholic and Wikipedia; *Dialogues* of St. Gregory the Great (The Fathers of the Church series from Catholic University Press)



Holy Week at St. Gregory's

The most holy week of the year for Christians is that week in which we commemorate the events of our Lord's earthly life from his triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday to his glorious Resurrection on the morning of Pascha. The services for this week include unique ceremonies which help call to mind these events. But we are not merely experiencing a re-enactment of historical occurrences. We are experiencing "*anamnesis*" – a remembrance that makes these events real and present now in our hearts and minds. When we hear the story of Christ's Passion in the words of the evangelists Matthew and John sung on Palm Sunday and Good Friday, we are the crowd of people who cried out for his crucifixion. Christ offers us his Body and Blood at the Last Supper, and we rejoice with the women at the empty tomb when we exclaim "Christ is risen! Indeed He is risen!"

As we again this year repeat all the unique ceremonies of Holy Week, let us remember in our hearts the events which they represent and rejoice in the Passion and Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Palm Sunday, April 13 - Matins will be sung at 9:00 am; the blessing and distribution of Palms, the reading of the Palm Sunday account, and the procession with palms will begin at 9:30, followed by Mass with the singing of the Passion Gospel of St. Matthew.

Monday and Tuesday, April 14 and 15 - Vespers at 6:30 pm; Mass at 7:00 with the singing of the Passion Gospels of St. Luke and St. Mark.

Wednesday, April 16 - Vespers at 6:30 pm; Mass with the blessing of the oils of catechumens and unction at 7:00.

Maundy Thursday, April 17 - Vespers at 6:30 pm; Mass with the foot-washing ceremony, the procession to the Altar of Repose, and the stripping of the altar at 7:00; Tenebrae (following a Lenten meal).

Good Friday, April 18 - Pre-Sanctified Liturgy beginning at noon with the singing of the Passion Gospel of St. John, the Solemn Collects, the Veneration of the Cross and the singing of the Reproaches.

Holy Saturday, April 19 - Confessions will be heard at 9:00 pm; at 10:00, the Great Vigil of Pascha beginning with the lighting of the Paschal Fire, the singing of the Exultet, the reading of lessons and singing the Litany, and the renewal of Baptismal vows; the first Mass of Easter. A Paschal banquet will follow.

Easter Day, April 20 - Mass at 11:00 am with the singing of the Vidi Aquam and the Paschal Sequence hymn.

Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen! Christos Anesti! Alethos Anesti! El Messieh Kahm! Hakken Kahm! Christos Voskrese! Voistinu Voskrese! Christus Resurréxit! Resurréxit Vere!



The Resurrection of Christ

by Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos

The purpose of the spiritual life is for one to be united with the Risen Christ, to see Him in one's heart. Christ is risen in our heart, mortifying the passionate thoughts which are present there under the influence of the demons and overcoming the impassioned representations and preoccupations of sin, just as then He overcame the seals of the tomb (St. Maximos the Confessor). Therefore it is not a question of an outward symbolic celebration, but of an inner and existential one...

Participation in the mystery of the Resurrection is an experience of deification. He who has been initiated into the ineffable power of the Resurrection has realised from experience what Christ's purpose was in creating the world (St. Maximos the Confessor). In reality, man was created in order to attain deification, and the world to share in the sanctification through man. Then he who is initiated into this ineffable power of the mystery of the Resurrection attains deification and fulfills the purpose of his existence. Thus he acquires greater knowledge.

The Apostle Paul commends this experience of life, and therefore he writes that we have been buried through holy Baptism with Christ into death, *that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life* [Rom. 6:4]. This rebirth is essential, because otherwise man will die spiritually, according to the words of the Apostle Paul: *For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live* [Rom: 8:13].

Christ's resurrection is the greatest event in history. It is a matter of deification and resurrection of the human nature and of a hope for deification and resurrection of our own person. Since

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the medicine has been found, there is hope of life. Through Christ's Resurrection both life and death acquire another meaning. We do not regard as life the whole of the events of history, but communion with God. And we do not regard as death the end of the present life, but man's withdrawal from Christ, while separation of the soul from the body is not death, but a temporary sleep. The Apostle Paul, can confess: *For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord* [Rom. 8:38-39].

In a catechetical oration of St. John Chrysostom which is a triumphal hymn of victory, he says that "through Christ's resurrection all human problems have been overcome. No one should weep about poverty and in general about deprivation of necessary material goods, because the common Kingdom has appeared. No one should bewail the sins which he has committed, because forgiveness has risen from the tomb. No one should fear death, because the death of the Savior has freed us."

An Excerpt Reprinted from *The Feasts of the Lord: An Introduction to the Twelve Feasts and Orthodox Christology*

