

✠ 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. 604

This is the day whereon suddenly there came a sound from heaven, and the Holy Ghost descended upon the disciples, and thereby changed the carnal minds of men, filling them with love for himself. Thus, whilst there appeared outwardly cloven tongues like as of fire, inwardly their hearts began to burn. At the same time that they perceived God in this fiery manifestation, they were all set on fire of love in its sweetness. The Holy Ghost himself is love. Whence it is that John saith: *God is love*. Whosoever, then, desireth God with all his soul, the same hath already entered into possession of him whom he loveth. And except he possess him that he loveth, he cannot love God.

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But here consider this. If I were to ask anyone of you whether he loveth God, he might perchance answer with all boldness and quietness of spirit “I do love him.” But we have heard what the Truth saith: *If a man love me, he will keep my words*. The proof of love, therefore, is its manifestation in practice. Hence the same John hath said in his Epistle: *The man that saith I love God, and keepeth not his commandments, the same is a liar*. For we do truly love God, and keep his commandments, if we deny ourselves the gratification of our appetites. Whosoever abandoneth himself to unlawful desires, such an one plainly loveth not God, for thereby he setteth himself against God’s good pleasure.

Note the words: *And my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him*. Think, dearly beloved brethren, what a dignity it is, to have God abiding as a guest in our hearts. Surely if some rich man, or some powerful friend, were to come into our house, we would hasten to have the whole house cleaned, lest perchance when he came in, he should see aught to displease his eye. So let him that would make ready his soul as an abode for God, cleanse it from all the filth of evil works. But consider once more what the Truth saith: *We will come unto him, and make our abode with him*. There are some hearts whereunto God cometh, but maketh not his abode therein. This is because they feel reverence for God when their conscience doth prick them; but in time of temptation they forget their conscience, and turn again to their sins, as though they had never repented. He therefore who truly loves God, who keeps his commandments, the Lord enters his heart, and there takes up His abode; because the love of the Divinity has so penetrated him, that in time of temptation he will not turn his back on that love.

St. Nicephorus I of Constantinople

Feast Day ~ June 2

Throughout the two thousand year history of Christianity, the Church has been under attack numerous times from without and also from within. First, there were attacks by pagan rulers during the centuries before Emperor Constantine gave Christianity legal protection in the year 313; these were the years of vast numbers of martyr saints who fill our calendar with the commemorations of their courage and steadfast faith. Then there were centuries of turmoil within the Church as Christian doctrine was being formulated into a Creed and Christian practices were being established; these years saw the sad pitting of brother against brother - all in the name of our loving and merciful Savior, Jesus Christ. In this second period - as the question of whether icons were to be venerated by the faithful as “windows into heaven” or banished as idolatry was being fought over - a faithful patriarch shines as one who defended the Truth despite the cost to himself.

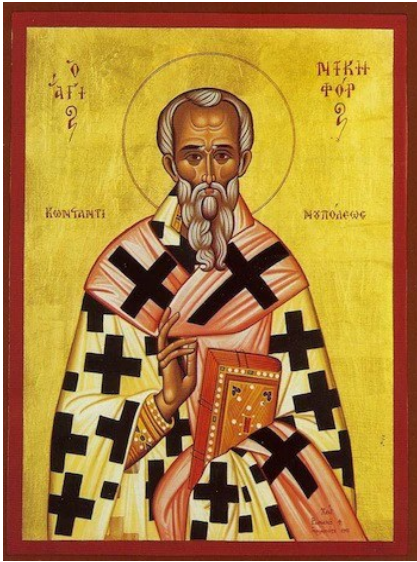
Nicephorus was born in Constantinople around the year 758, the son of Theodore, who was secretary to Emperor Constantine V (Copronymus). The Emperor, perhaps desiring to be the only object of his subjects’ veneration, took the iconoclastic position on this theological issue. His secretary, who did not share his views, took issue with him and was, therefore, tortured and banished. Nicephorus saw first-hand what it meant to stand up for the right against powerful forces.

After completing his education, Nicephorus was given the same position at court that his father had held, this time under the Emperor Constantine VI, who was still a child and therefore ruled with his mother, Irene, as regent. Nicephorus did well in his position and he also had the privilege of being secretary at the Seventh Ecumenical Council. This gathering of hierarchs wrestled with the issue of whether icons were the “graven images”

prohibited by one of the Ten Commandments (a position which, coincidentally, the fast-growing religion of Islam took), and the distinction between worshiping and venerating of icons. The Council decreed that the making and veneration of icons was a worthy Christian practice acknowledging that Christ, as both human and divine, was the perfect “icon” of God, and that depiction of the other saints of the Church was also a worthy practice.

Nicephorus eventually became weary of life at court, with all its pomp, ceremony, and intrigue. Desiring a quiet life of prayer, study, and writing he removed himself from the court and retired to a cloister. Later, he was recalled from this life to serve as the director of a large hospital for the destitute in the capitol city. When Patriarch Terasios reposed in 806, Nicephorus’ life took another dramatic turn. Even though still a laymen, he was determined to be the most suitable candidate and at Pascha, April 12, he went through the series of ordinations that led to being consecrated Patriarch of Constantinople. At his consecration, he placed a treatise on the subject of the veneration of icons which he had written on the altar as a statement of his determination to uphold the decisions of the Seventh Ecumenical Council.

Those in high public positions are often subject to sudden twists and turns in their lives. This happened again to Patriarch Nicephorus when Leo (the “Armenian”), an iconoclast, became Emperor in 813. The veneration of icons was once again banned and icons were confiscated and destroyed over the objections of the Patriarch. The Emperor made numerous attempts to persuade Nicephorus to change his “opinion” and there were even attempts at assassination, but the Patriarch stood firm in his defense of the truth. For this, he was removed from his position in the Church and sent into exile. Leo took it upon himself to select Theodotus, an illiterate married layman, as the new Patriarch. Nicephorus continued to be harassed by Leo’s successor, Michael.



St. Nicephorus did not bow to pressure from secular authority, he was not swayed from the Church's theological position, and he paid the price for that by dying in exile on June 2, 828. In 846, the Empress Theodora, who is credited with having restored the veneration of icons in the Empire, brought his relics to Constantinople for burial in the Church of the Apostles.

Holy Nicephorus, pray for us that we also may be steadfast in

upholding the teachings of the Orthodox Church, no matter the personal cost.

Resources: *Orthodox Saints* by George Poulos and Websites: New Advent; Orthodox Church in America; OrthodoxWiki; Wikipedia

Parish News

We will celebrate the great festival of Pentecost beginning with the Vigil on Saturday, June 7. Matins will be at 9:30am; Mass, with prophecies and the blessing of the font, will be at 10am followed by a pot-luck brunch. On Sunday, June 8, the Mass will include the sequence hymn for Pentecost "Come Thou Holy Paraclete," and at coffee hour we will read a portion of the Epistle lesson in as many languages as are represented in our parish, as a reminder of the gift of the Holy Spirit enabling the Apostles' to proclaim the good news in many languages at the first Pentecost.

On the Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday after Pentecost, the Ember Days call for us to pray particularly for those in ministry and for missionary efforts in the Church.



On Sunday, June 29, we will celebrate the feast day of two of the Church's greatest missionaries: St Peter and St. Paul, patrons of both Antioch and Rome, who were among the first to help spread the Gospel around the world.

The combined Parish Life Conference for the Diocese of Oakland and the Mid-Atlantic and the Diocese of Washington and New York will be held at Antiochian Village from June 25 through June 29. St. Gregory's will be represented at the Western Rite service of Matins on Friday morning, June 27.

Baptised With the Holy Spirit

by Metropolitan Hierotheos

With holy Baptism man becomes a member of the Church, a member of the Body of Christ. The day of Pentecost was the day of the Disciples' Baptism, because they became members of the Body of Christ. Thus Christ is not only their teacher, but their head.

Christ said to His Disciples right after His Resurrection: *For John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit* [Acts 1:5]. When the Holy Spirit descended on the Disciples It baptised them, and so the house where they were, awaiting the promise of the Father, became filled with the Holy Spirit, which made the house a spiritual Font.

The presence of the Holy Spirit in the upper room came with a violent wind. St. Luke writes: *Suddenly a sound like the*

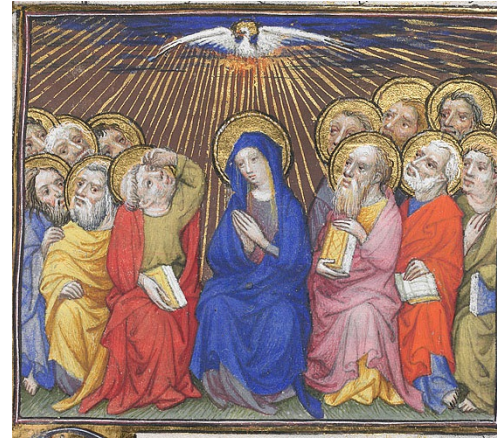
blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting [Acts 2:2]. This violent wind was prefigured and predicted in many situations in the Old Testament. It is the sound about which the mother of the Prophet Samuel said: The Lord has gone up to heaven and has thundered [I Samuel 2:10]. The Prophet Elijah's vision of God predicted this sound when he saw God through the sound of a gentle breeze. Christ suggested this sound when He cried, if anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink, for by this powerful word He meant the Holy Spirit, which was going to receive all who believed in It. Likewise it was indicated beforehand by Christ's breathing on the Disciples after His Resurrection, giving them the Holy Spirit so that they could forgive sins.

The manifestation of the Holy Spirit as a strong wind is significant, because it shows that the Holy Spirit conquers all things, passes over the walls of the evil one, demolishes the cities and every fortification of the enemy. At the same time It humbles the proud, lifts up the humble of heart, puts together what is badly damaged, breaks the bonds of errors and releases what is confined. By the power of the Holy Spirit man can become a living member of the Church and conquer all the powers of the enemy, overcome even death itself.

An excerpt from The Feasts of the Lord: An Introduction to the Twelve Feasts and Orthodox Christology by Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos.

Language and the Holy Spirit

Now the whole earth was one language and one speech...Come, let us go down there and confuse their language, so they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth. [Gen. 11:1, 7-8]



Mankind was united as one race and one language. But this unity existed without the Holy Trinity, for man's true unity is union and communion with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Lord divided this false unity for the sake of man's salvation, that man might seek and find Him. For they sought to build their unity by making a name for themselves. They cared nothing for the name of the Lord God, by which man is saved. [notes from the Orthodox Study Bible on the above verses]

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance...And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven...Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?" [Acts 2:1-4, 5, 7, 8]

This is...a divine reversal or recapitulation of the events at the Tower of Babel. In the account of Babel, pride was shown to possess the awesome power to divide; here, the humble reception of the Holy Spirit is shown to have the overwhelming power to unite, even in diversity. [notes from the Orthodox Study Bible on the above verses.]

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Address Correction Requested

The Apostles' gratitude to God was expressed aloud in various tongues, which attracted even more attention from the masses of people who had come to Jerusalem for the feast from various countries, both near and far. St. Luke purposely lists all the countries to show how many different tongues were spoken by the disciples of Christ after the descent of the Spirit. Here were inhabitants of eastern and western Asia, Africa, and Europe, and they all heard their native tongues. This was also symbolic. We see the foreshadowing of the Church of Christ, into which all nations and races would enter, so that with one mind and heart all would praise God.

The gift of tongues is understandable: it was necessary to spread the faith all over the earth. At the same time, one cannot help but remember how this same gift was once used by God as a punishment for human pride. There was once a time when *the whole earth had one language and one speech* [Gen. 11:1]. But man, in his pride, undertook a mad venture that God punished by sending down multiple tongues, which forced the workers to leave the work and go to different places. Now the multiplication of tongues has become a means by which diverse nations are united into a one single Church of Christ.

An excerpt reprinted from *The Acts of the Apostles: Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the New Testament*, Vol. II by Archbishop Averky (Taushev)



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>June 2025</h1>						<i>Sunday services: Matins at 9am Sung Mass at 9:30</i>
1 Sunday after the Ascension <i>W</i>	2 of the Octave of Ascension; Ss. Marcellinus, Peter & Erasmus, Mm, 304	3 of the Octave of Ascension; St. Kevin of Glendalough, Ab, c. 618	4 of the Octave of Ascension	5 Octave Day of the Ascension; St. Boniface, BM, 754	6	7 Vigil of Pentecost <i>Mass at 10am</i> <i>Vespers at 6pm</i> <i>V/R</i>
8 Pentecost <i>R</i>	9 Monday in the Octave of Pentecost; St. Columba of Iona, Ab, 597	10 Tuesday in the Octave of Pentecost; St. Margaret of Scotland, QW, 1092	11 St. Barnabas, Apostle, 1 st C; Ember Wednesday in the Octave of Pentecost	12 of the Octave of Pentecost	13 Ember Friday in the Octave of Pentecost	14 Ember Saturday in the Octave of Pentecost; St. Basil the Great, BCD, 379 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
15 Trinity Sunday; 1 st Sun. after Pentecost; Ss. Vitus, Modestus & Crescentia, Mm, c. 303 <i>W</i>	16	17	18 St. Ephrem the Syrian, DnCD, 373	19 Ss. Gervase & Protase, Mm, 2 nd C	20	21 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
22 2 nd Sunday after Pentecost; All Saints of Antioch; St. Alban, M, 209 <i>G</i>	23	24 Nativity of St. John the Baptist	25	26 Ss. John & Paul, Mm, c. 362	27	28 St. Irenaeus of Lyon, BM, 202; Vigil of Ss. Peter & Paul <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
29 Ss. Peter & Paul, Apostles, 1st C; comm. Third Sunday after Pentecost <i>R</i>	30 Comm. of St. Paul the Apostle					