

✠ 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. Augustine of Hippo d. 430

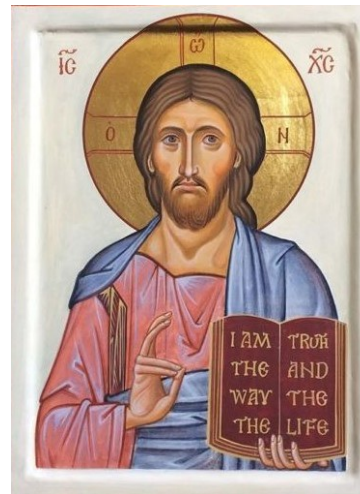
It is the voice of the Lord, Dearly Beloved: *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.* Let us learn what are the rewards of peace. Peace is serenity of mind, tranquillity of soul, simplicity of heart, the bond of love, the fellowship of charity. This it is that takes away enmities, restrains wars, holds back anger,

treads down pride, loves the humble, calms those who quarrel, reconciles those who are enemies, and is pleasing and acceptable to all. It seeks nothing that belongs to another; regards nothing as its own. It teaches a love that has never learned to hate. It knows not how to be lifted above itself. It knows not how to be puffed up.

He therefore who acquires this peace, let him hold fast to it. He who has broken it, let him strive to restore it again.

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He who has lost it, let him seek earnestly to find it again. For whosoever is found without this peace is rejected by the Father, disinherited by the Son, and becomes a stranger to the Holy Ghost. He refuses a gift offered to him who despises the blessing of the law (of peace) that is given to us. Nor can any man attain to the inheritance of the Lord who refuses to accept his will. He cannot have the friendship of Christ who is deliberately at enmity with another Christian.

Therefore, it is the offence of stubbornness that we are to reject from us, that we are bidden to oppose, commanded to turn away from. What part have you with enmities, O Christian Soul? Why should you love rages and quarrelings which cannot be pleasing to the Author of peace? Why do you foster enmities whose consequences not even the devil could escape, who first invented them? For in the beginning, as a serpent, he practiced enmities against the First Man, and destroyed him. And in bringing misfortune on Man he was himself brought down to the dust. While he was trying to entrap Adam, he was himself entrapped from the beginning in his own snares.

Therefore, O Christian, either you embrace the Charity of Christ, or else you must know and understand that in following the likeness of the devil's works, you are yourself become like to the author of all enmity.

Let us stir up our hearts, as much as we can, dearest brethren, and come out of the sleep of our past neglect, and let us, each one of us, be vigilant in keeping, in fulfilling, the commandments of the Lord. Let us be like those to whom he said: *Let your loins be*

girt, and lamps burning in your hands. And you yourselves like to men who wait for the Lord, when he shall return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open to him immediately. [Luke 12:34-5] We must stand ready with our loins girt; lest when the day of our setting forth comes, it may find us bound and encumbered. Let our light be shining with good works, and let it glow so brightly that it will lead us out of the night of this world into the day of eternal brightness, where with Christ the True Author of peace, and with His angels, we may come to enjoy peace without end, and joy without end, by the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who with the Father and the Son, reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

Ss. Nicholas & Habeeb Khasha

New Martyrs of Antioch: Feast Day ~ July 16

On October 19 of this past year, the Holy Synod of Antioch announced the glorification of two new saints of the Patriarchate, Fathers Nicholas and Habeeb Khasha, father and son, both martyrs for the Christian faith.

In the early years of the twentieth century, Nicholas Khasha was a layman active in helping the church establish Arabic, in stead of Greek, control over the Patriarchate. For his involvement in this work, Nicholas was arrested numerous times (with the help of the Greek Patriarch) by the Ottoman authorities. He spent some time in Egypt for his work in the silk trade and returned to Damascus when Meletios II became the Patriarch. The new Patriarch recognized the great contributions that Nicholas made to the church and ordained him deacon and then priest in 1900.

Fr. Nicholas led the St. John of Damascus Association, which had an extensive library of Orthodox material, and he was involved in helping to modernize and improve the Orthodox



schools. He was appointed as the Patriarchal representative to the Ottoman government and was also given oversight for the Saydnaya Monastery. Fr. Nicholas' experience in the business world helped in all these endeavors. As the Christians in the Diocese of Mersin (an area in what is now south central Turkey) were suffering persecution and great poverty, Fr. Nicholas was sent there to strengthen the people amidst these difficulties until he was himself the victim of the persecutions. The Turkish

authorities arrested the priest based on slander against him and, in 1916, he was martyred during one of the massacres of Christians under the Young Turks. Under the direction of a hate-filled commander, Fr. Nicholas was subjected to agonizing torture, suffering broken ribs, starvation, and whipping, all the while reciting verses from the Bible. A fractured skull was the final cause that brought about St. Nicholas' martyrdom on August 2, 1917.

Habeeb, the eldest son of Fr. Nicholas, had only recently graduated from the American University in Beirut when his father was martyred. With his mother and siblings, he escaped from Turkey and moved to Port Said, Egypt. In 1922, Habeeb married and started his own family, which eventually included five children.

Habeeb worked as an accountant and translator for an oil company which transferred him to Beirut in 1924. Despite his success in the business world, Habeeb's strong desire to follow in his father's footsteps as a priest led him to resign and seek ordination from Patriarch Alexander III. At first, his wife objected,

seeing the poverty and difficulties that priests' families endured, but eventually (after a prophetic dream of the Archangel Gabriel) she understood and agreed to his decision. He was ordained in 1932 and served at the cathedral in Damascus and in nearby smaller towns and villages.

Fr. Habeeb was noted especially for his care for the poor, often giving away money, food (that had been prepared for his own family), and in one instance, even a clerical garment (a jibee that had been a gift to him from his brother) which he gave to an even poorer priest.

Fr. Habeeb devoted much time to prayer and spiritual reading, and he often visited the Monastery of St. Thekla in Maaloula to spend time at the shrine of the saint. It was his desire to go to Mt. Hermon, in a remote rural area, where he could meditate and pray in peace and quiet, and this is where he was on July 16, 1948. He was attacked by a band of smugglers, who, seeing his clerical garb, mocked him for his Christian beliefs and his priesthood, and began beating him violently. Demanding that he renounce Christ, they stripped him of his clothes, beat him until his ribs were broken, castrated him, and tied him to a donkey and dragged him over rough terrain. Realizing that the priest would never deny his Savior, the torturers eventually threw him off a mountain cliff, and he now followed his father into martyrdom.

The hieromartyrs Fathers Nicholas and Habeeb Khasha now join that cloud of witnesses, all the saints of Antioch, whose newly-declared collective feast will be held each year on the Second Sunday after Pentecost, in addition to their own feast day on July 16. May their steadfast faith be an inspiration to us when we are mocked as Christians and may their heavenly intercessions assist us in this life. *Holy Nicholas and Habeeb, pray for us.*

Sources: *The Holy Hieromartyrs Nicholas and Habib Khasha; Orthochristian.com; araborthodoxy.blogspot.com.*

Parish News

The semi-annual Convention of our Antiochian Archdiocese of America will be held in Chicago July 21 through 27. This gathering of our church family with our bishops will worship together, hear reports from the departments and organizations of the Archdiocese, and hear from our Metropolitan Saba about his vision for the Archdiocese.



In August, we will celebrate two great feast days: the Transfiguration of Our Lord on August 6, with Mass at 7pm on the Eve, August 5 (Vespers at 6:30 and pot-luck supper following); and the Assumption (Dormition) of the Blessed Virgin Mary on August 15, with services on the Eve, August 14.

As you plan your family's vacation during these summer months, please speak with Fr.

Nicholas about finding the nearest Orthodox Church for worship.

Meditations on the Feast of the Transfiguration by Metropolitan SABA

The Feast of the Transfiguration is the feast of glory. It is the feast of glorification, of man's glorification by his return to how he was in paradise, before the fall of Adam and Eve. Indeed, it is the return to the perfection of glory that they would have attained had they not fallen.

If man was created just to live and act for some number of years on earth, what is the meaning of his life? He was created for divine glory. He was created to put on this glory.

Seeking for glory is the deepest and most deeply-rooted need in man's heart. It is the need that is constantly attached to his nature. Even children long for glory (even if unknowingly), as when they want to stand out. Adults find in it a motive for excelling and for great deeds or, if they are wicked, a motive for evil deeds.

Man cannot be satisfied with his situation and accept it. He constantly longs for something better. Man is better than his situation, even if he doesn't know this. Within him is a beauty that he covers with ugliness. But he senses this beauty and feels it in special cases. He strives for it by seeking glory, but while he is far from God, he continues to long for it, no matter what glories he achieves...

The glory that God has promised us is to *partake in the inheritance of the saints* [Col. 1:12]. It is the glory of holiness, which God has made possible for us through the cross. *I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us* [Rom. 8:18], and *our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory* [2 Cor. 4:17]. Therefore, Moses and Elijah spoke with Him *of His exit which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem* [Luke 9:31].

The word exit, in Greek *exodos*, indicates His death. Christ's death is intimately tied to the glory of the transfiguration because Christ is glorified in His death (cf. John 12:23). In the annual liturgical cycle, the Feast of the Transfiguration comes forty days before the Feast of the Cross, demonstrating the connection that exists between Christ's glory and the cross. The word *exodos* reveals that Christ's passion is the realization of the Passover of the Old Testament and the true exodus from slavery to salvation...

The account of the event of the transfiguration is preceded by the Lord's speaking to His disciples about His impending passion and of the value of self-denial for salvation. The account begins with the words, "After this discussion." This is an indication of the connection between the cross and the resurrection. The event of the transfiguration was an anticipatory revelation of Christ's glory in order to strengthen the disciples who saw Him and to make firm their faith in their teacher and His being the Messiah. The Gospel accounts that the Lord took His chief disciples (Peter, James and John), so that they might see this glory of His...

This glory is attained by one who has passed through the glory of the cross. That is, one who has been freed of the hateful ego and from self-love. Rejecting the cross causes a person to seek glory in self-affirmation, and thus his glory remains a worldly glory destined to fail. It does not give him the fullness and satisfaction that he seeks. This is evident in his dissatisfaction with any profit that he gains and in his constant striving for more of what he already has.

For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame - who set their mind on earthly things [Phil. 3:18-19]. *The things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal* [2 Cor. 4:18]. We do not limit the word "eternal" to the life after death, as it also includes earthly life.

Earthly glory is by definition passing, a mirage of the life to come and a cause of perdition. But the promised glory - the glory of man's transition in God's light - is the perfection of the image with the divine likeness, the lasting and original glory, the reason for the creation of man. If this glory does not exist, then what justifies human life? And what makes people bear their personal suffering and the suffering of others? And what gives them the capability to continue with the painstaking effort of life?



Life without this divine purpose becomes a heedless passing between strangers who uselessly go along their way, life from the womb to the grave. History becomes merely a succession of vain mirages. Life, the life of every person, is a short series of events with no justification for its past, no meaning to its present, and no possible end to its suffering. Mention of human suffering and the torments of humanity becomes something unbearable.

But we know that this is not the case. God manifests this in His having also become human. He will show His disciples the transformation that will happen to mankind in His kingdom of heaven, when they too will enter into glory...

The transfiguration, then, is a sample of man's natural state. It is the beauty of humanity restored, the beauty of original, undistorted creation. Many knew this beauty, this glory, and experienced it here on earth. The Prophet Moses knew it when his face shined and the Hebrews were not able to look upon him. Many enlightened persons knew it, those who in the purity of their life and their struggle were liberated from the corruption of their fallen nature and became temples for the indwelling of God, such as St. Seraphim of Sarov and many others.

May God make us worthy to seek this glory. Amen.

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

Oneness of Mind



Holy Scripture, and the liturgical services of the Church, are full of exhortations and allusions to the beauty and necessity of “oneness of mind” in Christian life. The Christian communities of the apostolic age were renowned, even among pagan neighbors, for having *one heart and one soul* [Acts 4:32]. The services of many of the martyrs and monastic saints extol the “oneness of mind” exemplified by their lives and deaths. We often hear quoted the verse of

Psalm 133, *Behold how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity.* Christian community life today, in its varied monastic or parish forms, is also meant to capture something of this fundamental dimension of Christian life and witness. This oneness of mind is not easily acquired. It is a charism of the Holy Spirit, a divine gift, which we cannot create, even by our most sincere efforts. But if we take time to reflect upon this great grace and gain some understanding of its nature, we will be helped in our efforts to acquire it.

Before His Passion and Resurrection, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ prayed for His disciples, and for all who would believe in His Name, entreated His Father to *sanctify them in the truth...that they may all be one...even as We are one, I in them and Thou in Me, that they may become perfectly one...that the love with which Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them* [John 17:17, 22, 23, 26]. Oneness of heart and soul in Christian

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community life depends on truth and on fidelity to the action of the word and work of God within the community. It also depends on love, the same divine love which binds together the Godhead Itself and sustains the created universe.

St. Nicholas Cabasilas, reflecting upon oneness of mind and the radiant life of the Christian communities described in the Book of Acts, observes that we cannot live in Christ if we “do not will what He wills. It is necessary to train one’s purpose, as far as it is humanly possible, to conform to Christ’s will and to prepare oneself to desire what He desires, and to enjoy it...The faithful in Palestine, since they desired the same things, “were,” as it says, “of one heart and soul”. This basis of commitment to “desiring what Christ desires” is as essential to grace-bearing community life as the commitment to truth and love. Community life, if it is to be salvific, must attain to this sanctifying unity.

If it sometimes seems a remote ideal, an unattainable vision, let us be encouraged by the words of St. John Chrysostom, who suffered much in an age of divisions and sorrows, yet spoke of the glory of Christian brotherhood in words of enduring power:

The Spirit was given to unite those who are separated by...ways of living and thinking...that everybody may become one even more effectively than a humanbody is one. For this spiritual relationship is of a higher order than the natural unity of one person...How is this unity to be kept? “In the bond of peace,” for it cannot exist where there is enmity and discord...And not for the sake of peace and mutual love alone, but that there may be one Spirit in all. This is a glorious bond: let it bind us all to one another and to God.

An article reprinted from Life Transfigured, the journal of the Orthodox Monastery of the Transfiguration in Ellwood City, Pennsylvania.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>July 2025</h1>						<i>Sunday services: Matins at 9am Sung Mass at 9:30</i>
		1 of the Octave of Ss. Peter & Paul	2 Visitation of the BVM; of the Octave of Ss. Peter & Paul; St. John Maximovitch, BC, 1966	3 of the Octave of Ss. Peter & Paul	4 of the Octave of Ss. Peter & Paul <i>(Independence Day)</i>	5 of the Octave of Ss. Peter & Paul <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
6 Fourth Sunday after Pentecost; Octave Day of Ss. Peter & Paul; St. Paladius, BC, c. 450 <i>G</i>	7 Ss. Cyril & Methodius (B), Cc, 869 & 885	8 St. Kilian of Wurzburg, BM, 689	9	10 Seven Holy Brothers, Mm, c. 165; St. Joseph of Damascus & comp., Mm, 1860	11 Solemnity of St. Benedict, Ab, c. 540; St. Pius I, PM, c. 154	12 Ss. Nabor & Felix, Mm, 303 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
13 Fifth Sunday after Pentecost; St. Anacletus, PM, 1st C <i>G</i>	14	15 St. Vladimir of Kiev, KC, 1015	16 Ss. Nicholas (1917) and Habib (1948) Khasha, Mm	17 St. Alexius, C, 5 th C	18 St. Sergius, Ab, 1392; Translation of the Relics of St. Raphael, 2024	19 St. Seraphim of Sarov, PrC, 1833 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
20 Sixth Sunday after Pentecost; St. Elias the Prophet, 9 th C, BC; St. Margaret of Antioch, VM, 304 <i>G</i>	21 St. Praxedes of Rome, V, 2 nd C	22 St. Mary Magdalene, Penitent, 1 st C	23 St. John Cassian, Ab, 433; St. Appollinaris, BM, 1 st C	24 St. Christina, VM, 3 rd C; Ss. Romanus & David, Mm, 1015	25 St. James the Greater, Apostle, 44; St. Christopher, C, 251	26 St. Anne, Mother of the BVM, 1 st C; St. Jacob Netsvetov, C, 1864 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
27 Seventh Sunday after Pentecost; St. Panteleimon, c. 305 <i>G</i>	28 Ss. Nazarius, Celsus, Mm, Ss. Victor, PM & Innocent PC, 5 th C	29 St. Martha of Bethany, V, 1 st C	30 Ss. Abdon & Sennen, Mm, c. 303	31 St. Germanus of Auxerre, BC, 448		

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>August 2025</h1>					1 St. Peter's Chains; Holy Maccabees, Mm, c. 160 B.C.	2 St. Stephen I, PM, 257 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
3 8 th Sunday after Pentecost; Finding of St. Stephen the Protomartyr, 415; St. Nicodemus, M, 1 st . C G	4	5 Our Lady of the Snows, 435; St. Oswald, KM, 642 <i>Mass at 7pm</i> W	6 Transfiguration of Our Lord; Ss. Sixtus II PM & Felicissimus, 285	7 Holy Name Day; St. Donatus of Arezzo, BM, 362	8 Ss. Cyriacus, Largus & Smaragdus, Mm, 304	9 St. Romanus, M, 258 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
10 9 th Sunday after Pentecost; St. Laurence, Deacon M, 258 G	11 Ss. Tibertius & Susanna, Mm, 3 rd C; St. Philomena, VM, c. 304	12	13 St. Maximus the Confessor, CD, 662; Ss. Hippolytus & comp., Mm, 235	14 Vigil of the Assumption; St. Eusebius, PrC, c. 300 <i>Mass at 7pm</i> W	15 Assumption of the BVM	16 St. Joachim, Father of the BVM, C, 1 st C; of the Oct. of the Assumption <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
17 10 th Sunday after Pentecost; of the Octave of the Assumption G	18 of the Oct. of the Assumption; St. Helena, Ma, 330	19 of the Octave of the Assumption	20 of the Octave of the Assumption	21 of the Octave of the Assumption	22 Oct. Day of the Assumption; Ss. Timothy, M, 311 & Hippolytus, BM, c. 225	23 Vigil of St. Bartholomew <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
24 St. Bartholomew the Apostle, 1 st C; comm. 11 th Sunday after Pentecost R	25	26 St. Zephyrinus, PM, 219	27 St. Caesarius of Arles, BC, 542	28 St. Augustine of Hippo, BCD, 430; St. Moses the Black, C, 405	29 Beheading of St. John the Baptist; St. Sabina, M, c. 125	30 Ss. Felix & Adauctus, Mm, 304; St. Fiace the Hermit, C, 670 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
31 12 th Sunday after Pentecost; St. Aidan of Lindisfarne, BC, 651 G						<i>Sunday services: Matins at 9am Sung Mass at 9:30</i>