

✠ 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. Gregory of Nyssa d. 394

If anyone withdraws his attention for a moment from his body and, emerging from the slavery of his passions and his carelessness, looks at his own soul with honest and sincere reason, he will see clearly how its nature reveals God's love for us and His intention in creating us. Reflecting in this manner, he will discover as essential and natural to man an impulse of his will towards the beautiful and the best, and connected with his nature a passionless and blessed love of that intelligible and blessed image of which man is the imitation.

However, a certain illusion related to the visible and the changing, caused by unreasonable emotion and bitter pleasure, always deceives and beguiles the soul which is careless and unguarded because of indifference, and drags it to terrible evil, originating in the pleasures of life, begetting

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death for those who love it. It is for this reason that the knowledge of the truth, the saving medicine for our souls, is, by the grace of our Savior, bestowed as a gift upon those who accept it eagerly. By this grace, the illusion beguiling man is dispelled, the dishonoring preoccupation with the flesh is extinguished, and, by the light of truth, the soul, which received the knowledge, makes its way to the divine and to its own salvation...

It is necessary for the soul and body which are going to move towards God, in accordance with the law of reverence, and render unto Him an unstained and pure service, to take as the guide of life the reverent faith which the voices of the saints proclaim in all their writings. Thus, the obedient and tractable soul gives itself over to a course of virtue, freeing itself, on the one hand, from the fetters of this life and separating itself from the slavery of mean and vain pursuits, and, on the other hand, involving itself wholly in the faith and in the life of God alone, because it sees clearly that where there is faith, reverence, and a blameless life, there is present the power of Christ...

Those who approach the Spirit with guileless intent, in perfect faith with no defilement in their conscience, the power of the Spirit cleanses according to the one who says: *For our gospel was not delivered to you in word only, but in power also; and in the Holy Spirit and in much fullness* [I Thess. 1:5] And again: *May your spirit and soul and body be preserved blamelessly in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ* [I Thess. 5:23], who has furnished a pledge of immortality through Baptism to those who are worthy, in order that the talent entrusted to each may, through their use of it, produce unseen wealth. For, brethren, holy Baptism is important, important for the things perceptible to the mind of those who receive it with fear; for the rich and ungrudging Spirit is always

flowing into those accepting grace, filled with which the holy apostles reaped a full harvest for the churches of Christ. For those who have taken possession of this gift sincerely, it endures as co-worker and companion in accordance with the measure of faith, the good dwelling in each one in proportion to the eagerness of the soul in its deeds of faith, in keeping with the word of the Lord...

So, govern yourselves thus as you are about to ascend to the highest power and glory through your cooperation with the Spirit; endure every suffering and trial with joy with a view toward appearing to be worthy of the dwelling of the Spirit within you and worthy of the inheritance of Christ... God never enjoins upon his servants what is impossible, but shows the love and goodness of his Godhead as something rich and poured out like water upon all, so that He furnishes to each person according to his will the ability to do something good...

He bids you to turn aside from mortals and from the praises of mortals and the reputation that wastes away and eludes us, and to seek that glory alone of whose beauty it is not possible to tell and whose end it is not possible to find, through which we also shall be able to glorify the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

Ss. Ptolemaeus and Lucius, Martyrs

Feast Day ~ October 19

There is a very cynical slogan, which probably originated with the 12th century work, *De nugis curialium*, by Walter Map and which was used again most famously by 20th century American writers Oscar Wilde and Clare Boothe Luce: “No good deed goes unpunished”. Despite the many instances of the truth of this slogan, it has not deterred Christians from doing good deeds. The



example of Ss. Ptolemaeus and Lucius and an unnamed companion of theirs demonstrates this.

Ptolemaeus was an enthusiastic Christian in the early second century. Even with the danger that open proselytizing afforded, he went about sharing the stories of Christ and salvation with those he met. One person most affected by Ptolemaeus’

preaching was a woman notorious for her immoral, adulterous life. She was so moved by what she heard that she became a Christian herself and left her abusive husband to live a better life. The enraged husband then reported Ptolemaeus to Urbicius, the Prefect of Rome, who immediately accused the saint of the crimes of adultery, sexual immorality, and robbery and sent him to prison to await execution.

Lucius, a Christian attending the trial, protested the sentence as unjust since no proof had been given for the crimes. The Prefect considered this a challenge to his honor and that of the Emperor (Marcus Aurelius), and the Senate, so he sentenced Lucius to be executed too.

A third man, whose name has not been recorded, also challenged the sentence and was given the same judgement. After a time spent in a filthy dungeon, all three men were beheaded in the year 165.

The martyrdom of these early Christians is known to us through the writings of St. Justin, the Philosopher, who related their story in his first *Apology*, which was an attempt to convince the

Emperor of the truth of the Christian faith. This is one of the oldest written reports of Christian martyrdom. St. Justin himself became a martyr that same year.

While good deeds may sometimes be punished in this sinful world, we Christians know that the rewards we will receive for whatever good we have done in this life will be given in the next, the life eternal we have been promised by our Savior, Jesus Christ. We glory in the faith of the martyrs and ask for their intercessions in the challenges to our faith. *Holy Ptolemaeus and Lucius, pray for us.*

Resources: *A Western Rite Orthodox Martyrology, e-Catholic 2000, Wikipedia* websites

Angels in Worship by Mother Alexandra

This excerpt from the book, The Holy Angels, describes references in worship to the angels in both the Eastern and Western traditions, which occur in the services of Western Rite Orthodoxy.

Let us come to think of the angels as long since buried in the tomes of old theological treatises, covered over and musty with the dust of the long ages of our indifference, let us turn to our daily, and especially our Sunday worship.

Attention to the angels is drawn in many a prayer. The Angelus bell...reminds us of the angelic salutation of the Mother of God. [Western Rite Orthodox] have dedicated the second of October to the commemoration of the guardian angels and keep a day of honor for the archangels Gabriel and Raphael. St. Michael had several feast days over the centuries, but his feast day is now on September 29th. He is, of course, the most popular of the archangels and his is the only feast the Reformers retained.

This lovely collect,...originally taken from the Sarum Missal...brings out the two most important attributes of the angels found in the Holy Scripture: their service of God in heaven, and their help and protection of men on earth:

O Everlasting God, who hast ordained and constituted the service of Angels and men in wonderful order; mercifully grant that, as thy holy Angels always do thee service in heaven, so, by thy appointment, they may succour and defend us on earth: through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Te Deum of Matins [exclaims] “To Thee all angels cry aloud, the heavens and all the powers therein. To thee cherubim and seraphim continually do cry: Holy, Holy, Holy”...

An angelic hymn common to several churches is The Great Doxology, or the *Gloria in excelsis*, the opening words of which are those sung by the angels when they announced the birth of Jesus Christ to the shepherds at Bethlehem. The whole of it is a kind of shout of praise to the glory of God. Its form is not exactly similar in the East and West, but it is used by both.

There is a prayer to St. Michael...which can well give strength and hearten any soul:

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle, be our protector against the malice and snares of the devil. We humbly beseech God to command him, and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly host, by the divine power thrust into hell Satan and the other evil spirits who roam about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

Perhaps one of the most beautiful prayers of the [Western] rite is that said immediately after the consecration, asking God to accept the Holy Sacrifice: “We humbly beseech Thee, Almighty God, to command that these things be borne by the hands of Thy



holy angel to thine Altar on High...”
When the priest at Mass blesses the incense he prays: “By the intercession of blessed Michael the Archangel, standing at the right hand of the altar of incense, and of all his elect, may the Lord vouchsafe to bless this incense, and receive it as an odor of sweetness...”

These many prayers have the function of sustaining and continually reminding us that the angels never have ceased to have a very real part, an active part, in our worship and also, by invoking them we keep intact our union with them. This has strong Scriptural basis, especially in St. Paul’s doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ, in which all members have their particular office [Rom.12:4-8] as *fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God* [Eph. 2:19]. The angels’ intermediary attribute of course goes back to the Old Testament.

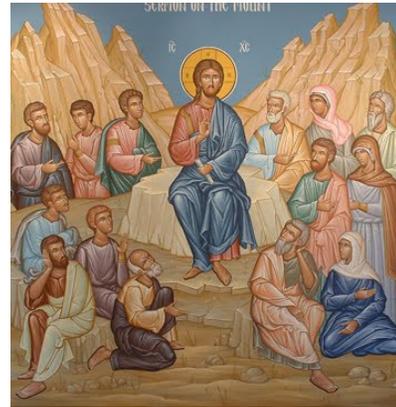
The Sanctus is sung in [Western and Eastern] Eucharistic rites...
For all of us this majestic hymn of praise and thanksgiving is the expression of our exultant gratitude that flows from the depth of heart and soul. It is founded upon the angels’ song heard by Isaiah [6:3] and also upon the hymn with which the Jews welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem [Mt. 21:9-15; Mt. 11:9; Jn. 12:13; and Ps. 117:26]

This, the greatest hymn of praise, is that of the angels; higher than this we cannot ascend, more we cannot express. If we but realized it, as our voices fill the church, we would be conscious that they are picked up by the myriads of angelic voices swelling the song to unearthly volume and carrying it to where the Holy Place of God is. Our voices are but a faint echo of that majestic hymn...

And, so, perhaps if we only knew how to listen we would hear the rustle of the celestial wings as they fold...Or, perchance, does the submerging in the Divine Light of the angelic pinions create instead a great and holy silence, an infinite peace...?

Blessed are the Pure in Heart

by Bishop Dimitri



Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. [Matt. 5:7]. Not only must one make every effort to purify his heart, but he must seek God’s help in order to acquire this essential characteristic of the new life in Christ. David the Psalmist says: *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.* [Ps. 51:10]. St. Augustine advises us: “It may be that you find it hard

to purify your heart. Call upon Him and He will not disdain to make there a clean abode for himself, and come to dwell with you.”

Cleanness of heart means simply holiness, and we cannot forget that the aim of the life in Christ is to be holy, or “perfect,” as the Lord Himself commands us [Mt. 5:48]. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Apostle is really saying that purity of heart and holiness are the same, in view of his admonition that without holiness one cannot “see God” [Heb. 12:14].

One of the first fruits of holiness is the desire for peace and the effort to make peace...In order to accomplish this, however, it

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is necessary to have peace within oneself, and the way to achieve this is to accept without question the will of God.

St. Leo the Great gives us more insight into the words of the Lord concerning peacemakers:

This blessedness is not promised to every kind of agreement, nor every sort of concord; but to that of which the apostle says: *let us have peace with God* [Rom 5:1; 2 Cor. 13:11]; and that of which the Prophet David says: *Much peace have they that love they law; and to them there is no stumbling-block* [Ps. 118:165]. The closest bond of friendship, the closest affinity of mind and heart, cannot truly claim this peace; if these ties are not in conformity with the will of God. Excluded from the dignity of this peace are they who are linked one with the other by shameless desires, those joined together for the purposes of crime and evil doing. There is no concord between the love of this world and the love of God; and he shall not belong to the children of God who will not separate himself from the children of this world. But they who at all times have God in mind [Tobias 4:6], careful to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace [Eph. 4:3], are never in conflict with the eternal law, saying in the prayer of faith, *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*. These are the peacemakers, these indeed are of one mind, and dwell in holy harmony, and shall be called by the eternal name of “sons of God” and joint heirs with Christ [Rom 8:17]: for this shall be the reward of the love of God and the love of our neighbor, that we shall suffer no more adversity, and go no more in fear of scandals, but with all struggle of temptation at an end, we shall rest in the most serene peace of God.

An excerpt from The Kingdom of God by Bishop Dimitri Royster, Bishop of the OCA Diocese of Dallas and the South.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>October 2025</h1>						<i>Sunday services: Matins at 9am Sung Mass at 9:30</i>
			1 St. Remigius of Rheims, BC, c. 530; St. Bavo, C, 659	2 Holy Guardian Angels	3	4 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
5 17 th Sunday after Pentecost; St. Placid & comp., Mm, 6 th C <i>G</i>	6 St. Faith of Agen, VM, c. 303	7 St. Mark, PC, 336; Ss. Sergius & Bacchus, Mm, 303	8	9 Ss. Denys, BM, Rusticus, & Eleutherius, Mm, 3 rd C	10 St. Paulinus of York, BC, 644	11 St. Kenneth, Ab, 599 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
12 18 th Sunday after Pentecost; St. Wilfred of York, BC, 709; St. Edwin, KM, 633 <i>G</i>	13 St. Edward the Confessor, KC, 1066; St. Jacob of Hamatoura, Martyr, 1450	14 St. Callistus, PM, c. 222	15 Our Lady of Walsingham	16 St. Gall, Ab., c. 646	17	18 St. Luke the Evangelist, 1 st C <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
19 19 th Sunday after Pentecost; St. Frideswide of Oxford, V, 735; St. Laura of Cordoba, VM, 864 <i>G</i>	20 St. Andrew of Crete, BC, 740; St. Artemius of Antioch, M, 362	21 St. Hilarion of Gaza, Ab., c. 371; Ss. Ursula & comp., Mm, 453	22	23	24 St. Raphael the Archangel	25 Ss. Crysanthus & Daria, Mm, 283 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
26 Christ the King; comm. 20 th Sunday after Pentecost; St. Evaristus, PM, c. 197 <i>W</i>	27 St. Frumentius of Ethiopia, BC, 4 th C	28 Ss. Simon & Jude, Apostles, 1 st C	29	30	31 Vigil of All Saints	