

✠ 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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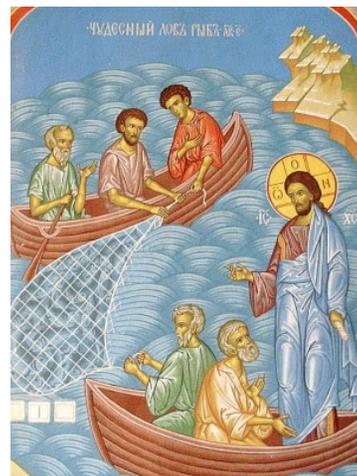
From a Homily of St. Basil the Great d. 379

Since Our Lord Jesus Christ says that *the workman*, not simply anyone or everyone, *is worthy of his food* [Matt. 10:10]; and since the Apostle commands us to labor, *working with our hands the thing which is good*, that we may have something to give to *him who is in need* [Eph. 4:28], it is very evident that we should all work earnestly and well. Nor is it fitting to presume that our desire of serving God gives us an excuse for being idle, or for avoiding labor, rather it is a greater reason for effort, for greater labors, and for patience in afflictions, so that we also may say: *In labor and painfulness, in much watchings, in hunger and thirst.* [2 Cor. 11:27].

For this way of living is profitable to us, not only for the mortification of our bodies, but also because of charity

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towards our neighbor; that through us God may provide what is needed for our weaker brethren; in accord with the example handed down to us in the Acts by the Apostle, where he says: *I have showed you all things, how that so laboring you ought to support the weak* [Acts 20:15]. And again: *That you may have something to give to him that suffereth need; through which we shall be judged worthy to hear the words: Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink.* [Matt. 25:34]

What need have we to dwell on the great evil of idleness, since the Apostle has laid it down clearly: *that if any man will not work, neither let him eat* [2 Thess. 3:10]? Just as food is needed for the daily nourishment of the body, so also does the body need work, according to its powers. Not without reason did Solomon write in praise of her, that *hath not eaten her bread idle* [Prov. 31:27]. And again, of himself the Apostle says: *Neither did we eat any man's bread for nothing; but in labor and toil we worked night and day* [2 Thess. 3:8]; though as a preacher of the Gospel he had the right to live by the Gospel. And the Lord has also linked idleness with wickedness, saying: *Wicked and slothful servant* [Matt. 25:26]. And the wise Solomon not only praises the laborer in the words already cited, but also rebukes the sluggard by a comparison with the tiniest creatures saying: *Go to the ant, O sluggard; and consider her ways.* [Prov. 6:6]

We have reason therefore to be fearful, lest in the day of judgement He Who gave us the power to work shall also require of us works worthy of the power He has given us. For He

says: *Unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required* [Luke 12:48]. And since there are those who use prayer and the recitation of the psalms as a means to escape work, we must know that in certain things each work has its due time; *All things have their season*, as Ecclesiastes tells us [3:4]. But for prayer and psalmody, as for many other things, there is no time that is not fitting; so that while our hands are engaged in their various tasks, with our tongue (if this be possible and edifying, and, if not, then with our hearts), let us give praise to God, *in psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles*, as it is written [Col. 3:16]. And so let us perfect our work with prayer, giving thanks to Him Who has given our hands the power to work, and our minds the power to gather knowledge; and Who has given us the material of our work, that in the tools we use, and that on which we use our skill, praying that the work of our hands may be directed to the end of pleasing God.

St. Eulogius of Alexandria, Confessor *Feast Day ~ September 13*

When the first age of martyrs ended for Christians with the Edict of Milan of Emperors (St.) Constantine and Licinius, the Church finally enjoyed a time of peace and freedom. But turmoil among Christians did not end in some places, and persisted even for several more centuries. In Egypt, Alexandria continued to produce priests and bishops who, through speculation and creative thought carried on some of the issues that had already been resolved by the first Ecumenical Councils. Patriarch Eulogius, who served the Church of Alexandria for nearly 30 years, spent all of those years battling with heresies.

Eulogius was born in Antioch and entered monastic life as a young man, eventually becoming the igumen (abbot) of the



Monastery of the Mother of God in that city, and around the year 579 Eulogius was elected Patriarch of Alexandria.

Alexandria was still rife with the followers of the heretical views of Nestorius (who had been Patriarch of Constantinople from 428-31) - that Christ was two persons with two distinct natures. Proponents of the opposite view, following Eutyches - that Christ's two natures fused completely to become one divine person (monophysitism) - were also still active in the city, as were

Novatians, who were rigid regarding the possibility of reconciliation with the Church for those who had apostitized. Even though all these issues had been discussed and declared heretical by this time, the adherents of the heresies were still present and disrupting the peace of the Church of Alexandria.

Being the "defender of Orthodoxy" could be a lonely position but Patriarch Eulogius found a friend in St. Gregory the Great who, through years of sending letters back and forth, shared encouragement and support. The two great men met when the deacon Gregory was serving as a papal representative at the court of Constantinople and the newly-elected Patriarch Eulogius had reason to travel to that city for a consultation with its patriarch. The friendship continued after St. Gregory became Pope in 590.

Although most of the writings of St. Eulogius have not survived, many of St. Gregory's letters to him are extant. In one letter of July in 597, he shared some good news about the missionaries he had sent to the English people:

Augustine, with my permission, has been made a bishop by the bishops of Germania, and, with their help, reached the English people at the ends of the earth, and now we have received reports of his well-being and of his work. He and his companions sparkle with so many miracles that in the signs that they have displayed they seem to copy the miracles of the apostles...

St. Eulogius passed from this life to the next in the year 606 (two years after his friend Gregory), having given himself to maintaining the Truth of the Christian faith in the Church of Alexandria. May he intercede for us as we try to do the same in our time and place. Holy Eulogius, pray for us.

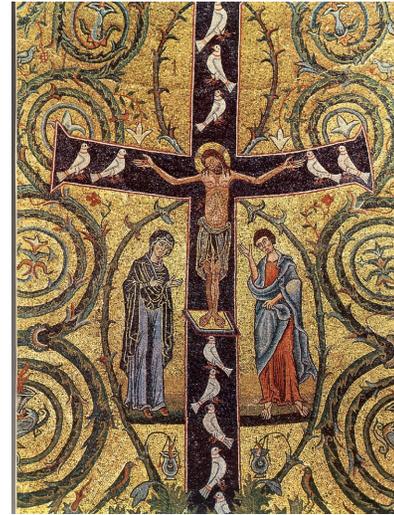
Resources: Butler, Alban - *Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs and Other Saints*; Markus, R. A. - *Gregory the Great and His World*; websites of the *Orthodox Church in America*, *Sanctoral*, and *Wikipedia*.

The Trees of Paradise

by Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos

There were many trees in Paradise, but two of them were different from the others. One was the tree of knowledge, and Adam received a command not to eat of it. *And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "From every tree in the garden you may freely eat; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat the fruit of it, you shall surely die.* [Gen. 2:16-17]

The other tree was the tree of life. And as the Old Testament says, after the man disobeyed and ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, God drove him out of Paradise...



So it seems that there were two trees in Paradise which had a special meaning and purpose, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the tree of life. From one he ate and died and from the other he was prevented from eating, lest he remain in the fallen and evil state forever. So here we see God's love for mankind. He expels man from Paradise so that he will not remain mortal forever, but may repent and at the suitable time, through the incarnation of the Son of God, may taste of the tree of life and overcome death and enter Paradise again. So then man's expulsion from Paradise was not a punishment by God, but an act of His love and philanthropy.

The Holy Fathers, interpreting Holy Scripture within the life of the Church and their personal experience, have handed down to us excellent analyses of these two trees. We should first mention St. Gregory the Theologian's interpretation of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In one of his homilies he says that this tree was neither planted in wickedness nor forbidden out of jealousy. This means that nothing created by God was evil, but everything was very good. Man was not forbidden to eat of this tree out of jealousy lest he attain deification. Moreover, this tree was the vision of God. *For the plant was vision of light.* Man was to eat at the appropriate time, because first he was to be trained spiritually, and this would constitute his deification. God forbade him to eat of it because he was still imperfect, he had not been suitably prepared, just as perfect and solid food does great harm to those who still need milk. The bad thing was that Adam partook of the tree of knowledge "at the wrong time, unsuitably". And since he missed the mark and lost divine grace, it was necessary that he did not then eat of the tree of life as well, lest he be permanently

confirmed in the fall and death. The taste of the tree of life was “great and splendid”, and this is why God commanded that it be guarded not by angels and archangels nor principalities, authorities, powers and dominions, but by the Cherubim, who belonged to the first rank of Angels.

St. John of Damascus, having in mind the interpretation by St. Gregory the Theologian, whom he regarded as his spiritual father, follows the same tradition. He writes that the tree of knowledge is a test, a trial and a school, to test man for obedience or disobedience. This tree was called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because it gave to anyone who ate of it the power to know its nature, a thing that is good for the perfect and bad for the imperfect and those who lack control over their sensation. The tree of life is so called because it has an energy which provides life either for those worthy of life or for those not enslaved to death.

This interpretation of St. John of Damascus shows that man had to be tested before eating of the tree of knowledge and then to eat of the tree of life and live eternally with God. Without practice and preparation it is not possible for anyone to attain deification and communion with God...

By His incarnation Christ Himself opened the gate of Paradise. He does not simply let man enter it, but the tree of life itself, which is Christ, goes and moves towards man. Now the womb of the Theotokos, where from the first moment the divine nature assumed human nature and deified it, is Paradise. And the Church which is the blessed Body of Christ is the tangible and intelligible Paradise. All who are living in the Church and are really and livingly members of the body of Christ can taste the tree of life, can overcome death and reach another dimension of existence. For apart from Christ the shadow and realm of death really holds sway.

With the union of divine and human nature in the Person of the Word, the journey towards deification becomes more steady.

Therefore now salvation is not a matter of obedience to a commandment of God, but it is man’s communion with the God-man Christ. Therefore in the Church, we must not just live sentimentally, nor simply aim to satisfy our individual and philanthropic feelings, but we must live ontologically, united with Christ. Our journey must be a journey of conquering death. And of course this will succeed only through the taste of the tree of life, who is the God-man Christ.

An excerpt from *The feasts of the Lord: An Introduction to the Twelve Feasts and Orthodox Christology*.

The Cross the Tree of Life

In Genesis, *In the beginning*, we are told that God planted a garden, a Paradise, in which He placed the man and the woman He had created. In Paradise were all manner of trees and plants, but two trees in particular are brought to our attention: the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and the Tree of Life.

In a beautiful and mystical interpretation of the Genesis story, St Ephrem the Syrian describes Paradise as a mountain-temple. The lower regions, where Adam and Eve began, correspond to the narthex and then the nave of a Church. At the boundary between the nave and the altar... St Ephrem sees the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This Tree, then, is a gate of entry into the Holy of Holies. When they were spiritually prepared, and not before, Adam and Eve would have been granted entrance into the sanctuary. Once there they would have been given to eat the sacred fruit of the Tree of Life, and would have become immortal.

Now, what is this tree and what is its fruit? We could spend a fair amount of time reading the mystical interpretations of Paradise found in the writings of the Fathers, and they are beautiful. But as we did not abide in Paradise but were banished

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through sin, we must turn our attention elsewhere to find the Tree of Life and its Fruit. Let us hear, then, St Ephrem:

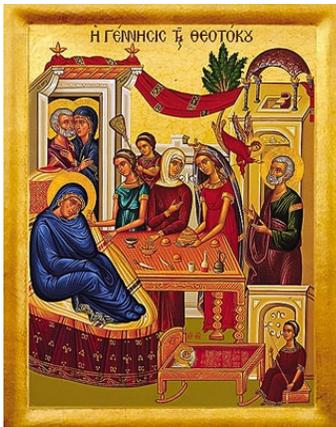
Greatly saddened was the Tree of Life when it beheld Adam stolen away from it; it sank down into the virgin ground and was hidden to burst forth and reappear on Golgotha...

Under the Old Covenant the Tree of Life continued to remain hidden from humanity, and it was only with the Crucifixion that it was finally made manifest.

The Cross *is* the Tree of Life. Let us be clear. The Cross is not a *symbol* of the Tree of Life, not a *figure* of the Tree of Life: it *is* the Tree of Life. And the fruit of Tree?

The Fruit of the Tree of Life that gives immortality to those who eat of it is the Body of Christ. What Adam was denied in Paradise because of sin is given to us in the Liturgy, and eating it we partake of Divine Life. And thus... we venerate the Holy Cross.

From the website of St. John of Chicago Orthodox Church (OCA), Rogers, Arkansas



Parish News

Three major holy days occur this month: the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (Sunday, September 14) will take precedence over the 14th Sunday after Pentecost; the Nativity of the Theotokos (September 8) and St. Michael the Archangel (September 29) will be observed with Vespers at 7pm.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>September 2025</h1>						<i>Sunday services: Matins at 9am Sung Mass at 9:30</i>
	1 St. Giles, Ab, 708; Twelve Holy Brothers, Mm, c. 303 <i>(Labor Day)</i>	2 St. Stephen of Hungary, KC, 1038	3 The Consecration of St. Gregory, 590	4 St. Gorazde of Prague, BM, 1942	5	6 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
7 13 th Sun. after Pentecost; St. Cloud, C, 560; St. Sergius I, PC, 701 <i>G</i>	8 Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary <i>Vespers at 7pm W</i>	9 St. Gorgonius, M, 304	10	11 Ss. Protus & Hyacinth, Mm, c. 257; St. Paph- nutius, BC, 4 th C	12	13 St. Eulogius, BC, 606 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
14 Exaltation of the Holy Cross; comm. 14 th Sunday after Pentecost <i>R</i>	15 St. Nicomedes, M, 4 th C	16 Ss. Cornelius, PM, 254 & Cyprian, BM 258; St. Ninian, BC, 5 th C	17 Ember Wed- nesday; St. Lambert, BM, 705	18	19 Ember Friday; St. Theodore of Canterbury, BC, 690; Ss. Januarius & comp., Mm, c. 305	20 Ember Saturday; Ss. Eustace & comp., Mm, c. 118 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
21 St. Matthew, Evangelist & Apostle, 1 st C; comm. 15 th Sunday after Pentecost <i>R</i>	22 St. Maurice & comp., Mm, 3 rd C	23 St. Thecla of Iconium, VM, 1 st C; St. Linus, PM, c. 80	24 Ss. Juvenaly, PrM, 1796 & Peter the Aleut, M, 1815	25	26 Ss. Cyprian, BM & Justina, VM, c. 303	27 Ss. Cosmas & Damian, Mm, c. 303 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
28 16 th Sunday after Pente- cost; St. Wenceslas, M, 938; St. Lioba of Mainz, V, 781 <i>G</i>	29 Dedication of St. Michael the Archangel	30 St. Jerome PrCD, 420; St. Gregory the Illumi- nator, BC, c. 323				