

✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

December, 2025 - Volume XXX, Issue 11

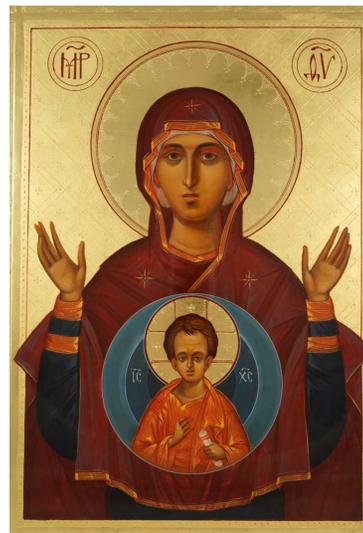
St. Gregory the Great Orthodox Church
A Western Rite Congregation of the Antiochian Archdiocese
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From a homily of St. Augustine of Hippo d. c. 430

Wake up, O man - it was for you that God was made man! Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light. For you, I say, was God made man. Eternal death would have awaited you had he not been born in time. Never would you be freed from your sinful flesh, had he not taken to himself the likeness of sinful flesh. Everlasting would be your misery, had he not performed this act of mercy. You would not have come to life again, had he not come to die your death. You would have broken down, had he not come to help you. You would have perished, had he not come.

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Let us joyfully celebrate the coming of our salvation and redemption. Let us celebrate the hallowed day on which the great eternal day came from the great eternal day into this, our so short and temporal day. He has become our justice, and our sanctification, and our redemption. And so, as scripture says: *Let him who glories, glory in the Lord.*

Truth, then, is sprung out of the earth: Christ who said, *I am the truth*, is born of a virgin. And justice looked down from heaven: man, believing in him who has been born, has been justified not by himself, but by God.

Truth is sprung out of the earth, for the Word was made flesh. And justice looked down from heaven, for every best gift, and ever perfect gift, is from above.

Truth is sprung out of the earth - flesh born of Mary. And justice looked down from heaven, for a man cannot receive anything, unless it be given him from heaven.

Being justified by faith, let us have peace with God, for justice and peace have kissed each other, through our Lord Jesus Christ, for Truth is sprung out of the earth. Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we glory in our hope of sharing the glory of God. Saint Paul does not say, *our glory*, but *the glory of God*; because justice does not proceed from us, but has looked down from heaven. Let him who glories then, glory, not in himself, but in the Lord. Because of this, when the Lord was born of the Virgin, the angels announced, *Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will.*

Whence is peace on earth, if not from the fact that Truth is sprung out of the earth, that is, Christ is born of flesh? And he is our peace, who has made both one, that we might be men of good will, bound together by the sweet bonds of unity.

St. Trason of Rome, Martyr

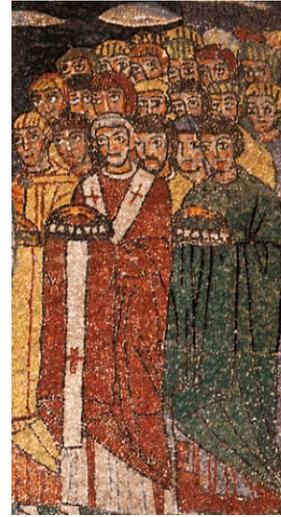
Feast Day ~ December 11

For many of the innumerable saints of the Church, very little historical information exists. Sometimes the saint has been revered in a small part of the world unknown to others in distant lands. Sometimes, the sanctity of the person was shown in very private, behind-the-scenes ways, known primarily to those the saint ministered to and to God.

We know of St. Trason through a mention in the Roman Martyrology for December 11: *At Rome, the passion of St. Trason, who fed from his resources the Christians who worked in the baths, and were worn out by other public works and kept in prison; wherefore by command of Maximian he was arrested and crowned with martyrdom, together with two others, Pontian and Fuscian, under the same emperor.*

Trason's acts of mercy were honored quietly by the Christians of this day who were under persecution for their faith, and the memory of these acts remained alive through the centuries afterward.

The great baths of Diocletian were commissioned by the Emperor Maximian in honor of his co-emperor. They were the largest baths ever built and were considered to be among the wonders of the city of Rome. The baths were massive and required great numbers of men to complete the construction in just eight years. Among those who were forced to participate in this



endeavor were Christians - possibly as many as 40,000 - who had been arrested for refusing to worship Rome's official "gods". They had been imprisoned and then, as slaves, had been compelled to help build the baths. After the completion of the construction, these slaves continued to work in the baths - as personal slaves attending the wealthy Roman patrons, as workers who fed the fires that kept the water for the sauna hot, and other grueling tasks. Many of these slaves died due to the heavy labor and lack of food and rest.

Trason could not free these slaves. He could not miraculously change the social conditions which had allowed slavery to exist. But, as a Christian himself, he could perform small acts of mercy and kindness. He bought food for the workmen and surreptitiously brought it to them. He wiped away the sweat from their faces caused by the hard labor (just as those personal slaves washed their masters' bodies in the baths).

Diocletian's baths were finally abandoned after the siege of Rome by the Ostrogoths in 537. But the memory of what had happened here remained alive and, in 1560, the pope of Rome, Pius IV, had a church built among the ruins in honor of the Christian slaves who were martyred by their labor for the vanity of a heathen emperor. The Church of *Santa Maria degli Angeli e dei Martiri* still stands as a monument to these early Christians.

We, too, live in a sometimes godless or heathen world, where the pleasures of the body are often more important than respecting the faith of devout Christians. When there is nothing else we can do about this, we can look to St. Trason as an example of one who offered mercy and kindness to those in need. *Holy Trason, pray for us.*

Parish News

Collection of canned and packaged food for the Food for Hungry People program of the Archdiocese will be through Advent and Christmas and end at the beginning of Epiphany. Your generosity will benefit the poor through the Manna Food Bank.

The Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary will be celebrated on Monday, December 8, with Vespers at 6:30PM.

We remember with gratitude the life of the handmaid of God, Lauren Marie Housley, who fell asleep in the Lord on November 9. We will especially miss her voice in the choir but know that she is in the hands of God. May she rest in peace and may light perpetual shine upon her. We will celebrate the 30th day of her repose with a memorial Requiem Mass on Wednesday, December 10, at 7pm (Vespers at 6:40pm).

On the Heart Prepared for God

by St. Nikolai of Ochrid

O God, my heart is ready, my heart is ready. [Psalm 57:8] Blessed is he, my brethren, who can say this to his Lord. Blessed is he whose heart is utterly ready to follow the will of God. The preparedness of a man's heart lies in this: his following of the will of God with joy and his being in no way distracted by his own thoughts and desires. The repentant King David first followed his own sinful thoughts and desires, and was like a ship tossed on a stormy sea. When, however, he realized that the storm would drown him, he turned to God with great repentance and tears, and put the ship of his life entirely into God's hands. *My heart is ready, my heart is ready*, he cries with great peace of soul, for he knows that he has put his ship into the hands of the greatest Steersman. The storm may still rage, the wind and waves may still assail him,

but he does not fear, for he is sure that nothing can overturn his ship and that it will sail peacefully to a calm haven.

A heart that is ready means a heart cleansed from pride and humbled before the majestic power and wisdom of God. A heart that is ready means a heart that is emptied of all worldly desires and fancies, and filled only with aspirations towards God and love for God. A heart that is ready means a heart healed of all restlessness, cares and fears, and strengthened and encouraged by the presence of God's grace.

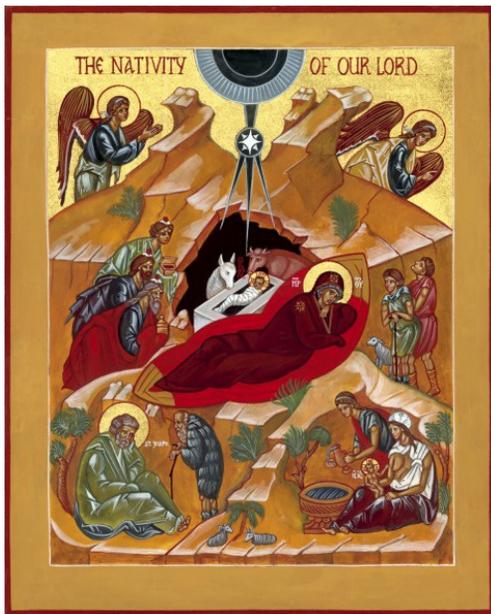
I will sing and give praise in my glory. Thus the Psalmist continues. This shows how truly his heart is ready. He is not proud of his kingly glory, but his whole joy is to magnify and glorify God. His personal glory is given to him solely as a reason for glorifying his glorious God. O, my brethren, let us strive that our hearts may soon be ready for God - ready to hear the word of God, ready to follow the will of God, ready to glorify the living God.

O Lord God, our immortal Creator, help us to prepare our hearts, that we may be vessels of Thy life-giving grace. To Thee be glory and praise for ever. Amen.

The Mystery of the Incarnation

by Very Reverend Georges Florovsky

God creates the world and reveals himself in order to become a man in this world. Man is created in order that God may become man and it is by this union that man is deified. Or as St. Irenaeus of Lyons expressed it: "The Son of God became the Son of man in order that man would become the Son of God." This purpose was realized in the mystery of Christ's birth, when the foundation of the Church was already prefigured.



But the road from Bethlehem to Zion is long, and is leading us through Gethsemane and Golgotha. Already in Bethlehem the newborn Godchild is presented with funeral offerings by the Wise Men from the East. “Today God leads the Wise Men to worship through the star, prefiguring His three-day burial in gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” The very doors of the Bethlehem cavern are nearly stained with the

innocent blood of the children who were killed for Christ’s sake. The way of the Cross is mysteriously foreshown. The Lord is born for this very hour of the Cross, *For this cause came I unto this hour.* [John 12:27] The Lord is born for death and crucifixion: “He had a body that He might take death upon Himself.” So wrote St. Athanasius the Great. Through the voluntary passion and death is the Christmas joy transfigured into Resurrection joy. This is the second and higher victory of life. In the very birth of Christ the order of nature is potentially overcome. It is not so much that the natural birth is sanctified as that the higher is prefigured and revealed.

In the birth of Christ is revealed not only the glory of Godmanhood, but also the mystery of Godmotherhood. The Church testifies to the mystery of the Incarnation in very precise and vigorous terms, calling us to a responsible firmness and exactness in our confession of faith. Through the use of the important name “Theotokos” the Church confesses the glory of the divine Incarnation, the glory of the Only Begotten who was then

born of the Virgin, according to His humanity. St. John of Damascus said: “This name includes the whole mystery of salvation.” For this glorious name testifies to the oneness of the divine human personality....If the one who gave birth is the Mother of God, then the One who is born of her is a true God and a true man. For how could God, having existed before all ages, be born of a woman without becoming man!”

The incomprehensible mystery of Godmotherhood is not exhausted by birth only, even as natural motherhood is not exhausted by the fact of physical birth. The fulfillment of motherhood lies in sacrificial love. By this love for the one born the passive self-centeredness of the heart is broken. In this love is shown the natural image of love for another person, for the neighbor. *As thou lovest thyself.* In its depth and its fulfillment motherhood has not only a physical, but also a spiritual meaning. These features of the true natural motherhood are transcended in the ineffable virginal Godmotherhood. The love of the Virgin for the one who was born of her can be neither transient nor limited.

In the pure love of the Mother of God there is nothing arbitrary, nothing casual, there is no partiality. This love includes the Cross; it is crucified with the redeeming love of the Son. Actually one cannot truly love Christ if one does not follow Him in His love of the Cross; if one does not love the whole human race with Christ and in Christ. The love of the Mother of God receives its fulfillment in that it becomes our protection and intercession for us. The word mother always indicates love, especially the name of the Mother of Light. In the mystery of Incarnation the Divine Love is disclosed as descending and bringing peace and goodwill to the world.

An excerpt from *The Year of Our Lord*, by Fr. Georges Florovsky (1893-1979), published by St. Vladimir’s Seminary

Advent & Christmas services

The Novena for the Nativity of our Lord will begin on December 16 and continue through December 23, with Vespers at 6PM each evening. The great “O” Antiphons are sung at these services before and after the Magnificat.

On Saturday, December 20, our annual para-liturgical service of Advent Lessons and Carols will be celebrated at 6pm. This quiet service recalls the prophecies of the coming of the Messiah through Scripture readings and hymns. You are encouraged to invite your non-Orthodox friends and family members to this service. A light reception will follow.

On Christmas Eve, December 24, we will begin our Nativity celebration with carols and instrumental and choral offerings beginning at 9:30PM. The first Mass of Christmas will be celebrated at 10PM with a great Nativity feast following. On Christmas Day, December 25, Matins will be at 9:30 and Mass at 10AM.

On the Sunday within the twelve-day Nativity celebration, the Feast of the Holy Innocents will be celebrated on December 28.



St. Gregory Orthodox Church
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Address Correction Requested

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>December 2025</h1>						<i>Sunday services: Matins at 9am Sung Mass at 9:30</i>
	1 St. Andrew the Apostle, 1st C (tr.); St. Eligius of Tournai, BC, 660	2 St. Peter Chrysologus, BCD, c. 450; St. Bibiana of Rome, VM, 363	3	4 St. Barbara, VM, c. 306	5 St. Sabbas of Palestine, Ab, 532	6 St. Nicholas of Myra, BC, c. 342 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
7 Second Sunday in Advent; St. Ambrose of Milan, BCD, 397 <i>V</i>	8 Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary <i>Vespers at 6:30pm W</i>	9	10 St. Melchisedes, PM, 314 <i>Requiem Mass at 7pm</i>	11 St. Damasus, PC, 384	12 St. Spiridon, BC, 348	13 St. Lucy, VM, 304; St. Herman of Alaska, C, 1837 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
14 Third Sunday in Advent <i>V</i>	15 St. Maurus, Ab, 6 th C	16 St. Eusebius of Vercelli, BM, 371 <i>Vespers at 6pm O Sapientia</i>	17 Ember Wednesday; St. Lazarus of Bethany, BC, 1 st C <i>Vespers at 6pm O Adonny</i>	18 <i>Vespers at 6pm O Radix Jesse</i>	19 Ember Friday <i>Vespers at 6pm O Clavis David</i>	20 Ember Saturday <i>Lessons & Carols 6pm O Oriens</i>
21 Fourth Sunday in Advent ; St. Thomas, Apostle, 1 st C <i>Vespers at 6pm O Rex gentium</i> <i>V</i>	22 <i>Vespers at 6pm O Emmanuel</i>	23 <i>Vespers at 6pm O Virgo virginum</i>	24 Vigil of the Nativity <i>Vespers at 6pm Mass at 10pm</i> <i>W</i>	25 The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ; St. Anastasia, VM., c. 304 <i>Mass at 10am</i> <i>W</i>	26 St. Stephen, Proto-martyr, 1 st C; of the Octave of the Nativity	27 St. John, Evangelist & Apostle, 1st C; of the Octave of the Nativity <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
28 Holy Innocents, Mm, 1 st C; comm. The Sunday within the Octave of the Nativity <i>W</i>	29 of the Octave of the Nativity	30 of the Octave of the Nativity	31 of the Octave of the Nativity; St. Sylvester, PC, 335			