

✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

January, 2026 - Volume XXXI, Issue 1

St. Gregory the Great Orthodox Church
A Western Rite Congregation of the Antiochian Archdiocese
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From a homily of St. Maximus of Turin d. c. 465

Deary beloved, we are instructed by the traditions of the Fathers, that on this solemnity we are to celebrate several joyful events. They tell us that on this feast we are to commemorate: first, the coming of the star-led Gentiles to worship the Lord Christ; secondly, our Lord's miracle of turning water into wine at the wedding-feast to which he had been bidden; and thirdly, his Baptism from John, whereby he hallowed the waters of the Jordan, and cleansed him that baptized him.

Which of these events was greatest, only he knoweth by whose will they came to pass; for us it is needful only to believe, and doubt not, that whatever was wrought was

Inside:

<i>St. Anastasius the Persian...</i>	2
<i>The Epiphany of Our Lord</i>	4
<i>Following the Star</i>	5
<i>The Arrival of the Wisemen.</i>	6
<i>The Sanctification of Water</i>	8
<i>Parish News</i>	9
<i>Calendar</i>	11



wrought for us. For to the Gentiles is given hope of worshipping that Very God of Very God, to adore whom the Chaldeans were led by the ray of a glorious star. So also, he, who by his will changed

water into wine, hath given us to drink of the Cup of his Blood of the New Testament; and the Lamb of God baptized in the Jordan hath hallowed for us that Fountain wherein we are born again.

Therefore, my brethren, as we have lately kept with gladness the Nativity of our Savior, so now it behovest us with all devotion to celebrate this, the birthday of his wonder-working. And verily, these three anniversaries are rightly on one day set forth unto us, who do acknowledge the mystery of the Trinity under the name of one God. For by these miracles the Lord Christ our Redeemer willed to manifest to men some of the power of that Godhead, which in him lay hidden under the Manhood.

St Anastasius the Persian Feast Day ~ January 22

The Cross is the most powerful symbol for Christians, and it has the power to convert those who are seeking Truth. The original Cross - the True Cross that had been recovered by St. Helena and kept in Jerusalem for veneration - was the vehicle for the transformation of one young Persian soldier in the 7th century.

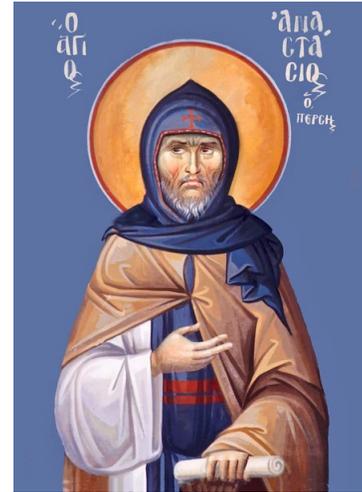
Magundat served in the Sasanian army under the Persian King Khosrow II. His father, Bavi, was a *magus*, a magician or

sorcerer, and Magundat was well versed in the practices of his father's "profession". Magundat was in the army when Persia captured Jerusalem in 614 and carried off the most holy relic in that city, the precious Cross of our Lord. The Cross was taken to the capital city, Ctisiphon and soon miracles began to occur. Magundat was very impressed by this and curious about the power of this relic. Perhaps the magicians' search for the supernatural made him open to learning more about what the Cross meant to Christians.

The young man soon left the army and moved to the city of Hierapolis, where he found lodging with a silversmith who was a devout Christian. Going frequently with his landlord to church, he was moved by the icons and frescoes and especially by the courage and steadfastness of those Christians who were being martyred.

Having made the decision to become a Christian himself, Magundat traveled back to Jerusalem where he received instruction and baptism from Modestus, the priest who was in charge of the Jerusalem church after the Patriarch, Zacharias, had been taken into exile at the same time the Holy Cross was stolen. He took the baptismal name Anastasius to indicate his resurrection from his old life.

Simply being a Christian was not enough for this convert, so in the year 621, Anastasius became a monk. Seven years later he felt compelled (some accounts say after an intense dream) to confront the false religion of the Zoroastrians. He went to Ceesarea where he ridiculed the priests and was consequently arrested and tortured. As with so many others, Anastasius was offered a full pardon, especially in light of his earlier service in the army, if he would only renounce Christ.



Of course the monk Anastasius would not deny his savior, so he was strangled to death and then beheaded, with seventy others, on January 22, in the year 628. The bodies of the martyrs were thrown to the dogs, but St. Anastasius' relics were discovered by other Christians to be untouched. They were taken first to a nearby monastery, then to Palestine, then to Constantinople, and finally to Rome.

May we, like St. Anastasius, look to the life-giving Cross of our Lord to sustain us in whatever trials may confront us, even to martyrdom for Christ. *Holy Anastasius, pray for us.*

Resources: *Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs and Other Saints* by Alban Butler; websites of The Orthodox Church in America, Regnum Christi, and Wikipedia.

The Epiphany of Our Lord

In the season of Epiphany, we hear of Christ's manifestation to the Gentiles and of the beginning of his earthly ministry. The antiphon sung before and after the Benedictus at the morning Blessing of Water spells out the three events we witness in the Gospel readings at this time:

Today the Church is joined to her heavenly Bridegroom; because in the Jordan Christ hath washed away her offences: the Wise Men with their offerings hasten to the royal marriage, and the guests are regaled with water made wine. Alleluia.

The antiphon sung at an evening Blessing of water does the same:

Now do we celebrate a festival in honor of three days when Christ was made manifest: the day where-on the star led the Wise Men to the manger, the day whereon water was turned to wine at the wedding feast; the day whereon Christ was pleased to be baptized of John in Jordan that he might save us.

The following articles help us to understand more clearly how God, who had been preparing the world for the coming of the Savior, now begins to reveal him to the world.

Following the Star

In a Nativity homily, *A narrative of the Adoration*, St. Dimetri of Rostov tells us that the holy fathers of the church suggest these men came from three different countries in the east, - likely Persia, Arabia, and Ethiopia. These lands border one another and were plentiful in gold, frankincense, spices, and perfumes. Scholars living in these areas knew the prophecy of Balaam that a star would appear. This prophecy was passed down through many generations.

According to more details offered by St. Dimetri these men are called Magi because people of the east called their philosophers and astronomers by this name. They were also referred to as kings, because they were princes charged with the administration of a city. Although these three men set out from different locations, they were guided by a single star. Providence caused them to meet one another along the way, and to continue their journey together, following the celestial light foretold by Balaam, who said, “A star shall rise out of Jacob, a man shall spring out of Israel.” [Num.24:17]



What sort of star was this? St. John Chrysostom and Blessed Theophyact say it was not an ordinary star, but “a divine and angelic power that appeared in the form of a star”. St. Dimetri explains that other stars had their origin in the creation of the universe, but this star was revealed at the end of the ages, when the Word of God became incarnate. Stars are fixed in the heavens, but

this star was visible lower in the skies, and moved from the east southward to Jerusalem, rather than from east to west. This star shone not only at night, but shone like the sun even in the day, surpassing every other star in size and brilliance. Blessed Theophylact tells us, “It moved when the Magi moved, and stood still as they rested.”

We find a very interesting and touching answer in the homily of St. Demetri to the question of when the star appeared. He calls to mind what St. John Chrysostom and Blessed Theophylact suggest: “The star was revealed to the Magi before the Lord was born. Since their journey would take a long time, it became visible well before His birth, enabling them to worship Him while He was still in swaddling clothes”. St. Demetri concludes, “On the basis of what Chrysostom and Theophylact teach, understand that it was on the very day and at the exact moment when the archangel brought the glad tiding of the Annunciation, the Holy Spirit descended and the Word became flesh in the immaculate womb of the Virgin—nine months before the Nativity—that the star became visible in the east”. St. Demetri goes on to explain that the wise men saw the star and were amazed and were soon convinced that it radiated divine power according to Balaam’s prophecy that the Lord of creation was soon to be born in Israel.

Even up to our very day, seekers follow some light, some reading, some invitation, some reflection of this star to find their way to Christ. Singing hymns about wise men following a star over two thousand years ago teaches us to follow Christ - the True Light.

An excerpt from an article in *Life Transfigured*, the Journal of the Orthodox Monastery of the Transfiguration in Ellwood City, Pennsylvania.

The Arrival of the Wisemen

And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasure, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense and myrrh. [Matt. 2:11]

Matthew, writing for Jewish Christians, cites Gentiles as the first worshipers of Jesus...The Magi, first-fruits of the Gentiles, come to Christ bearing gifts: gold for a king, frankincense for God, and myrrh, for a man who is to suffer and die. The Wisemen have received some knowledge about the newborn King through their observation of the star, but when they see Him, they recognize Him as the Sun of Righteousness [Mal. 4:2], the Orient (the rising sun), from on high [Is. 59:19], the Bright and Morning star [Rev. 22:16].

Scripture and notes from the *Orthodox Study Bible*.

The Wedding in Cana

The wedding in Cana is the setting for the first of seven signs performed by Jesus in the Gospel of John... The setting is significant. In the Old Testament, marriage feasts symbolize the union of God with his bride, Israel. Jesus begins His ministry at a wedding in Galilee, which was largely Gentile territory: thus this sign becomes a symbol of the joy of the Kingdom being spread

beyond Judea to all the world. It is the third day from the call of the first disciples. The Mother of Jesus was there... By His presence at this wedding, Jesus declares marriage to be holy and honorable... Here is an example of Mary's gift of intercession. The Orthodox Church believes Mary continually speaks to her Son on our behalf... The Church Fathers saw in the transformation of water into wine an anticipation of the transformation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ at the Eucharist.

From the notes in the *Orthodox Study Bible*.

The Sanctification of Water

The Lord created water as an element of life, but human sin made it a source of death. When the Lord created water, the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters [Gen. 1:2], filling water with his life-creating energy. But when human sin was multiplied on the earth, the water of life became the water of death and humanity perished in the waters of the flood. The biblical flood in Christian tradition is a symbol of renewal - the death of the old man and the birth of the new man.

Before the coming of Christ to earth, Saint John the Forerunner baptized people in the waters of the Jordan. People came down to these waters decrepit and emerged from them new, having been renewed by repentance. Jesus Christ came to the Jordan not in order to be purified of sin, but in order to sanctify the waters of the Jordan, to transfigure them and fill them with life. And the water of death, saturated with human sin, became a source of life, because God himself in his human flesh came down to it and filled it with his divinity.

In the commemoration of the Savior's baptism, a great sanctification of water is performed at Theophany (Epiphany)... The Baptism of the Lord in the Jordan is seen as an integral part of the divine plan for the salvation of mankind. It was incumbent on

God not only to take on human flesh but also to descend into the waters of the Jordan in order to bring to the light those sitting in darkness.

An excerpt from *Orthodox Christianity: The Worship and Liturgical Life of the Orthodox Church* by Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev

Parish News



We begin the month of January (and the new secular year) with the Feast of the Circumcision of Our Lord. Mass will be celebrated at 10am with Matins at 9:30 and a pot-luck brunch and games following.

The Christmas season ends with the Feast of the Epiphany of Our Lord, which will be observed on the Eve, January 5, at 7pm. The Blessing of Water will precede Liturgy at 6:30, and a pot-luck supper will follow.

We will continue our collection of canned and packaged food for the Manna Food Bank through January 11.

The Epiphany season will last until February 8, when the three “gesima” Sundays - Septuagesima, Sexagesima, and Quinquagesima - prepare us for the season of Lent. During this time, it is customary in the Orthodox Church for homes to be blessed. Please speak to Fr. Nicholas to schedule yours.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>January 2026</h1>						<i>Sunday services: Matins at 9am Sung Mass at 9:30</i>
				1 The Circumcision of Our Lord & Octave Day of the Nativity (New Years Day) <i>Mass at 10AM W</i>	2 St. Fulgentius, BC, 533	3 St. Genevieve, V, 512 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
4 Second Sunday after the Nativity; St. Titus, BC, c. 96 <i>W</i>	5 Vigil of the Epiphany; St. Telesphorus, PM, c. 137 <i>Mass at 7pm W</i>	6 The Epiphany of Our Lord	7 of the Octave of Epiphany; St. Cedd, BC, 664	8 of the Octave of Epiphany; St. Lucius & comp., Mm, c. 290; St. Severinus, Ab, 482	9 of the Octave of Epiphany	10 of the Octave of Epiphany; St. Paul the First Hermit, 342 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
11 First Sunday after Epiphany; St. Hyginus, PM, c.142; St. Theodosius, Ab, c. 529 <i>W</i>	12 of the Octave of Epiphany; St. Benedict Biscop, Ab, 690	13 Octave Day of Epiphany; St. Kentigern, BC, 603	14 St. Hilary, BCD, 367; St. Nina, V, 335	15 St. Maurus, Ab, 584	16 St. Marcellus, PM, 309; St. Honoratus, BC, 429	17 St. Anthony, Ab, 356 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
18 Second Sunday after Epiphany; Chair of St. Peter in Rome; St. Prisca, VM, c. 270 <i>W</i>	19 St. Mark of Ephesus, BC, 1444 <i>(MLK Day)</i>	20 Ss. Fabian, BM & Sebastian, M, 3 rd C	21 St. Agnes, VM, 304	22 St. Vincent, M, 304; St. Anastasius, M, 628	23 St. Emerentiana, VM, c. 304; St. John the Almoner, BC, c. 619	24 St. Timothy, BM, 97 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
25 Conversion of St. Paul; comm. Third Sunday after Epiphany <i>W</i>	26 St. Polycarp, BM, 156	27	28 St. Ephrem the Syrian, DnCD, 373; St. Isaac the Syrian, C, 7 th c.; The Second Feast of St. Agnes, VM	29	30 St. Martina, VM, 228; St. Bathildes, QMa, 680	31 Ss. Cyrus & John the Unmercenaries, Mm, c. 304 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>