

✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

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St. Gregory the Great Orthodox Church
A Western Rite Congregation of the Antiochian Archdiocese
13407 Roxbury Rd., Silver Spring, MD - stgregoryoc.org

*From a
Homily by
St. Gregory
Nazianzus
d. 390*

It is the Day of the Resurrection. Let us then keep the Festival with splendor, and let us embrace one another...

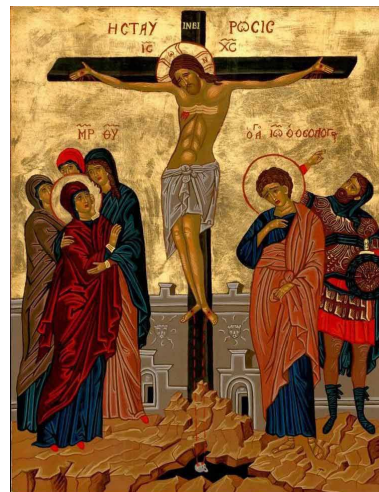
Yesterday the Lamb was slain and the door-posts were anointed, and Egypt bewailed her Firstborn, and the Destroyer passed us over... Today we have escaped from Egypt and from

Pharaoh; and there is none to hinder us from keeping a Feast to the Lord our God - the Feast of our Departure; or from celebrating that Feast, not in the old leaven of malice and wickedness, but in the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth [I Cor. 5-8].

Yesterday I was crucified with Him; today I am glorified with Him; yesterday I died with Him; today I am

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quicken with Him; yesterday I was buried with Him; today I rise with Him. But let us offer to Him Who suffered and rose again for us the possession most precious to God, and most fitting; let us give back to the Image what is made after the Image. Let us recognize our Dignity; let us honor our Archetype; let us know the power of the Mystery, and for what Christ died.

Let us become like Christ, since Christ became like us. Let us become gods for His sake, since He for ours became man. He assumed the worse that He might give us the better; He became poor that we through His poverty might be rich; He took upon Him the form of a servant that we might receive back our liberty; He came down that we might be exalted; He was tempted that we might conquer; He was dishonored that He might glorify us; he died that He might save us; He ascended that He might draw to Himself us, who were lying low in the Fall of sin. Let us give all, offer all, to Him Who gave Himself a Ransom and a Reconciliation for us.

We needed an incarnate God, a God put to death, that we might live. We were put to death together with Him that we might be cleansed. We rose again with Him because we were put to death with Him. We were glorified with Him because we rose again with Him. A few drops of Blood recreate the whole of creation!

Saints of the Passion

The Passion of our Lord as described in the Gospels is filled with vivid details. When we hear the Passion Gospel accounts

chanted in Holy Week those details remain imprinted on our minds and hearts. We identify with the failings of each of the characters: when we should be keeping watch with Christ, we fall asleep as the disciples did; with Peter, we promise to follow Christ even to death and yet, also with Peter, we deny Him.

The Church rightly pays much attention to the major “players” in this great drama – the blessed Theotokos and the Apostles – but there are others whose scriptural roles are minor but who are also honored among the saints. As we pass through Holy Week and approach the great celebration of the Resurrection of our Lord, let us also remember these saints who were completely transformed by Christ.

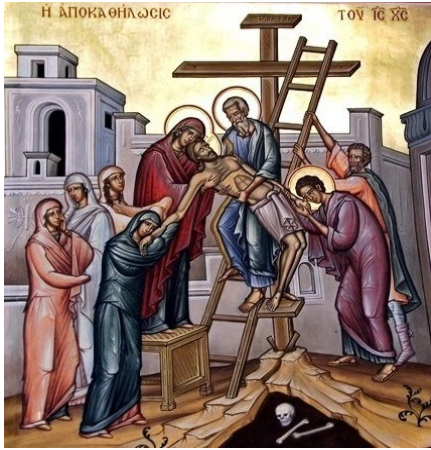
St. Longinus is the name given to the Roman centurion, described in the synoptic Gospels as the one who supervised the crucifixion of Christ and the two thieves. He had overseen the entire process – the scourging, the long walk carrying the crosses to Golgotha, the nailing, the offer of vinegar on the sponge. But through all of this, as he was carrying out his responsibilities, doing his job, he had also witnessed our Lord’s compassion toward his persecutors (*Father, forgive them*); he had seen the devotion of His mother, the other women and of St. John; he had heard the promise to the penitent thief. Perhaps Longinus was already beginning to recognize the Truth when, at our Lord’s death, the sky darkened and the earth shook with an earthquake. Then, acknowledging the One before him, Longinus said, *Surely this man was the Son of God*. His life was forever changed.

St. Mark [15:44] records that the centurion’s duties continued as he was summoned before Pilate to confirm the death of Christ before the governor could allow the body to be taken away. Longinus then disappears from the scriptural record, but holy tradition provides the rest of the story. Longinus is believed to have left military service (deserted) in order to be with the followers of Jesus and learn of His teachings. After the

Resurrection and the events of Pentecost, Longinus went back to his homeland, Cappadocia, to tell his friends and relatives about Christ. It was here that he was captured by the military authorities and beheaded for his desertion. He is considered a martyr by the Church and his feast day is celebrated on October 16. May St. Longinus pray that our eyes and minds and hearts may be open to see the Truth before us and worship Him, no matter the cost.

St. Dismas, one of the two thieves crucified with our Lord, was a criminal, described in the Gospels as a robber and further identified by the Jewish historian Josephus as a militant nationalist (whose tactics were akin to that of the “terrorists” of our day). When his fellow criminal, Gestas, mocked Jesus as they hung on the crosses, Dismas rebuked him and reminded him that they were receiving the expected penalty for the crimes that they had committed. But, recognizing the divinity of Christ, who had willingly accepted this punishment, he cried out to Him: *Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom* [Luke 23:42], and Christ promised that Dismas would be with him in paradise. Our Lord’s parable of the workers in the vineyard [Matt. 20], in which those who began at the 11th hour received the same pay as those who had labored all day, told us that in God’s eyes, every repentant sinner will be forgiven. At the Paschal Liturgy, we will hear the sermon of St John Chrysostom which also reminds us that it is never too late to turn to Christ. St. Dismas is the most dramatic example of God’s mercy and forgiveness – even to those whose repentance occurs at the “midnight hour” of their lives. At every Liturgy, we promise: “Like the thief will I confess thee: remember me, O Lord, in thy Kingdom.” (We celebrate St. Dismas’ feast day on March 25, which some in the early Church observed as the date of the crucifixion.)

The Sanhedrin, the legal body for the Temple at Jerusalem, the group which brought Jesus before Pilate and demanded his execution, was not unanimous in its judgements. At least two members of this court were followers of Christ – Nichodemus and



Joseph of Arimathea. Perhaps because of their influential position in the community, these men had not been very public in showing their interest in Jesus (Nichodemus had come to Christ under cover of darkness to ask him questions [John 3]), but their cowardice came to an end at this fateful time. They each protested against the accusers of Christ in the deliberations of the Sanhedrin and they argued against bringing Him before Pilate.

After the crucifixion, Joseph went to Pilate and asked to take Jesus' body to his own newly-carved tomb for burial. Scripture describes Joseph as a just man and a rich man and, in accordance with his concern for justice, he offered the fruits of his riches as a last resting place for our Lord. Nichodemus assisted Joseph with the burial and, according to tradition, is thought to have soon been baptized by St. Peter and to have been ousted from the Sanhedrin and forced to leave Jerusalem for his conversion to Christianity. August 3 is the day on which the Church honors St. Nichodemus.

From extra-Biblical writings, we learn that after the Resurrection, Joseph became an ardent and public member of the Christian community, helping to found the church at Lydda. It is believed that Joseph also traveled with the Apostle Philip to England, where he was instrumental in establishing the church at Glastonbury, which became a great place of pilgrimage. Other pious legends have persisted through many centuries and are celebrated in the English hymn "Jerusalem" ("and did those feet in ancient times...", a reference to this Joseph bringing Mary and the Christ Child to England) and in the legend of the Glastonbury

thorn (which grew from Joseph's staff). St. Joseph's feast day is celebrated on February 22. May Ss. Nichodemus and Joseph of Arimathea pray for us, that we may be able to justly defend what is right and offer our riches to God, proclaiming the good news of Christ our Savior.

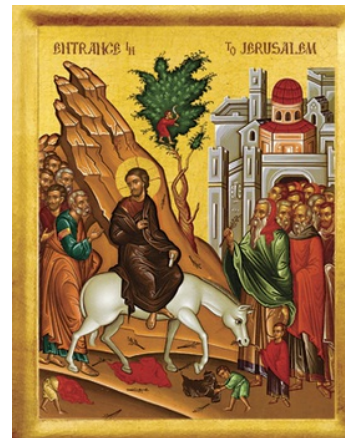
There are other characters in the story who are even less well-known. Malchus, the servant of the High Priest, was healed by Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane after Peter cut off his ear with a sword. Simon of Cyrene (in modern Libya) was forced to carry the Cross for Jesus; he is noted as the father of Alexander and Rufus (who were probably known to the Church in Rome). While we know little about them, we can be certain that the events of our Lord's Passion touched them and changed their lives forever.

As we meditate on the mighty acts of God in Holy Week, may we too be healed and transformed by all that we hear and see.

Reprinted from our website: stgregoryoc.org

Victory Over the Last Enemy

By St. Nikolai of Ochrid



The first enemy of man is the devil; the second, sin; and the third, death. The Lord Jesus conquered these three enemies of the human race. By His humiliation, He conquered the proud devil; by His death, He conquered sin and, by His Resurrection, He conquered death. Conquering all our enemies, He invites us to partake in his glorious victory. Not that we should ourselves conquer, but that we should creep in under the

wing of His victory. His strength alone conquers; His weapons alone slay. We are without strength and without weapons, and our enemies are fearsome. But with Him we can conquer those more powerful than ourselves.

At what price does he offer us His victory? At a low price, my brethren, at a very low price, does He offer us this most costly victory. That we humble ourselves and obey the will of God - that is the payment that He asks for conquering the devil on our behalf. That we die to self; die to our bodily desires and passions - that is the payment He asks for conquering sin on our behalf. To live for Him and not ourselves; to enthrone Him in our hearts - that is the payment He asks for conquering death on our behalf. He has utterly and completely overcome all our enemies, and that is the price at which He offers His victory to each of us. The Apostle says: *Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ* [I Cor. 15:57].

O risen Lord, illumine us, strengthen us and heal us by Thy victory! With thanksgiving, we ascribe glory and praise to Thee for ever. Amen.

Holy Week Schedule of Services

In this most holy week of the Church year, we recall the events leading up to Christ's Crucifixion and Resurrection. This recollection is not only about the historical events of our Incarnate Lord's earthly life. It is *anamnesis* - a recalling that makes these events present in our hearts now. We participate with Christ in His giving of His Body and Blood in the Eucharist, His betrayal, Crucifixion, and His Resurrection.

We begin holy week on Palm Sunday, April 5. After Matins, weather permitting, we will go outside for the blessing and

distribution of palms, the reading of the first Palm Sunday story [Matt. 21:1-9], and a procession around the church singing the hymn "All Glory, Laud, and Honor" and the *Christus Vincit*. At the Mass, we will hear the Passion Gospel of St. Matthew sung as we recall the events of that day when Christ was led into Jerusalem on a donkey and the people hailed Him: *Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!*



On Monday and Tuesday of Holy Week, April 6 and 7, the Passion Gospels of Mark and Luke will be sung. The Unction Mass, during which the oils of catechumens and the sick will be blessed, occurs on Wednesday of Holy Week. Each service will be followed by a Lenten pot-luck supper.

At the Maundy Thursday service, we celebrate Christ's institution of the Eucharist and we recount his humility in washing the disciples' feet. At the end of the Mass, the Blessed Sacrament will be carried in procession to the Altar of Repose for veneration and, returning to the chapel, the main altar will be stripped in remembrance of Christ being stripped of His garments by the soldiers. After a silent pot-luck meal, the service of Tenebrae will be held for those who can remain.

The Good Friday liturgy on April 10 begins at noon. At this service, we hear the Passion Gospel of St. John, we pray for the Church in the Solemn Collects, and the cross is brought forward for veneration while the ancient Reproaches are sung by the choir. The Sacrament consecrated the previous evening is brought from the altar of repose for the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy and we depart in silence.

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Address Correction Requested

The Paschal Vigil on Saturday, April 11, will begin outside with the blessing of new fire and lighting of the Paschal candle. Our candles are lit from this candle as we enter the church, we hear the singing of the ancient chant, *Exultet* and readings from the Old Testament which tell the story of our salvation. The Litany of the Saints is sung, water for the font is blessed, baptism and chrismations will take place, and we hear the first proclamation of the joyful news: *Christ is risen! Indeed He is risen!* At the first Mass of Easter, we hear the wonderful Paschal sermon of St. John Chrysostom, Lauds is sung following the Mass, and we end with a bountiful Paschal feast. On Easter Day, Mass will be at 11:00am.

The Resurrection of Christ



by Metropolitan Hierotheos

The purpose of the spiritual life is for one to be united with the Risen Christ, to see Him in one's heart. Christ is risen in our heart, mortifying the passionate thoughts which are present there under the influence of the demons and overcoming the impassioned representations and preoccupations of sin, just as then He overcame the seals of the tomb...

Participation in the mystery of the Resurrection is an experience of deification. He who has been initiated into the ineffable power of the Resurrection has realized from experience what Christ's purpose was in creating the world. In reality, man was created in order to attain deification, and the world to share in the sanctification through man.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>April 2026</h1>						<i>Sunday services: Matins at 9am Sung Mass at 9:30</i>
			1 St. Melito of Sardis, BC, 177	2 St. Mary of Egypt, Penitent, c. 421	3 St. Sixtus I, PM, 127; St. Joseph the Hymnographer, C, 883 <i>Stations of the Cross at 6:30pm</i>	4 St. Isidore of Seville, BCD, 636 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
5 Palm Sunday <i>R/V</i>	6 Monday in Holy Week; St. Notker, C, 912 <i>Mass at 7pm V</i>	7 Tuesday in Holy Week; St. Tikhon of Moscow, BC, Patron of the Western Rite, 1925 <i>Mass at 7pm V</i>	8 Wednesday in Holy Week <i>Mass at 7pm W</i>	9 Maundy Thursday <i>Mass at 7pm W</i>	10 Good Friday <i>Liturgy at noon B</i>	11 Holy Saturday <i>Vigil at 10pm V/W</i>
12 Pascha: The Resurrection of Our Lord <i>Mass at 11am W</i>	13 Monday in the Octave of Easter	14 Tuesday in the Octave of Easter	15 Wednesday in the Octave of Easter	16 Thursday in the Octave of Easter	17 Friday in the Octave of Easter	18 Saturday in the Octave of Easter <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
19 Low Sunday: First Sunday after Easter <i>W</i>	20 St. Leo the Great, PCD, 461 (tr.)	21	22 Ss. Soter & Caius, PpMm, 174	23 St. George, Martyr, 303	24	25 St. Mark the Evangelist, 1st c. <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
26 Second Sunday after Easter; St. Cletus, 89 & Marcellinus, 304, PpMm <i>W</i>	27	28 St. Vitalis, M, 3 rd c.	29	30 Vigil of Ss. Philip & James		