

✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

May, 2026 - Volume XXXI, Issue 5

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. Augustine of Hippo d. 430

On this day, the fortieth after His Resurrection, the Lord ascended into heaven. We have not seen, but we believe. They who beheld Him proclaimed what they saw, and they have filled the whole earth: *There are no speeches nor languages where their voices are heard. Their sound hath gone forth into the earth: and their words unto the ends of the world.*

[Ps. 19:4,5] And so they have reached even unto us, and awakened us from sleep. And lo! This death is celebrated throughout the world.

Remember the Psalm [57:6]. To whom was it said: *Be thou exalted, O God?* To whom was it said? Was *Be thou exalted* said to the Father, Who never was made lowly?

Inside:

<i>Saint Melangell.</i>	3
<i>Parish News</i>	5
<i>Two Great Feasts of the Church.</i>	7
<i>Calendar</i>	11
<i>Two Great Feasts of the Church.</i>	7



Be Thou exalted: Thou, who was enclosed in the womb of a mother. Thou Who was formed in Her whom Thou made. Thou Who hast lain in a manger. Thou Who as a true Child in the flesh drank milk from the breast. Thou who while borne in Thy Mother's arms sustained the world. Thou whom the venerable Simeon beheld a child, and extolled as Mighty. Thou Whom the Widow Anna saw at the breast, and knew Omnipotent. Thou Who hast hungered because of us, suffered

thirst for us, grown weary on the way (but did the Bread of Life hunger, the Fountain thirst, the Way grow weary?) Thou Who hast borne all these things for us. Thou Who has slept, yet unsleeping watches over Israel. And lastly, Thou Who wast seized, bound, scourged, crowned with thorns, hung upon the Tree, pierced with a lance, died, and was buried. *Be Thou exalted, O God!*

Be Thou exalted, he cries, *exalted above the heavens*: for thou art God. Take Thou Thy seat in heaven Who hung from the Cross. As Judge to come Thou art awaited Who awaited and received judgement. Who could believe this without His help Who raised the needy from the earth, and uplifted the poor from the dunghill? He has raised up His own needy flesh, and placed it with the Princes of His people [Ps. 113:6,7], with whom He shall judge the living and the dead. He has placed this needy flesh with those to whom He said: *You shall sit on twelve seats, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* [Matt. 19:28]

Be Thou therefore exalted above the heavens, O God! This has come to pass. It is now fulfilled. Yet we also say of that which was proclaimed of the future: *Be thou exalted above the heaven, O*

God! We have not seen it, but we believe. For lo! Before our eyes is now fulfilled that which follows: *Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: and thy glory above all the earth.* He cannot believe the first who does not see this. For what does, *And thy glory above all the earth* mean but Thy Church which is spread over all the earth, Thy Spouse spread over all the earth, Thy Bride over all the earth? Thy Beloved, Thy Dove, Thy Consort! She is thy glory.

St. Melangell

Feast Day ~ May 27



It is a story common to many women saints of the Church: a young woman from a prominent family is engaged to marry a man of her family's choosing and she cannot envision a life of marriage and family life with this man. She prefers to dedicate her life to prayer and meditation. So she runs away from home. This was the story of St. Melangell in the 7th century.

In the early centuries of the Church - and probably before and for centuries after - many young women found themselves in this dilemma. There were a few exceptions to escape, such as that of St. Cecilia (in 3rd century Rome), who, because persecution of Christians was increasing all around them, chose to convince her pagan fiancé of the truth of the Christian faith and they both became Christian martyrs. Most (Ss. Agnes, Frideswide, Agatha, Barbara, Etheldreda), however, had to flee from an unwanted marriage.

The details of Melangell's objection to her arranged marriage are not known but they were serious enough that she fled her father's home in Ireland to live in a forest she found in Powys, a minor kingdom in Wales. Here, she found the peace and tranquility that allowed her to spend her time as a solitary hermit in prayer and gratitude for the natural beauty around her.

Melangell's peace was disturbed after many years by the sound of hounds chasing down a hare. The terrified hare found refuge under the skirts of the praying woman and the hounds stopped abruptly, refusing to carry the chase further. A local prince, on whose land Melangell had been living, was the hunter and he was amazed to see this young woman deep in prayer and the effect that she had on his hunting dogs. He was even more amazed after talking with her, hearing her story, and sensing her holiness. He immediately gave her all the land which had supplied her with everything she needed and declared that it would forever be held as a refuge for women in need of sanctuary and for the numerous animals living there.

Soon, other women joined Melangell to form a monastery, with the saint serving as its Abbess until her death thirty-seven years later. She had become known as a healer and her relics continued to be venerated and her intercessions sought.

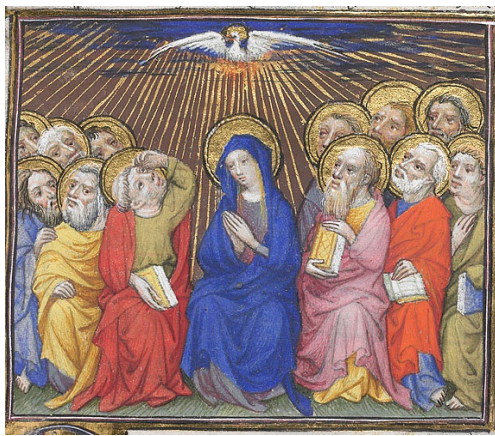
St. Melangell did nothing heroic or unusual. She was not a martyr who gave up her life for Christ. She was not a great missionary who converted many to Christ. But in her quiet life of prayer, in her gift of healing, in her protection of God's creatures, she helped to strengthen the faith of those around her by her humility and perseverance. *Holy Melangell, pray for us.*



Parish News

We begin this month with the Finding of the Holy Cross on May 3, a feast which celebrates the discovery by St. Helena of the True Cross of Christ, as she made her pilgrimage to the Holy Land in the 4th century, searching for the sites associated with the events of our Lord's earthly life and building churches to commemorate those events.

The Rogation days (Monday and Tuesday before Ascension), in which we pray particularly for the bounty of the earth, will be anticipated on Sunday, May 17 with a procession outside to the Mary garden. The Feast of the Ascension will be celebrated on the Eve, May 20, with Vespers at 6:30pm and Mass at 7pm. A pot-luck supper will follow. On Sunday, May 24, we will observe the Sunday in the Octave of the Dedication of our church building (on May 21, 2017).



We end our fifty-day celebration of Pascha with the great Feast of Pentecost on May 31. The Vigil will be observed on Saturday, May 30, with Liturgy at 10am. This service recalls the Paschal Vigil in that it includes the Blessing of the font and the singing of the Litany of Saints. A pot-luck brunch will follow this service. After Mass on Pentecost, we will read the story of that first Pentecost in as many languages as are represented in our parish, echoing our Paschal declarations of "Christ is Risen" in many languages.

Many thanks to those who contributed baby items for our National Baby Shower (sponsored by Orthodox Christians for Life) collection and to Jennifer Caldwell for delivering these items to the Shady Grove Pregnancy Center.

We bid farewell to Subdeacon Kevin (Keivan Shahrokhi) this month as he retires and moves to Tennessee to be near family. Keivan has been at the heart of our parish life at St. Gregory's for more than twenty years, serving at the altar and, as Sacristan, taking responsibility for vestments and candles and managing the training and service schedule for acolytes. He bakes our holy bread and has served many terms on the parish council (as president several times). Keivan was tonsured as a Reader by Bishop THOMAS in 2006 and ordained Subdeacon by Bishop JOHN in 2017. We will especially miss his wonderful Persian food at coffee hours! Thank you, Subdeacon Kevin and may God bless you in the coming years!



The newly illumined and their godparents at Pascha

Two Great Feasts of the Church: Ascension and Pentecost

by St. Gregory the Great



Ascension: My friends, on this solemn feast we must particularly consider that today our sentencing to death has been changed. The nature which was told, *You are dust, and to dust you shall return*, today ascended to heaven. Of this festival the psalmist said: *Your splendor has been raised above the heavens*; and again: *God has ascended with a shout of joy, and the Lord with the sound of a trumpet*; and again: *Ascending on high he led captivity captive; he gave gifts to all people*.

Of the glory of the Lord's ascension Habakkuk said that *the sun was raised up, and the moon stood in its place*. What do "sun" and "moon" signify but the Lord and his church? Until Jesus ascended into heaven his church was filled with fear of the world's opposition; strengthened by his ascension, she openly preached what she had secretly believed. *The sun was raised up, and the moon stood in its place*, because when Jesus sought heaven, his holy church grew in the authority with which she preached.

And so the church speaks through Solomon: *See how he comes leaping on the mountains, bounding over the hills!* The church pondered the loftiness of his great works and said: *See how he comes leaping on the mountains!* If I can put it this way, by coming for our redemption the Lord leaped! My friends, do you want to become acquainted with these leaps of his? From heaven

he came to the womb, from the womb to the manger, from the manger to the cross, from the cross to the sepulcher, and from the sepulcher he returned to heaven. You see how Truth, having made himself known in the flesh, leaped for us to make us run after him. *He exulted like a giant to run his course* so that we might say to him from our hearts, *Draw me after you; let us run!*

My friends, it is fitting for us to follow him in our hearts where we believe he has ascended in his body. Let us flee earthly desires. Let us no longer delight in anything here below, we who have a Father in heaven. We must take to heart that he who was mild at his ascent will be terrible at his return, demanding of us with the greatest severity what he has commanded of us with gentleness. No one should take lightly the time of repentance granted us. We must be concerned for ourselves while we can do so, because our Redeemer will come with great severity in proportion to the patience shown us before the judgment.

Reflect on these things, my friends, turn them over constantly in your minds. Disturbances in the world around us may still be driving your hearts to and fro, but fix the anchor of your hope in your eternal home. Establish your heart's attention in the true light.

We have heard that our Lord has ascended into heaven. Let us meditate on our belief. If physical weakness still holds us here, let us follow him by the steps of love. Jesus, who gave us our desire, will not fail us.

Pentecost: Today the Holy Spirit came suddenly upon the disciples and completely transformed their earth-bound way of thinking. When the tongues of fire appeared outwardly upon them, their hearts within them were set on fire; while they received God in visible flames, they were being gently inflamed by love. The Holy Spirit is love, and so John says that *God is love*. Those who desire God wholeheartedly already possess the one they love; no one is able to love God without also possessing God.



If I asked any one of you whether you love God, you would answer me with entire confidence and complete conviction: “I do.” But you heard the words of Truth: *If anyone loves me, he will keep my word.* The proof of love is its manifestation in our actions. That is why John says in his first letter that *one who says, I love God, and does not observe his commandments is a liar. And my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home*

with him. My friends, consider the greatness of this solemn feast that commemorates God’s coming as a guest into our hearts! If some rich and influential friend were to come to your home, you would promptly put it all in order for fear something there might offend your friend’s eyes when he came in. Let all of us then who are preparing our inner homes for God cleanse them of anything our wrongdoing has brought into them.

O*ne who does not love me does not keep my word.* My friends, enter into yourselves and ask yourselves if you truly love God. But we should not believe the answer our hearts give unless we have the testimony of our actions as well. We must examine our words, our thoughts and our lives concerning the love of our Creator. God’s love is never idle. Where it exists it does great things; if love refuses to work, it is not love.

A*nd the word which you have heard is not mine but the Father’s who sent me.* You know, my friends, that the one saying this is the only-begotten Son, the Father’s Word. Therefore the word which the Son speaks is not his own but the Father’s, because the Son himself is the Father’s Word.

Reprinted from *Be Friends of God: Spiritual Reading from Gregory the Great* in an English version by John Leinenweber, Cowley Publications, 1990.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>May 2026</h1>					1 Ss. Philip & James, Apostles, 1 st C	2 St. Athanasius, BCD, 373 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
3 Finding of the Holy Cross; comm. Third Sunday after Easter <i>W</i>	4 St. Monica, Ma, 387	5	6 St. John before the Latin Gate	7 St. Alexis Toth, C, 1909	8 Apparition of St. Michael, 492	9 St. Gregory Nazianzus, BCD, 390 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
10 Fourth Sunday after Easter; Ss. Gordian, 362 & Epimachus, 250, Mm <i>W</i>	11	12 St. Epiphanius of Salamis, BC, c. 403	13	14	15 St. Pachomius, Ab, 348	16 St. Brendan the Navigator, Ab, 577 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
17 Fifth Sunday after Easter <i>W</i>	18 Rogation Monday; St. Venantius, M, 250; St. Theodotus & comp., Mm, c. 303	19 Rogation Tuesday; St. Dunstan, BC, 988; St. Pudentiana, V, 2 nd C	20 Vigil of the Ascension <i>Mass at 7pm</i> <i>W</i>	21 Ascension Day; Dedication of St. Gregory's; St. Constantine, C, 337	22 of the Octave of Ascension; St. Romanus of Subiaco, Ab, 560	23 of the Octave of Ascension; St. Julia, VM, 439 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
24 Sunday in the Octave of Dedication; Sunday after the Ascension; St. Vincent of Lerins, C, 450 <i>W</i>	25 of the Octave of Ascension; St. Urban, PM, 230; St. Aldhelm, BC, 709 <i>(Memorial Day)</i>	26 St. Augustine of Canterbury, BC, 605; of the Octave of Ascension	27 St. Bede, CD, 735; of the Octave of Ascension; St. John I, PM, 526	28 Octave Day of the Ascension; St. Germanus of Paris, BC, 576	29	30 Vigil of Pentecost; St. Felix I, PM, 274 <i>Mass at 10am</i> <i>Vespers at 6pm</i> <i>V/R</i>
31 Pentecost <i>R</i>						<i>Sunday services: Matins at 9am Sung Mass at 9:30</i>