

✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

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St. Gregory the Great Orthodox Church
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From a Homily by St. Nikolai of Ochrid

d. 1956

Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye behold Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable. [I Peter 1:8]

St. Peter the Apostle saw the Lord and loved Him. He beheld the Lord and believed in Him. Precisely because of this, he praises the love of those

who have not seen the Lord and the faith of those who have not beheld Him with their eyes. The Lord Himself said: *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.* [John 20:29] Blessed are those who have not seen the Lord as the Apostle saw Him, yet love Him with an apostolic love. Blessed are those who, not beholding the Lord as the Apostle beheld Him, yet believe in Him with apostolic faith.

Oh, my brethren, if we do not see the Lord, we see His works, which have permeated the whole of human

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history and uncovered the spiritual meaning of every created thing under heaven. If we do not see the Lord, we see His holy Church, built of His most precious Blood, of a great throng of saints and righteous men and of innumerable souls baptized in His name through the ages. If we do not behold the Lord face to face, as the apostles beheld Him, we do believe that He is among us in the Body and Blood that we receive according to his

commandment, and, receiving, rejoice with joy unspeakable.

The Lord is alive, my brethren, and the Lord is near. This is our unchanging faith and this is the spark of fire that inflames our hearts with love for the living Lord who is at hand.

To know that the Lord our Creator became incarnate in His love and revealed Himself to man for our sakes, that He died and showed Himself alive - what firmer foundation does our faith require, or what stronger justification does our love need?

The Lord is alive, my brethren, and the Lord is near. Here and now. He reveals Himself to the many righteous souls who serve Him with patience.

Oliving Lord, Thou wast dead and didst rise again. Fill us with life through faith and love until our last breath on earth, that we may by faith and love be made worthy to see Thee face to face as did Thy holy apostles. To Thee be glory and praise for ever. Amen.

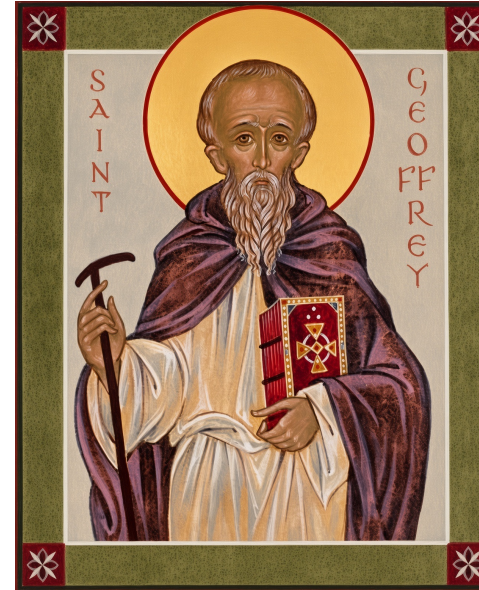
St. Ceolfriad

Feast Day ~ September 25

Through the centuries, monastics of the Church have devoted their lives to striving for the Kingdom of Heaven through prayer, study, and service. While most Christians must lead a path striving for the same thing amid the distractions (and joys) of life in the world which God created for us, holy monks and nuns can provide inspiration for our journeys. St. Ceolfriad (Ceolfriad and also Geoffrey), abbot of the monastery of Jarrow in the north of England, is a wonderful example whose faith we can emulate and who will intercede for us.

Ceolfriad became a monk at the age of 18 in a small monastery at Gilling. When the abbot there died of the plague, which was a constant deadly presence at that time, Ceolfriad and other monks were invited by Bishop (St.) Wilfrid to join his monastery at Ripon. There Ceolfriad was ordained to the priesthood at the age of 27. After spending some time at another monastic establishment to study the Scriptures and the rule of life there, he returned to Ripon. Despite his elevated position as a priest-monk and his greater learning, he accepted in humility the office of miller and baker for the monastery, praying and reciting the Psalms as he ground the flour and baked bread for the monks.

When Benedict Biscop began the establishment of a monastery dedicated to St. Peter at the mouth of the River Wear, he requested that Ceolfriad be sent to assist him in this work. As Prior of the new monastery, Ceolfriad was disappointed by the refusal of some noblemen who were attempting the monastic life to accept the necessary discipline, and so he returned to the peaceful life of his former monastery. However, Abbot Benedict appealed to him to come back to his assistance and Ceolfriad returned to Wearmouth.



In order to supply the monastery with books for its library and liturgical items (including relics of martyrs), Abbot Benedict went to Rome, accompanied by Ceolfriad, where they were also able to bring back to England John, the Archcantor of Rome, to teach the monks the proper manner of chanting.

Eight years later, an estate was given by the king for the establishment of

another monastery dedicated to St. Paul at Jarrow which would be yoked to Monkwearmouth as a single brotherhood. Ceolfriad was appointed by Benedict as abbot of this new monastery and he devoted himself to helping the monks learn the monastic way of life - the daily singing of psalms, prayers, and work for the community as well as studying of the Holy Scriptures. He was a spiritual father to all, guiding them in the faith, and he insured that the monastery was generous to the poor.

During what has often been described as the “dark ages”, monastic communities such as those at Jarrow and Monkwearmouth - far away from the great centers of Christianity - maintained excellent libraries of books not only on theological subjects but also studies in science and nature. The copying of manuscripts was an important part of a monastic community, with the scriptorium producing books that were also beautiful works of art. A major project undertaken by the monks of the Jarrow monastery was the copying of the Vulgate, St. Jerome’s translation of the Bible in Latin. Ceolfriad ordered three copies to be made - one for Jarrow, one for Monkwearmouth, and another to be taken

by him to Rome as a gift to Pope Gregory II. This manuscript, called the *Codex Amiatinus*, is one of the oldest manuscripts with a complete text of the Vulgate. It displays an especially beautiful example of early British, Pre-Carolingian calligraphy.

A fascinating story is told in the anonymous *History of Abbot Ceolfrith* about a time when another epidemic of plague almost wiped out the monastery at Jarrow:

In the monastery which Ceolfrith ruled, all those who could read or preach or were able to sing the antiphons and responsories were carried off by the plague except the abbot himself and one small boy... Because of the plague the abbot was very sorrowful and ordered the previous custom to be interrupted and that the whole psalter except at Lauds and Vespers should be recited without antiphons. But when this was done for the space of only one week with many tears and laments, he felt unable to bear it any longer so he decided that the psalms with antiphons should be resumed as before. With everyone trying their best, he completed this by himself but with the help of the boy mentioned above...

That small boy was St. Bede, the Venerable, who spent his life in this monastery under the spiritual guidance of Abbot Ceolfrid and who gave the world his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, one of the most influential accounts of English Christianity in the 6th and 7th centuries.

When Benedict Biscop reposed in 690, Ceolfrid was appointed Abbot of both monasteries, emphasizing their unity as one brotherhood. For 27 more years, he faithfully led his monks until the slowing down in old age caused him to resign and plan for one last trip to Rome, this one to deliver the monastery's gift of the Bible to the pope. Despite the pleadings of all the monks that this trip was inadvisable, he departed by sea at the mouth of the river

Humber on June 4 in the year 716 and landed in Gaul on August 12. Due to weariness and sickness on the voyage, St. Ceolfrid passed from this life to the next on September 25, not reaching his destination or presenting his gift to the pope. His body was buried at a monastery near Langres, later translated to his monastery in Jarrow, and then to Glastonbury in the time of Danish raids.

May we follow the example of St. Ceolfrid and devote ourselves to striving for the Kingdom of God. *Holy Ceolfrid, pray for us.*

Sources: Anonymous, *History of Abbot Ceolfrith*; Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*; Bede, *Lives of the Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*; Butler, Alban, *Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs, and Other Saints*; Haigh, Benedict, comp, *A Calendar of British Saints (Orthodox Synaxarion)*; Ward, Benedicta, *The Venerable Bede*; Wikipedia article.

Parish News



In the month of September, two holy days will be celebrated with Vespers at 6:30pm, Mass at 7, and pot-luck suppers following: the Exaltation of the Holy Cross on Monday, September 14 and St. Michael the Archangel on the Eve, Monday, September 28.

Thanks to all who have volunteered to be a part of one of the committees which the Parish Council has designated. The work of hospitality (coffee hours and special events), education (Sunday School, library), property (building maintenance and supplies), and liturgical (caring for altar linens and baking holy bread) are very important in the life of the parish.

Prayer and Life

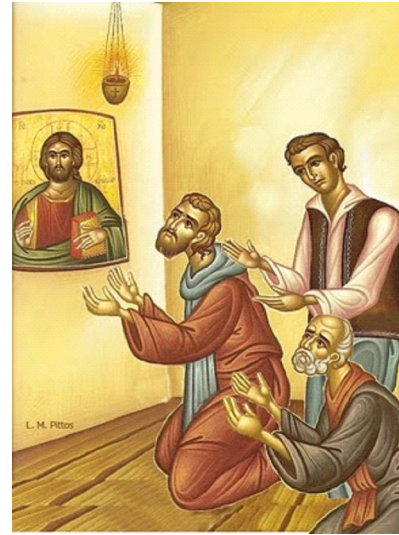
by Mother Raphaela

That they may have life and have it abundantly [John 10:10]. In these words the Lord speaks of what He desires for all of us; indeed of what He desires for the whole of His creation. What means has He given us to gain this life? He has given us the fruits of His own life, passion, death and resurrection. But how do we make these our own? How do we enter into the mystery He offers to us? Simply to go through the motions of receiving Holy Communion is not enough. As St. Paul tells us, to eat His body and drink His Blood unworthily are to eat and drink to our own judgment.

Prayer is the only way. But only as we pray in the Lord's own Spirit of truth will our prayer be the doorway to abundant life. There are many artificial forms of prayer that lead us to dead ends. We can get so involved in the external mechanisms of prayer that we lose sight of the goal. It is possible even to worship ideas of prayer and lose the living God in the process.

Prayer is nothing other than bringing our whole self, heart, mind and body, before God, that He may in turn fill us with His own abundant life. This is an effort that takes the whole of our lives and demands everything we can possibly bring to it. We must strive with every ounce of our effort, knowing that when we do so it is God who is working within us. We must train our bodies to worship God and serve our brethren. We must learn to walk in the ways of God-given virtue and morality. And we must learn to use our minds rightly.

The great saints and fathers of the Church, such as the theologians, St. Basil, St. Gregory and St. John Chrysostom, and their successor, St. Gregory Palamas, the great champion of



hesychastic prayer, had a solid foundation in secular studies. Moreover their minds and consciences were trained through the study of the Old and New Testaments, the lives and writings of the saints and the liturgical texts of the Church.

Until very modern times, study meant getting as much “by heart” as possible. Today, television, the computer, the internet and education may leave us nearly incapable of memorizing

words, let alone knowing them so well that we continually ponder them in our hearts. Yet we must learn to do this. The liturgical services of the Church are a great school for this. If we try to participate in them with attention and understanding, we find ourselves disciplining our bodies and immersing our minds and hearts in the Scriptures and hymns of the Church over and over again. We gradually allow our whole being to be filled with God-given truths. The Lord told us: *Out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks* [Matt. 12:34]. More and more, we should be able to speak from these riches rather than out of the poverty of our hearts. We will learn to test our hearts by hearing how busy our mouths are in “normal” conversations with our self-centered thoughts, complaints and wishes rather than with the truth and beauty of God.

St. Paul tells us that we must take on the mind of Christ. We cannot fathom the mind of God, yet we can try to learn from the Gospels about the human mind of Jesus. As we study the Gospel accounts, we will come to see that His was a mind that sought to learn about His faith from an early age. As was His custom, He went regularly to the synagogue and read and



interpreted the Scriptures. He lived His entire life as a conscious fulfillment of the history of Israel revealed in those same Scriptures. By the end of His earthly life, He had made the words of the Psalms as much His own that as he was dying on the Cross, they were what came to His lips. *My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?* [Matt. 27:46] We must try to do the same.

St. Anthony the Great and St. Pachomius, two great founders of monasticism, who did not have backgrounds in secular learning, insisted on the necessity of study. St. Anthony, who could not read, based his whole life on the impact of the Scripture readings he heard and memorized by attending Church from the time he was a young child. Pachomius insisted that his monks be taught to read and that they spend every possible free moment memorizing the Scriptures; the Psalms and the entire New Testament were the required minimum. They were to recite these as they worked and walked.

Those who want to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, with the Psalmist they want to cry: *O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all* [Ps. 104:24]. With St. Anthony, they want to read the book of created things: the beauty of places; the grandeur of the desert. They want abundant life, not boxed religion. They want to call on the Lord in the context of this abundant life, which is His own. Any forms of prayer they use will be the means to this end; nothing more, nothing less.

An excerpt reprinted from *Living in Christ: Essays on the Christian Life* by an Orthodox Nun.

