

✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

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A Reading from a homily on the Parable of the Prodigal Son by St. Peter Chrysologus

*died c. 450
feast day - December 2*

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When he came to himself, the text reads, *he said, How many hired men in my father's house have bread in abundance!* Previously, when he departed from his father, he had ceased to be himself; now, he came to himself. He first returned to himself that he might return to his father. The man who is unmindful of his father's devotion, and forgetful of his parent's love, departs from himself, and changes his whole self from man to beast.

How many hired men in my father's house have bread in abundance, while I am perishing here with hunger! Hunger calls back him whom abundance had exiled. Hunger enabled the son to understand his father, whereas abundance had caused him to recognize only a sire.

If even involuntary hunger did all this, try by experiment how beneficial a voluntary fast can be. A burdened stomach drags down the heart toward vices, and depresses the mind to keep it unable to experience heavenly piety. Scripture tells us: *The corruptible body is a load upon the soul, and the earthly habitation presseth down the mind that museth upon many things.* [Wisdom 9:15] Hence, the Lord said, too: *Take heed lest your hearts be overburdened with self-indulgence and drunkenness.* [Luke 21:34]. Wherefore, the stomach should be relieved by the tempering influence of a fast, that the mind can be unburdened and attend to higher things, rise to virtues, and like a winged bird fly in its entirety to the very Author of piety. The case of Elias proves this. Relieved of bodily weight by continuing that fast which the Lord arranged, he flew to heaven as victor over death.

I will get up and go to my father. He who said *I will arise* was lying down. He had understood his fall, he was aware of his ruin, and gazed upon himself lying in the mire of disgraceful prodigality. That is why he cried out: *I will get up and go to my father.* With what hope? With what confidence? With what assurance?

With what hope? With that by which [he reflects]: He is a father. I have squandered the marks of a son; he has not lost the characteristics of a father. It is not a stranger who intercedes with a father; rather, it is that affection inside his own breast which intervenes and pleads. The father's heart is moved to beget his son again through forgiveness. I shall go as a culprit to a father. But a father, on seeing his son, soon covers up the guilt. He conceals his role of judge, and is more eager to fulfil that of father. He wants his son to return, not to perish, and soon changes his condemnation into forgiveness.

St. Joseph the Hymnographer ~ Feast day, April 3



A writer of sacred music would hardly have been expected to lead anything approaching an adventuresome, perhaps stormy life. Yet that was precisely the kind of life led by one of the foremost writers of religious music. On the contrary, his life encompassed the controversial, the daring, and the adventuresome...

Joseph was born in the eventful ninth century during the reign of the iconoclast Emperor Theophilus (832). His early years in Sicily were uneventful even for such a quarrelsome period, but his bravery asserted itself when the island was overrun by hordes of vandals and barbarians from the mainland. Because he dared to resist the invader, he was singled out as a prized trophy sought by the vandals. After harassing the enemy, and with the odds overwhelmingly against him, he managed to escape after several close calls. Joseph eluded the havoc wrecked by the invader by spiriting his family and himself out of Sicily to Greece, much to the consternation of the vandals.

This early chapter set the pattern for the rest of his turbulent life. Having settled in Thessalonike, it appeared he would have had a trouble-free career when he joined the Monastery of St. Antipas in Constantinople. But the serenity he sought was shattered when he took up the cause of the Iconophiles during the iconoclastic controversy. Emperor Theophilus had removed the icons from the churches and was severely punishing the Iconophiles who dared to defy him. Not one to dodge an issue, Joseph joined the controversy vigorously, publicly defending the holy icons and openly defying the emperor. Consequently, Joseph was persecuted, abused, and set upon with such intensity that he might as well have remained an elusive guerrilla in Sicily. The great Iconoclastic controversy reached its peak during this time.

When several clergymen, Joseph among them, were banished for their opposition, he fled to Rome. After the death of Theophilus and the restoration of the icons, Joseph joyfully boarded a ship with the hope of enjoying a peaceful monastic life. The ship never made port. Joseph was captured by pirates who cast him into a wretched prison in Crete.

In this implausible setting, Joseph started writing his beautiful Hymns. During his years of imprisonment at the hands of pirates, he prolifically composed the sacred music still sung in the church today. He did not limit himself to his music writing, but also devoted himself to converting many of those about him to Christianity....

After release from prison, Joseph acquired some relics of St. Bartholomew and erected a church to the saint's memory. Later he was exiled when he criticized Caesar Bardas' divorce of his wife. After an exile of many years, he returned to Constantinople after the death of Bardas.

At long last Joseph was accorded the honor of a high position by the...Patriarch Photios, who afforded him the opportunity to write his lovely hymns. This ultimately led to his recognition as St. Joseph the Hymnographer. The hymn writer who had eluded death many times, who had survived long imprisonment and long periods of exile, and who had seen enough intrigue and excitement for a dozen lifetimes, died quietly in Constantinople on 3 April 886.



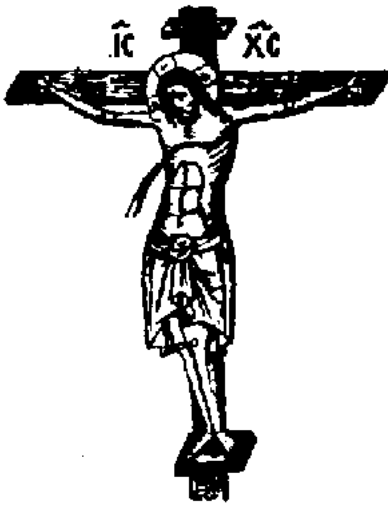
The above is excerpted from Orthodox Saints Vol. 2, by George Poulos. Hymns by St. Joseph the Hymnographer in the St. Ambrose Hymnal are "Stars of the Morning" (222) for feasts of the Holy Angels and "Let us Now Our Voices Raise" (#251) for feasts of the Martyrs.

Singing With the Fathers

One of the characteristics of Orthodoxy is the church's concern for faithfulness to the Apostolic tradition. We guard against heresy, heterodoxy and innovation by immersing ourselves in Holy Scripture and the writings of the Fathers of the church - those who are the direct descendants of the Apostles. Beginning with the first several generations after the Apostles and continuing through the centuries with their disciples, they have been careful to maintain the unaltered faith of the Apostles.

We have at our disposal the theological treatises of many of these fathers, such as Athanasius' "On the Incarnation" and

St. John of Damascus' "On the Holy Icons." We have the sermons of great preachers such as St. John Chrysostom. And we have letters of instruction from such prolific correspondents as St. Gregory the Great and St. Jerome. But it is primarily in the Liturgy that most Orthodox Christians receive the thought of the Church Fathers. It is in the several liturgies of both East and West - those of St. John Chrysostom, St. Basil, St. James, St. Mark, and St. Gregory the Great (and its derivative, that of St. Tikhon) - that we hear the words of the fathers about the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation, salvation, redemption, forgiveness and healing.



The hymns which adorn our liturgy provide special insight into the thought of the fathers, and the hymns of Lent and Passiontide are particularly important for maintaining our connection with the ancient church. An examination of some of these hymns in the *St. Ambrose Hymnal* will show the richness of our liturgical heritage and the continuity of the faith of the fathers, expressed in several Lenten themes.

The two Office hymns for Lent were written by our patron, St. Gregory the Great. In "The Fast as Taught by Holy Lore" (#87), specified for the daily service of Matins in the morning, St. Gregory refers to the practice of fasting by our Jewish ancestors under the old law, a practice which Christ sanctified for us under the new Covenant. He spells out specifically that in our Lenten fast, we should abstain not only from some food and drink, but also from excessive talking, joking, and even sleep. The Vespers hymn "O Kind Creator, Bow Thine Ear" (#84) sung before the Magnificat in the evening, expresses the hope that as we fast outwardly, we may also fast inwardly, thereby purifying our souls.

In another Lenten hymn by St. Gregory, "The Glory of These Forty Days" (#88), the "typology" so frequently used by the fathers is employed. We are told that our fast, which we keep in imitation of our Lord's fast, was prefigured in the Old Testament - by Moses, fasting before receiving the Law; by Elijah who, while fasting, was given the vision of the chariot of fire; and by Daniel who, through fasting and meditation, was delivered from the lions' den. And, as St. John the Forerunner fasted and became the herald of the Messiah, we pray that we may, through our fasting, be prepared to see our Lord.

Two Sarum (from the ancient usage at Salisbury Cathedral) Office hymns are included in the Lenten section of the hymnal: "Now is the Healing Time Decreed" (#82, from the 11th century) and "O Jesu Christ, From Thee Begun" (#83, from the 9th century). In these hymns, we are reminded that the Orthodox view of sin is like that of sickness that requires not punishment or

retribution but healing, and that the spiritual and physical disciplines of Lent are as medicine to the sinner.

In the hymns, “Jesus, Name All Other Names Above” (#79) and “The Deep Abyss of Former Sin” (#88), we are to identify ourselves as prodigal sons, the penitent thief, and the publican at prayer as we plead for God’s grace and return to our father in repentance. The first hymn is the only known hymn written by St. Theoctistus (c. 890) and paraphrased from his “Suppliant Canon to Jesus” and the second was written by St. Joseph of the Studium in the 9th century.

The hymn, “Servant of God, Remember” (#85), written as part of a longer work by the poet Aurelius Clemens Prudentius (348-413), is a reminder to the Christian that the Cross is our protection against the terrors of night and the temptations and assaults of the devil. We are to make the sign of the Cross upon our hearts and foreheads and remember God’s grace.

The verses of a long work by the poet, Venantius Fortunatus (540-600) are divided in the hymnal to form office hymns for Passiontide and feasts of the Holy Cross. In “The Royal Banners Forward Go” (#96) and “Thirty Years Among us Dwelling” (#95) these verses pay homage to the tree - the Cross - which brought about man’s freedom for our bondage caused by Adam’s sin through that first tree in Eden. This hymn was written for a very momentous occasion - the depositing of a relic of the True Cross given by the Emperor Justin II for the monastery in Poitiers of the Abbess Radegund on November 19, 569. St. Gregory of Tours describes the great feast in his *History of the Franks*: “...[Bishop] Eufronius deposited the sacred relics in the nunnery with much chanting of psalms, with candles gleaming and with a great burning of incense.”

In these and the other hymns by early hymnographers sung during this season of preparation, these themes appear again and again: that the Lenten fast was prefigured in the Old Testament and sanctified by Christ; that sin is illness requiring healing through the medicine of fasting and repentance; that our Lord, in his parables, showed us the way of repentance; and that the Cross is to be revered as the instrument of our Salvation.

As we lift our voices in song during this season, we remember that these words express the thoughts of the Fathers of the Church. These are the words that bind us to Christians from the earliest days of the Church and throughout the ages. This is the faith of the Apostles and in singing with the Fathers, we are maintaining that faith and passing it on to our children.



Parish News

On the Eve of the Feast of the Annunciation, St. Gregory's was blessed by the visit of Bishop THOMAS, Bishop of Pittsburgh and the East. His Grace spoke to us about this feast of good news and our obligation to share the good news with others (in particular by inviting them to come with us to Church). Many thanks to those who prepared the meals and to our choir and acolytes for their extra efforts.

On Tuesday evenings during Lent we will again meet in parishioners' homes for Class and Compline at 7:30PM. On Tuesday, April 5, we will meet at the Greens' house (11800 Prestwick Rd., Potomac), on Tuesday, April 12 at the O'Neills' (4 West Walnut St., Alexandria), and on Tuesday, April 19 at the Hawfields' (5016 Euclid Dr., Kensington). We will offer Stations of the Cross and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament at 7:30PM on Friday, April 22.

Holy Week is the most important time in the Church year. These services recall the central mysteries of our faith, what God has done for us. Please make every effort to be present at these wonderful services.

Saturday - April 23 - Vespers at 6PM, Confession following.

Palm Sunday - April 24 - Matins at 8:30AM, Blessing of Palms, Procession, Singing of the Passion & Sung Mass at 9AM.

Holy Wednesday - April 27 - Mass for the Blessing of the Holy Oils & Unction at 7:30PM.

Maundy Thursday - April 28 - Sung Mass with footwashing, Procession to the Altar of Repose, stripping of the High Altar & Tenebrae at 7:30PM.

Good Friday - April 29 - The Solemn Collects, Adoration of the Holy Cross & Mass of the Pre-sanctified at 12Noon.

Holy Saturday - April 30 - Confessions at 7:30PM; the Lighting of the Paschal Fire, the Exultet, the Prophecies, the Blessing of the Font, Renewal of Baptismal Vows & the First Mass and Lauds of Easter at 9PM, followed by pot-luck brunch.

Pascha - May 1 - Sung Mass at 9AM (no Matins).



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>April 2005</h1>						
					1 St. Melito of Sardis, 177	2 ^{Feria} <i>6PM Vespers</i>
3 ^{3rd} Sunday in Lent <i>8:30AM Matins 9AM Sung Mass</i>	4 St. Isidore of Seville, BCD, 636	5 ^{Feria} <i>7:30PM Lenten Class</i>	6 St. Sixtus I, BM, 127	7 St. Tikhon, Enlightener of America, BC, 1925	8 ^{Feria}	9 St. Mary of Egypt, Penitent, c. 421 <i>6PM Vespers</i>
10 ^{4th} Sunday in Lent <i>8:30AM Matins 9AM Sung Mass</i>	11 St. Leo the Great, BCD, 461	12 St. Justin, M, Apologist, 167 <i>7:30PM Lenten Class</i>	13 St. Hermene-gild, C, 583	14 ^{Ss.} Tiburtius, Valerian & Maximus, Mm, c. 190	15 ^{Feria}	16 ^{Feria} <i>6PM Vespers</i>
17 ^{Passion} Sunday <i>8:30AM Matins 9AM Sung Mass</i>	18 ^{Feria}	19 St. Alphege of Canterbury, BM, 1012 <i>7:30PM Lenten Class</i>	20 ^{Feria}	21 ^{Feria}	22 ^{Feria} <i>7:30PM Stations of the Cross & Benediction</i>	23 St. George the Martyr, 303 <i>6PM Vespers</i>
24 ^{Palm} Sunday <i>8:30AM Matins 9AM Blessing of Palms, Singing of Passion, Sung</i>	25 Monday in Holy Week	26 Tuesday in Holy Week	27 Wednesday in Holy Week <i>7:30 Unction Mass</i>	28 Maundy Thursday <i>7:30 Sung Mass, followed by Tenebrae</i>	29 Good Friday <i>12 Noon Mass of the Presanctified</i>	30 Holy Saturday <i>7:30PM Confessions 9PM Paschal Vigil, followed by pot-luck</i>

There will also be Sung Mass on Pascha, May 1, at 9AM (no Matins).

Confessions are heard during the Psalms at Matins, following Vespers, at 7:30PM on Holy Saturday, and by appointment.

Coffee Hour follows Sunday Liturgy