

# ✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

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*St. Gregory the Great Orthodox Church - A Western Rite Mission of the Antiochian Archdiocese*

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## *A Reading from the letter to the Corinthians by St. Clement of Rome*

*died c. 100  
feast day - November 23*

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Let us fix our thoughts on the blood of Christ; and reflect how precious that blood is in God's eyes, inasmuch as its outpouring for our salvation has opened the grace of repentance to all mankind. For we have only to survey the generations of the past to see that in every one of them the Lord has offered the chance of repentance to any who were willing to turn to him. When Noah preached repentance, those who gave heed to him were saved. When, after Jonah had proclaimed destruction to the people of Niniveh, they repented of their sins and made atonement to God with prayers and supplications, they obtained their salvation, notwithstanding that they were strangers and aliens to him.

All those who were ministers of the grace of God have spoken, through the Holy Spirit, of repentance. The very Lord of all himself has spoken of it, and even with an oath: By my life, the Lord declares, it is not the sinner's death that I desire, so much as his repentance; and he adds this gracious pronouncement, Repent, O house of Israel, and turn from your wickedness. Say to the children of my people, Though your sins may stretch from earth to heaven, and though they may be redder than scarlet and blacker than sackcloth, yet if you turn wholeheartedly to me and say Father, I will listen to you as I would to a people that was holy.

Thus, by his own almighty will, he has confirmed his desire that repentance should be open to every one of his beloved.

Let us bow, then, to that sovereign and glorious will. Let us entreat his mercy and goodness, casting ourselves upon his compassion and wasting no more energy in quarrels and a rivalry which only ends in death.



*St. Clement of Rome*

**M**y brothers, do let us have a little humility; let us forget our self-assertion and braggadocio and stupid quarreling, and do what the Bible tells us instead. The Holy Spirit says, The wise man is not to brag of his wisdom, nor the strong man of his strength, nor the rich man of his wealth; if a man must boast, he should boast of the Lord, seeking him out and acting with justice and uprightness. More particularly, let us remember what the Lord Jesus Christ said in one of his lessons on mildness and forbearance. Be merciful, he told us, that you may obtain mercy; forgive, that you may be forgiven. What you do yourself, will be done to you; what you give, will be given to you; as you judge, so you will be judged; as you show kindness, so it will be shown to you. Your portion will be weighed out for you in your own scales. May this precept, and these commands, strengthen our resolve to live in obedience to his sacred words, and in humility of mind; for the holy word says, Whom shall I look upon, but him that is gentle and peaceable, and trembles at my sayings?

**T**hus there exists a vast heritage of glorious achievements for us to share in. Let us then make haste and get back to the state of tranquillity which was set before us in the beginning as the mark for us to aim at. Let us turn our eyes to the Father and Creator of the universe, and when we consider how precious and peerless are his gifts of peace, let us embrace them eagerly for ourselves.

## *Ss. Perpetua and Felicitas, Martyrs*

*Feast day - March 6*

**A**utobiographies provide a wonderful “inside” story that mere biographies cannot match. Diaries offer the reader not just the external facts but also the thoughts and feelings of the writer. Eye witness reports give more detailed information than can be gathered later by someone who was not there.

**W**e are blessed in the Church to have the words, thoughts, beliefs, and feelings of numerous saints to aid us in our journeys toward Heaven. Among the most dramatic of such accounts is that of St. Perpetua, who with her servant Felicitas and a number of other companions was martyred in the city of Carthage in the year 203.

**P**erpetua was a 22-year-old with a new-born infant. Her slave, Felicitas, was eight months pregnant. They and their companions were catechumens preparing to be baptized when the Emperor Severus began a violent persecution against Christians,

ordering that there be no more conversions to this “subversive” religion. Even when the persecution reached Carthage the friends were unwavering in their desire to be united with Christ in His Church.

Despite being the wife and daughter of prominent Carthage citizens, Perpetua was arrested and imprisoned in a private house, there to await a hearing before the Procurator of the province. Here the young mother began to keep an account of the events which followed and the internal struggles she endured.

Following our Lord’s admonition that “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me” and “he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of Me” [Matt. 10:37] was the first great challenge for Perpetua. Her father, who was still a pagan, tried everything in his power - from begging to beating - to convince her to do the thing that would save her life: renounce Christ. But she would not relent.



The prisoners received the gift of the Holy Spirit in Baptism during this time and were shortly thereafter transferred to a common prison. The place was dark and hot and the prisoners were ill-treated by the soldiers on guard. But deacons from the church were able to minister to the Christian inmates by bribing the soldiers and they brought Perpetua’s son to her for nursing.

Perpetua’s father continued in his attempts to rescue her. According to her account:

..my father came from the city to the prison, overwhelmed with grief. “Daughter,” said he, “have pity on my grey hairs, have compassion on your father...make me not a reproach to mankind. Have respect for your mother and your aunt; have compassion on your child that cannot survive you; lay aside this resolution, this obstinacy, lest you ruin us all...” He took me by the hands at the same time and kissed them; he threw himself at my feet in tears... I confess, I was pierced with sharp sorrow when I considered that my father was the only person of our family that would not rejoice at my martyrdom. I endeavored to comfort him, saying, “Father, grieve not; nothing will happen but what pleases God; for we are not at our own disposal.” He then departed very much concerned.

The prisoners were brought before Hilarion, the Procurator to be interrogated. Among those in the crowd of people who came to watch was Perpetua’s father, who appeared with her baby in his arms as she was being questioned in a last effort to

change her mind. But each of the prisoners answered clearly “Yes” to the question of whether they were Christians and the sentence was pronounced: death by exposure to wild beasts.

The companions now had to face the challenge of fear in the face of violent, painful death. Perpetua was given the gift of visions to aid in overcoming this fear and as an inspiration to the others. She had vivid dreams of those who had already received the crown of martyrdom and she was led through a “preview” of the coming battle in the arena in which she was victorious over her foes. One of the other companions, Saturus, also had a vision in which angels led the friends to a beautiful garden where they met others of their church who had suffered before them.

Shortly before the festival on which the Christians were to provide the “entertainment” for the public, St. Felicitas went into labor and was delivered of a baby girl. The child was taken by another Christian woman of the city to raise as her own.

Perpetua’s diary ends at this point and an eye witness supplies the remaining details of the martyrs’ final hours. On the night before the “show”, the prisoners were fed well and the curious public was invited to come and watch the condemned at their last meal. The Christians were able to inspire several, including Pudens, the keeper of the prison, to conversion.

As the prisoners entered the arena, they called out to Hilarion, “You judge us in this world, but God will judge you in the next.” Different kinds of wild animals were released upon each of them - a bear, a wild boar, a leopard. Perpetua and Felicitas were tossed about by a wild cow. Their clothes and their bodies were torn, but they remained alive, Perpetua enduring all as if in a trance.

Finally, as was the custom, when the people had had their fill of the bloody combat, soldiers finished off the martyrs with the sword. The newly-baptized Christians of Carthage, confessing Christ to the end, received their heavenly palms on March 7, 203. Within 50 years, the witness of these saints of God was being celebrated all over the Christian world.

Because we have the diary of this courageous saint and the account of the martyrdom of the companions from a sympathetic eye witness, those of us who face many lesser dangers and persecutions can be inspired to keep the faith and persevere in our commitment to Christ. We know that Ss. Perpetua and Felicitas and their companions are praying for us on our journey.



*The Sunday of Orthodoxy -  
20th March*

## Parish News

Our ninth Annual Parish Meeting was held after Mass on Sunday, February 13 (rescheduled due to inclement weather). Parish Treasurer, Karl Tsuji presented the 2004 financial report and the 2005 budget. Parish Council Chairman, Jim O'Neill and Fr. Nicholas discussed the state of the parish, which included announcing that Eldbrooke Methodist Church will be closed later this year and thus we have about a year to find a new location to meet. Jimmy Lang was elected and Brian Green re-elected to positions on the Parish Council.

We will welcome David and Jennifer Caldwell as members of the Holy Orthodox Church and St. Gregory's parish by the Sacrament of Chrismation on February 27. Their sons, Nathan and Benjamin, will be baptized on Saturday, March 5, at 10:00AM. All are invited to share in this joyous occasion.

St. Gregory's collected 80 pounds of canned goods for the Annual Archdiocesan "Food for the Hungry" program and (via delivery by Karl Tsuji) this food has been donated to the Carpenter's Shelter in Alexandria.

Many thanks to Fr. Stephen Walinski of Omaha, Nebraska who filled in while the Alford's were in Turkey. Thanks also to Subdeacon Jerome for his extra efforts which included serving as the Walinskis' tour guide around Washington.

On Thursday, March 24<sup>th</sup>, St. Gregory's will welcome Bishop THOMAS for our celebration of the Feast of the Annunciation. Bishop THOMAS, recently consecrated in Damascus, is the new Bishop of Pittsburgh and the East. He previously served as the pastor of St. Nicholas Church in Pinellas Park, Florida. His Grace will meet with the Parish Council on Tuesday evening for dinner at the O'Neills and will greet the entire congregation at the Mass at 7:30PM on the 24<sup>th</sup>, with a potluck dinner following.

The First Sunday in Lent, March 20<sup>th</sup>, is also the Sunday of Orthodoxy, an annual celebration of the triumph of the Orthodox faith over heresy and persecution, remembering the return of the icons to the churches in 843AD. This year our pan-orthodox Vespers will be held at St. George Greek Orthodox Church, Bradley Blvd., in Bethesda at 5PM.

Beginning March 29<sup>th</sup>, there will be a Lenten class on Tuesday Evenings at 7:30PM, concluding with the service of Compline. Location to be announced.



*The Eve of the Feast of the Annunciation - March 24th*

# The Bishop

An excerpt from Fr. John Abdalah's editorial in *The Word*, February 2005



**T**he bishop is set aside to champion the faith. He joins a tradition of champions who have lived a continuous life of worship and prayer, maintaining the faith of the apostles. The bishop surrounds himself with presbyters who share this life, and who have been ordained into this same ministry and life. He feeds himself with the same faith of his faithful, who have been baptized into this same royal priesthood of Jesus Christ. The Church gathers regularly to share God's fellowship, love, and truth. We gather around our bishop to be the Church, that is, to offer our holy oblation of work and praise.

**T**he bishop is the pastor of pastors and the shepherd of shepherds. The parish priest need not be pastorless. The bishop will provide the kind of pastoring for the pastor and his family that the local pastor provides for his congregation. He will live among the pastors, reminding them of the goals that God has for us, keeping us in a truthful perspective. If a priest or deacon forgets his mission, the bishop will provide with his staff the gentle guidance to bring the clergyman back to Christ's path. The staff of the shepherd is for gentle nudges which refocus the attention of the sheep on the right way.

**T**he bishop will provide vision for the diocese, assessing all of the needs and overseeing all of the resources. He will dream dreams, and see visions (Joel 2:28) for, without visions, surely we would perish. The bishop stands at the helm, sees the goal, and steers the Church. Having a clear vision, the diocese will share that clarity with each parish, providing her with the clarity she needs to fulfill her mission.

**T**he bishop will rightly divide the word of truth, providing the faithful with guidance in articulating and proclaiming the faith. He will wisely choose good words to support the ministry of the people in his care. He will teach the congregations, he will inspire them, and he will love them. The bishop will supervise the activities of the churches, assuring that they don't forget what it means to be the Church, and assuring that every action of the parish reflects and is in line with the vision and mission of the Church.

**T**he bishop is called to be a "prince of the Church," "the master of God's house." The master makes sure that all of the needs of the members of the household are met. He takes real interest in all of the details. He provides the Church with all that She needs. He is a faithful steward...

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>March 2005</h1>						<i>Ab - Abbot</i> <i>B - Bishop</i> <i>C - Confessor</i> <i>D - Doctor</i> <i>M - Martyr</i>
<i>Fasting with Abstinence from Meat, Dairy, Alcohol &amp; Olive Oil begins on Ash Wednesday in the Western Rite</i>		<b>1</b> St. David of Wales, BC, 544	<b>2</b> St. Chad, BC, 672	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> 10AM Holy Baptism  No Vespers
<b>6</b> Sexagesima comm. Ss. Perpetua & Felicity, MM, 203  <i>Matins - 8:30</i> <i>Sung Mass - 9</i>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b> St. Gregory of Nyssa, BCD, 394	<b>10</b> 40 Martyrs of Sebaste, 320	<b>11</b> St. Sophronius of Jerusalem, BCD, c. 369	<b>12</b>  <i>Vespers at 6PM</i>
<b>13</b> Solemnity of St. Gregory the Great, BCD, 604 comm. Quinquagesima <i>Matins - 8:30</i> <i>Sung Mass - 9</i>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b> Ash Wednesday  <i>Sung Mass with Blessing &amp; Imposition of Ashes at 7:30PM</i>	<b>17</b> St. Patrick, BC 461	<b>18</b> St. Cyril of Jerusalem, BC, 386	<b>19</b> St. Joseph, Spouse of the BVM  <i>Vespers at 6PM</i>
<b>20</b> Lent I: The Sunday of Orthodoxy comm. St. Cuthbert, BC, 687 <i>Matins - 8:30</i> <i>Sung Mass - 9</i>	<b>21</b> Repose of St. Benedict, Ab, c. 550	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b> Ember Wednesday	<b>24</b> St. Gabriel the Archangel  <i>Sung Mass at 7:30PM</i>	<b>25</b> Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary comm. Ember Friday	<b>26</b> Ember Saturday  <i>Vespers at 6PM</i>
<b>27</b> Lent II comm. St. John of Damascus, CD  <i>Matins - 8:30</i> <i>Sung Mass - 9</i>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>  <i>Lenten Class and Compline at 7:30PM, location TBA</i>	<b>30</b> St. John of the Ladder, Ab, 649	<b>31</b> St. Innocent of Alaska, BC, 1879	<b>1</b> St. Melito of Sardis, BC, 177	<b>2</b>  <i>Vespers at 6PM</i>

*Confessions are heard during the Psalms at Matins, following Vespers, and by appointment*

*Coffee Hour follows Sunday Liturgy*