

✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

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

A Reading from The Exposition of the Holy Gospel according to St. Luke by St. Ambrose

d. 397

feast day - December 7

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And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel. The birth of the Lord is attested not only by Angels, Prophets and shepherds, but also by elders and just men. Every age, and both sexes, as well as the wonders of the events themselves, are here present to strengthen our faith. A virgin conceiveth, a barren woman beareth, a dumb man speaketh, Elisabeth prophesieth, the wise man worshippeth, the unborn child leapeth, the widow praiseth, and the just man waiteth.

Well is he called just, who looked not for favor for himself but for consolation for his people. He desired to be set free from the bondage of this frail body, but he waited to see the Promised One; for he knew that blest are the eyes that see him. Then took he him up in his arms, and blest God, and said, "*Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word.*" Behold a just man, confined in the weary prison of the body, desiring to depart, and to begin to be with Christ! For it is far better to depart and to be with Christ.

Whosoever will depart and be with Christ, let him come into the temple. Yea, let him come, as to Jerusalem, and wait for the Lord's Christ. Let him take hold on the Word of God, let him embrace the same with good works, as it were with arms of faith. Then let him depart in peace, for he who hath seen Life, shall not see death. Behold how the Lord's birth doth overflow with abounding grace for all, and prophecy was not denied except to the unbelieving. Behold, Simeon prophesieth that the Lord Jesus Christ is come for the fall and rising again of many. Yea, he shall separate the just from the unjust by their deserts. And according as our work shall be, so shall the true and righteous Judge command us to be punished or rewarded.

St. Ethelbert, King and Confessor - Feast Day - February 25



*A stone carving of
St. Ethelbert*

The responsibilities of political leadership are great. Whether a public official is elected or receives his position through inheritance, his (or her) duty to protect, defend, and guide the people in his charge must be taken very seriously. The world has known many leaders who yielded to the temptation for selfish, tyrannical rule or who, through weakness, abandoned and neglected the needs of their people. But St. Paul reminds us that all governing authority comes from God [Romans 13:1] and - praise be to God - the world has also known many rulers who, through Him, were able to lead their people to better, holier lives. St. Ethelbert of Kent was such a ruler.

When Ethelbert inherited his position from his father in 560, the kingdom of Kent was being ruled by several overlords. After a long period of peace, the kingdom reached a high level of prosperity and culture. Through peaceful relations and diplomacy, Ethelbert rose to the pre-eminent position of power and influence among the English people, eventually to be called “King of the English”.

Ethelbert was a shrewd politician. In order to broaden the prestige of his kingdom, he cultivated relations with the kingdom of the Franks. This led to marriage with Bertha, the daughter of Charibert, the king of Paris. Determined to be well thought of on both sides of the channel, Ethelbert agreed to the condition of the marriage contract that allowed Bertha to practice her Christian religion and to bring with her a bishop as chaplain.

As all good rulers have done, King Ethelbert allowed a certain amount of personal freedom among his subjects, and he showed this most prominently with Queen Bertha. Not only was she allowed to be openly Christian, but the king gave her chaplain the ancient Roman church of St. Martin to use for Christian services. The king continued in the worship of Odin, the religion of his ancestors, but the fact that he did not impose this religion on others made for good relations, not only within his family, but also with other kingdoms.

The arrival of a large group of Christian monks from Rome in the year 597 presented Ethelbert with a new challenge. He could have taken this as an “invasion” of sorts and banned the party from entering his kingdom. He could have feared a greatly increased influence by foreigners, one which would tip the balance toward the religion of the foreigners. He was cautious in meeting with this

delegation - insisting that the meeting be outdoors to prevent the monks from casting a magic “spell” on him, a precaution which his pagan subjects would have appreciated. Ethelbert knew full well that Christians did not cast spells, as in all the years of his marriage, his Christian wife had not bewitched him, but this action made for good public relations.

Augustine and the other monks from the monastery of St. Andrew had been sent by a diplomat with greater political experience and expertise than the king. St. Gregory the Great, who had fulfilled a life-long missionary desire by sending the monks to convert the Angles, had served as the Roman prefect before becoming a monk and then had served as a papal emissary in Constantinople. St. Gregory knew how to open relations with a minor ruler in a small corner of the world, in a part of the Empire which Rome had abandoned. He instructed Augustine’s party to take Frankish interpreters with them. Ethelbert had to be receptive to his wife’s people, who spoke the same language and who knew the proper protocol when approaching a man of his stature. Gregory also sent gifts and letters of greeting, and, in Ethelbert’s mind, these came from a very great man who was a subject of the greatest man, the Roman Emperor.

The king listened politely to the initial speeches of the Romans. He said that, although he personally did not share their beliefs, he would not prevent others from doing so. The monks were given a place to live in Canterbury and freedom to preach Christianity.

As more and more of his subjects accepted the Christian religion, King Ethelbert continued to receive letters from Pope Gregory, encouraging him to establish a Christian kingdom as the Emperor Constantine had. Gradually, the king’s heart and mind were opened to accept the good news of the resurrected Christ, and Ethelbert was baptized into the Church. He was not afraid to abandon the traditions of his pagan forefathers when he became convinced of the Truth. But once again, Ethelbert did not force his subjects to do the same. Slowly, through his example, the people followed in his footsteps.

Now the politician strove to become close to God, to be not only a good ruler, but to live a holy life. One of the first tasks that the now Christian King Ethelbert undertook was the passing of just laws for the fair governance and safety of the people. Among these laws were provisions for protection from violence for Christians (the clergy particularly) and churches. Although his desire was to destroy the houses of pagan worship, Ethelbert followed Pope Gregory’s advice and sanctioned the re-consecration of these buildings - as well as the seasonal festivals celebrated in them - for Christian worship. The king



*We will celebrate
the Eve of the Feast
of the Presentation
on February 1st*

built a monastery and church dedicated to Ss. Peter and Paul, he founded a cathedral in Canterbury and provided for the establishment of churches in Rochester and London.

When he fell asleep in the Lord in 616, the king's relics were buried in the Church of Ss. Peter and Paul, where he was venerated from very early times. Many miracles were reported at his shrine through the centuries until the destruction at the time of the Reformation.

We pray that St. Ethelbert, King and Confessor, will intercede for our civic officials, that they may, through tolerance and by good example, rule the people justly, pass laws for the common good of all, and finally rest in the kingdom of Christ, our King and God.

Sources: *Christianity in England from Roman Times to the Reformation*, by Kenneth Hylson-Smith; *The Lives of the Fathers, Martyres, and Other Principal Saints*, Vol. I, by Rev. Alban Butler; *The Rise of Western Christendom* by Peter Brown.

Antakya (Antioch)

The Feast of the Chair of St. Peter at Antioch, celebrating the first See of St. Peter the Apostle, is commemorated by the Church on February 22. St. Peter was Bishop of Antioch from about 45 to 53AD. Today Antioch is within the Archdiocese of Aleppo in Syria; the following history of the city is adapted from the website of the Archdiocese of Aleppo.



The entrance to the grotto of St. Peter - the first Church in Antioch

The city of Antioch-on-the-Orontes (modern Antakya) is located in modern-day Turkey. It was founded near the end of the 4th century BC by Seleucus I Nicator, who made it the capital of what was then Syria. Seleucus I had served as one of Alexander the Great's generals, and the name Antiochus occurred frequently amongst members of his family. Josephus, the first century Jewish historian, says that Antioch was considered the third most important city of the Empire, after Rome and Alexandria (Wars 3:2.4). He also comments on a large Jewish community that lived there and converted many Greeks to proselytes of Judaism (War 7:3.3).

In the New Testament, Antioch was one of the most prominent cities in the movement of early followers of Jesus. Some were no doubt converted at Pentecost, like Nicolas of Antioch (Acts 6:5) who was appointed to aid the church in Jerusalem. Many, however, were likely first acquainted with the faith through those who fled persecution after the stoning of Stephen (Acts 11:19). Upon hearing of the growing community of faith in Antioch, Barnabas was dispatched from Jerusalem to visit the new community forming

there (Acts 11:23ff). This mission was the catalyst for Barnabas to search out Saul of Tarsus, and enlist his aid in accompanying him on this mission. Paul followed Barnabas and stayed on at Antioch to preach the Gospel for the next year. It was here that that followers of Jesus Christ were first called Christians [Acts 11:26] and that Paul preached his first Christian sermon in a synagogue [Acts 15:35].

Two significant earthquakes preceded the years leading up to the visit by Paul. The city was rebuilt during the reigns of Caligula (37-41 AD) and Claudius (41-54 AD), but some speculate that the disastrous destruction may have made people more open to spiritual warnings and more receptive to the message of Paul.

As Christianity spread, Antioch became the seat of one of the five original patriarchates, along with Jerusalem, Alexandria, Constantinople, and Rome. Today it remains the seat of our patriarchate, although the Patriarch has resided in Damascus since the 13th century.

For several centuries Antioch was an important city in the Byzantine Empire. In 526 the city suffered a severe earthquake and in 540 it was captured by Persia, and later on by the Muslims in 636. The city remained in Arab hands until 969, when it was recovered by the Byzantine Emperor Nicephorus II Phocas. The city was lost again, to the Seljuk Turks, in 1085. 13 years later, it was captured by the Crusaders, and became the capital of an independent Principality of Antioch. The city remained in Crusader hands for the better part of the 12th and 13th centuries, until it was finally captured by the Mamluk Sultan Baibars in 1268. Baibars' destruction of the city was so great that it was never a major city again, with much of its former role falling to the port city of Alexandretta (Iskenderun). It was further damaged by Tamerlane in 1401. In 1516 Antioch was taken by the Ottoman Empire. The city was held (1832-40) by Muhammad Ali of Egypt, and in 1872 it was badly disrupted by an earthquake. After World War I, Antioch was incorporated into the French Syria League of Nations mandate. In 1939 it was restored to Turkey as part of Hatay province.

Outside the town, one can still visit the grotto of St. Peter - the cave church from which the Apostle preached for the first time and where he established the Christian community.



*St. Peter the
Apostle - first
Bishop of Antioch*

Parish News

Despite frigid temperatures following a snowy weekend, the annual March for Life, held near the date of the Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe vs. Wade* decision, brought many participants to Washington. All those who came as individuals or as groups from parishes, schools, seminaries, and monasteries (including "Medical Students for Life" and "New York Rabbis for Life") joined together to peacefully express the hope that our country will once again protect the lives of the most vulnerable - unborn children. Among the members of congress and religious leaders who spoke prior to the beginning of the March was Metropolitan Herman of the Orthodox Church of America. Metropolitan Herman also led Orthodox participants in prayers at the conclusion of the March. He is shown

here with some of the other Orthodox marchers.



We will celebrate the Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple (also known as the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Candelmas) on the eve, February 1, with a Sung Mass at 7:30PM. We begin this service

with the blessing of candles to be used in church throughout the year, and we end with the annual St. Blaise blessing for protection from illnesses of the throat. A pot-luck supper will follow the service.

We end this season of Epiphany on Sunday, February 20, when we "bury" the Alleluia until its use is restored at the Paschal Vigil on April 30. Then follows *Pre-Lent*, a three-week transition period from Epiphany to Lent (sometimes referred to as the "gesimas" for the proper Sunday names of Septuagesima, Sexagesima, and Quinquagesima).

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>February 2005</h1>						
		1 St. Ignatius of Antioch, BM, c. 107 <i>7:30 Sung Mass, pot-luck supper following</i>	2 Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple FAST	3 St. Blaise, BM, c. 316	4 Neo-Martyrs of Russia, Mm, 1917 and following FAST	5 St. Agatha, VM, c. 250 <i>6PM Vespers</i>
6 5 th Sunday After the Epiphany <i>8:30AM Matins 9AM Sung Mass</i>	7 St. Romuald, Abbot, 1027	8 Feria	9 St. Cyril of Alexandria, BC, 444 FAST	10 St. Scholastica, V, 543	11 St. Benedict of Aniane, Ab., 821 FAST	12 Feria <i>6PM Vespers</i>
13 6 th Sunday After the Epiphany <i>8:30AM Matins 9AM Sung Mass</i>	14 St. Valentine, PrM, 3 rd c.	15 Feria	16 St. Nicholas of Japan, BC, 1912 FAST	17 St. Flavian, BM, 449	18 St. Simeon of Jerusalem, BM, 1 st c., St. Colman, BC, 674 FAST	19 Feria <i>6PM Vespers</i>
20 Last Sunday After Epiphany <i>8:30AM Matins 9AM Sung Mass</i>	21 Feria	22 Chair of St. Peter at Antioch; St. Joseph of Arimathea, C, 1 st c.	23 Vigil of St. Mathias FAST	24 St. Matthias, Apostle, 1 st c.	25 St. Walburga, Abbess, 779, St. Ethelbert, KC, 616 FAST	26 Feria <i>6PM Vespers</i>
27 Septuagesima <i>8:30AM Matins 9AM Sung Mass</i>	28 St. Oswald of Worcester, BC, 992					

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

Coffee Hour follows Sunday Liturgy