

✠ 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 a Sermon by Saint Theodore the Studite

*Confessor
d. 826
feast day - November 11*

Inside:

*St. Fiacre 2
Summer Schedule 4
Calendar 6, 7*

To do justice to the holy celebrations proclaimed for today, my friends, our words call for the sound of the trumpet, for the voice of the horn sounding out more loudly and echoing to the ends of the earth; yet I fear they must be borne by the weak instrument of our own voices. Still, the queen and mistress of the world cares little for honor, and may well accept our short, poor discourse, offered here in her service, as graciously as the long and splendid works of great orators. For she is moved by the prayers of those who have asked me to speak, since she values true goodness, after all, and looks only at our intentions.

But come, gather around me, everyone under heaven - all you hierarchs and priests, monks and people of the world, kings and rulers, men and women, young men and maidens, of all nations and tongues, of every race and every people - change your clothes for the robes of virtue, wrap yourselves in them as in "bright garments fringed with gold" [Ps. 45:13], and come with hearts rejoicing to celebrate the festival of the burial and the passing [into glory] of Mary, the Mother of the Lord. For she has gone away from here and draws near the eternal mountains, she who is the true Mt. Sion, where God was pleased to dwell, as the Psalmist's lyre sings [Ps. 132:14]. Today she who was heaven on earth is wrapped in a cloak of incorruptibility; she has moved to a better, more blessed dwelling-place. Today the spiritual moon, shining with the light of God, has come into heavenly conjunction with the "sun of righteousness," eclipsing her temporary home in this present life; rising anew in his home, she is radiant with the dignity of immortality. Today that ark of holiness, wrought with gold and divinely furnished, has been lifted up from her tabernacle on earth and is borne towards the Jerusalem above, to unending rest; and David, the ancestor of God, poet as he is, strikes up a song for us

and cries, “Virgins” - meaning souls - “will be led to the King” - to you, O God - “behind her” [Ps. 45:14].



Now the Mother of God shuts her material eyes, and opens her spiritual eyes towards us like great shining stars that will never set, to watch over us and to intercede before the face of God for the world's protection. Now those lips, moved by God's grace to articulate sounds, grow silent, but she opens her 'spiritual' mouth to intercede eternally for all of her race. Now she lowers those bodily hands that once bore God, only to raise them, in incorruptible form, in prayer to the Lord on behalf of all creation. At this moment her natural form, radiant as the sun, is hidden; yet her light shines through her painted image, and she offers it to the people for the life-giving kiss of relative veneration, even if the heretics are unwilling. The holy dove has flown to her home above, yet she does not cease to protect those below; departing from her body, she is with us in spirit; gathered up to heaven, she banishes demons by her intercession with the Lord.

Long ago, death took charge of the world through our ancestor Eve; but now it has engaged in combat with her blessed daughter and been beaten away, conquered by the very source from whom it had received its power. Let the race of women rejoice, then, for it has received glory in place of shame! Let Eve be glad, for she is under a curse no more, having produced in Mary a child of blessing. Let the whole of creation jump for joy, drinking the mystical flood of incorruption from that virgin spring and putting an end to its mortal thirst. These are the things we celebrate today, this is the subject of our solemn song: Mary provides it for us - the root of Jesse who bore the flower Christ; the rod of Aaron with its sacred bud; the spiritual Paradise containing the tree of life; the meadow alive with the fragrance of virginity; the blooming vine, cultivated by God, which became the ripe grape flowing with life; the high, exalted cherubim-throne of the universal king; the home full of the glory of the Lord; the sacred veil of Christ; the bright land of sunrise. She has fallen asleep in peace and righteousness - fallen asleep, I say, but she is not dead! She has passed on from us, yet she does not cease to protect her people.

Saint Fiacre ~ Feast Day, August 30

And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed.” [Gen. 2:8]

Holy Scripture abounds in references to gardens, beginning with that most perfect garden, Eden, where men still “walked

with God.” Our Savior spent the last night before his death in the Garden of Gethsemane and was crucified and buried in a garden. *Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden.*
[John 19:41]

Jesus’ parables are also full of references to planting, weeding, and harvesting. It is obvious that God has intended for his people to be connected to this fruitful earth and to make use of its bounty.

Historically, monasteries have had a special vocation for planting and tending gardens. After the first monks had fled to the Egyptian desert to live in solitude, and monasticism spread to the West, most monastics began to live in community with others and in harmony with their surroundings.

St. Benedict, in the early 6th century, established a “rule” which soon became the norm for most Western monastic houses. This rule required, in addition to prayer and study, useful work of some kind and this always included farming (or gardening) to help provide food for the monastery. In the next century, an Irish hermit became so associated with the art of gardening that he is known as the patron saint of gardeners.

Fiacre is believed to have been the son of an Irish chieftain, the leader of a large “tuath” or settlement populated by an extended family - a clan. His father wanted him to join in leading the clan, but Fiacre desired nothing more than to live a quiet life of prayer and fasting in solitude. He had received his education at a monastery and preferred the life that monks led to that of going to war against rival clans.

After several years of life on the banks of the Nore River, where he lived in a cave near a well with a garden for food, Fiacre had acquired a number of followers. Many came to him for words of wisdom or for herbs for physical ailments and some stayed to share in this quiet life. So, like many others, Fiacre left his hermitage and pursued solitude in exile from his homeland. Journeying to the continent, he settled near Meaux (south of Paris) around 626.

Fiacre asked the bishop for a plot of land to till to sustain himself, and Bishop Faro offered him as much land as he could “turn over” in one day. A miracle then occurred which was a sign of the plans that God had for this lowly monk. As Fiacre moved around the land, carrying his shovel and examining the soil, trees and shrubs fell over and the ground turned over by itself, ready to be planted, providing the monk with a large farm suitable for many more inhabitants than one solitary hermit.



Image of St. Fiacre in the Alford's herb garden

It did not take long for word to spread about this monk and his gift of miracles. His holiness of living was also noticed and once again many other men came to follow him in this life. Fiacre had to establish a monastery with a pattern of work, study and prayer for the monks. With wood from the trees which fell and stones from his land, he built a chapel dedicated to the Mother of God. He soon added an infirmary for the many sick who came for help and he built a hospice for travelers, especially poor pilgrims from his native Ireland.



Abbot Fiacre remained in charge of the gardens. This was the work he loved the most and it was the vehicle for his gift of healing. People came from great distances to receive tonics and salves - as well as prayers - from Fiacre, and many miraculous healings resulted. The abbot used very ordinary herbs and plants and, through the healing power of the Holy Spirit, was able to ease the suffering of many people.

Even after his death around 670, St. Fiacre's gardens flourished and throughout the centuries since that time, miracles of healing have been attributed to his intercession. Because carriages could be hired to take people from the Hôtel Saint-Fiacre in Paris out to his shrine, the name *fiacre* eventually came to be applied to the carriages themselves. The name is still used for taxi-cabs in France and taxi drivers have also adopted the saint as their patron.

St. Fiacre provides us with an example of how we are to use whatever gifts God has given us to help others and a reminder to rejoice in the beauty and bounty which God has provided in the gardens of this world. We give thanks for the fruits of the earth and we implore the intercessions of St. Fiacre for the healing of bodily infirmities.

Summer Schedule

We will welcome Eve Theodora O'Neill into the Church through the sacrament of Holy Baptism on Saturday, July 24, at 10:30 am at Ss. Peter & Paul Church in Potomac. All are invited to be a part of this celebration.

The special Archdiocesan Convention will be held in Pittsburgh July 16-18 (*no Vespers at St. Gregory's on July 17*). This convention has been called by Metropolitan PHILIP to consider a revised constitution and budget which will reflect our new status of self-rule and to vote on nominees as potential new bishops for the archdiocese. The Alford, Jerry Chiles and the O'Neill family will be attending this convention. Each parish has been given a list of seven men who meet the canonical

requirements to become bishops (i.e., celibate, graduates of Orthodox seminaries...). Those names chosen by the delegates to the convention will be submitted to our Synod (which consists of the Metropolitan and our current auxiliary bishops, JOSEPH, ANTOUN, and BASIL) who, along with representatives from the Holy Synod of Antioch, will make final choices of four men to be consecrated as our new bishops. The Archdiocese will be organized into dioceses (roughly corresponding to the current regions). May the Holy Spirit guide the Church as these important decisions are made.

Our Saturday Vespers service will be discontinued during the month of August (through Labor Day weekend) and will resume on Saturday, September 11. On Monday, August 5, we will celebrate the Eve of the Transfiguration with Sung Mass at 7:30 and a pot-luck supper.

Hymn for the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary (July 2)

*Portal of the world's Salvation, Mary, Mother high in fame,
maiden humble, maiden gentle, fair in form, and void of blame,
o'er the mountain ways of Judah with her heavenly burden came.*

*She the serpent's head who bruiseeth, Bush unburnt by Horeb's flame,
Gideon's fleece which Heaven bedeweth, Rod that tells of Aaron's fame,
of the Bridegroom spouse beloved, undefiled is her name.*

*She the Branch of Jesse blooming, Mother of Emmanuel,
Portal closed to man forever, as Ezekiel did foretell,
Mount, before whose stone the image crushed, in Daniel's vision, fell.*

*Maid beloved, she ever gloweth with the fire of charity,
kinship's pure embrace returning by a gentle ministry
waiting for the Birth mysterious in her gladness patiently.*

*Blessed was that priestly dwelling, honored by so great a Guest,
blessed she whose love abounding bade her cousin share her rest;
but of Jesus, John surpassing, be the higher grade confessed.*

*Glory be to God the Father, ruler of the world's array;
glory unto thee, Redeemer, Fount of grace, thy servant's pay;
and to thee, Creator Spirit, equal laud be done for aye. Amen.*



Verses from *Mundi salus affutura* (15th c. Sarum Breviary)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>July 2004</h1>						
				1 St. Gall, BC	2 Visitation of the BVM FAST	3 St. Leo II of Rome, BC <i>6PM Vespers</i>
4 Pentecost V 8:30AM <i>Matins</i> 9AM <i>Sung</i> <i>Mass</i>	5 within the Octave of Ss. Peter & Paul	6 St. Palladius, BC	7 Ss. Cyril & Methodius, Bb, Cc FAST	8 Feria	9 Feria FAST	10 St. Felicitas & Seven Holy Brothers, Mm <i>6PM Vespers</i>
11 Pente- cost VI 8:30AM <i>Matins</i> 9AM <i>Sung</i> <i>Mass</i>	12 St. Pius I, BM	13 St. Ana- cletus, BM	14 Feria FAST	15 St. Vladi- mir of Kiev, KC	16 Feria FAST	17 St. Alex- ius, C <i>No Vespers</i>
18 Pente- cost VII 8:30AM <i>Matins</i> 9AM <i>Sung</i> <i>Mass</i>	19 St. Sergius of Radonezh, Abbot	20 St. Mar- garet of Antioch, VM	21 St. Prax- edes, V FAST	22 St. Mary Magdelene, Penitent	23 St. Apol- linaris, BM FAST	24 Vigil of St. James <i>6PM Vespers</i> FAST
25 St. James, Apostle[Comm Pentecost VIII 8:30AM <i>Matins</i> 9AM <i>Sung</i>	26 St. Anne, Mother of the BVM	27 St. Pante- leimon, C	28 St. Samson of Dol, BC	29 St. Martha of Bethany, V	30 Ss. Abdon & Sennen, Mm FAST	31 St. Germanu s of Auxerre, BC <i>6PM Vespers</i>

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

Coffee Hour follows Sung Mass

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>August 2004</h1>						
1 St. Peter's Chains [Comm Pentecost IX 8:30AM Matins 9AM Sung Mass	2 St. Stephen of Rome, BM	3 Finding of St. Stephen, Protomartyr	4 Feria FAST	5 St. Oswald, KM 7:30PM Sung Mass & Pot Luck Supper	6 The Transfiguration of Our Lord FAST	7 Holy Name of Jesus
8 Pentecost X 8:30AM Matins 9AM Sung Mass	9 Feria	10 St. Lawrence, Deacon & Martyr	11 Ss. Tiburtius & Susanna, Mm FAST	12 Feria	13 St. Maximus the Confessor, Abbot FAST	14 Vigil of the Assumption FAST
15 Assumption of the BVM 8:30AM Matins 9AM Sung Mass	16 St. Joachim, Father of the BVM	17 Within the Octave	18 St. Helena, Empress FAST	19 Within the Octave	20 Within the Octave	21 Within the Octave
22 Pentecost XII 8:30AM Matins 9AM Sung Mass	23 Vigil of St. Bartholomew FAST	24 St. Bartholomew, Apostle	25 St. Hilda, Abbess FAST	26 St. Zephyrinus, BM	27 Feria FAST	28 St. Augustine of Hippo, BCD
29 Beheading of St. John the Baptist 8:30AM Matins 9AM Sung Mass	30 St. Fiacre, Hermit	31 St. Aidan of Lindisfarne, BC				

Confessions are heard during the Psalms at Matins and by appointment

Coffee Hour follows Sung Mass