

✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

July/August 2005 - Volume X, Issue 7

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

A Reading from a homily by St. John of Damascus

*died c. 760AD
feast day - March 27*

Inside:

*St. Phocas the Gardener . . . 2
St. Oswald, King 3
Parish News 5
Calendar 6, 7*

We worship God; God, I repeat; not he who began to be, but, He Who Is, from all ages, above every cause, every design, every conception of our mind, above all nature. And we honor and venerate the Mother of God. We do not say the He derived the timeless beginning of His Godhead from her: for the birth of God the Word was not in time, and is Co-Eternal with the Father. We speak only of His second Birth, through His own deliberate Incarnation: for whose sake we know and confess. For our salvation, He became Incarnate Who was without a body like ours: that like by like might be redeemed. And He was made Flesh solely of this Sacred Virgin, and from her was brought forth; remaining wholly God, and becoming wholly man: wholly God in His body, and Perfect Man in His Divinity. And so, confessing that this Virgin is God's Mother, we celebrate her falling asleep; not proclaiming that she is God (such things belong to the Greek fables), since we are announcing her death; but we proclaim her as the Mother of God incarnate.

Let us who are the people of Christ, and enriched by Him, praise her this day with sacred canticles. Let us honor her with night-long vigils. Let us honor her with the purity of our soul and body; for she is in very truth the purest of all creatures and next to God himself: for it is natural for like to glory in like. Let us do honor to her by showing mercy and compassion to the poor. For if God is served by nothing as by mercy, who will refuse to give glory to God's Mother by this means? Through her the unspeakable abyss of God's love has been made open to all. Through her the age-long war against the Creator has been ended. Through her our reconciliation with Him is confirmed, and peace and grace restored to us. And we are friends with the angels; and we who before were dishonored, outcast, are now raised up as children of God. From her we have gathered the Fruit



of Life; through her we have gained possession of the seed of immortality. She has become for us the intermediary of all graces. In her God became man, and man became God. What more wondrous than this? What more blessed than this: I feel dizzy and fearful when I speak of it.

With Mary the prophetess [Ex. 15:20], O earnest souls, let us dance with the timbrels; that is, mortifying our members which are upon the earth [Col. 3:5]: For this is the mystical meaning of the timbrel. Let us cry aloud for victory before the Ark of the Lord God of souls, and the walls of Jerusalem shall fall down [Jos. 6:20]: and by this I mean the evil prisons of the demons who are our enemies. Let us dance in the Spirit with David [II Kings 6:14]. For today the Ark of the Lord is at rest. And with Gabriel, the foremost of the angels, let us cry out: Hail, full of grace; the Lord is with thee [Luke 1:28]. Hail, thou inexhaustible sea of grace! Hail, thou remedy that taketh pain from every heart! Hail, thou through whom death has been driven out and replaced by True Life!

St. Phocas, the Gardener - Feast day, July 2

St. Oswald, King - Feast day, August 5

We are reminded many times in Holy Scripture and in the witness of the saints that the Christian way of life is for all people and that God makes no distinctions among his children. There is neither rich nor poor, high or low estate, “neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for [we] are all one in Christ Jesus.” [Galatians 3:28]

Even a humble gardener can receive the heavenly reward of sainthood, as we see in the story of St. Phocas, who lived in the Black Sea port of Sinope near the gates of the city. He was a holy hermit - living alone and spending his time in prayer and in tending a garden near his cottage. Phocas also had a vocation for hospitality. Whenever anyone entered the city, they were greeted by him, and he offered them some of the fruits of his labors from his garden and a place to rest in his house. Visitors rarely received material sustenance only, for Phocas was a devout Christian and was anxious to share with others, in his simple language, the good news of Christ our Savior.

But even this seemingly insignificant member of society could not escape the vicious persecution that the Emperor

Diocletian imposed on Christians. Soldiers were sent to Sinope with orders to execute the known Christians, Phocas among them. When they arrived at the gate of the city near dark, the hermit greeted them in his usual fashion and offered them hospitality. The soldiers were grateful for this kind gesture and enjoyed a good meal from the hermit's garden. They told him the purpose of their visit to this city and who they were looking for. Did the hermit know the whereabouts of the "criminal" Phocas? Their host told them that, in the morning - after they had had a good night's rest - he would tell them where to find the man.

All that night, as the soldiers slept, Phocas dug in his garden until he had carved a hole large enough for a grave. In the morning, when the soldiers were thanking him for his hospitality, Phocas revealed to them that he was the man they sought. At first, they were shocked and begged the hermit to recant his beliefs so that they could release him. But Phocas told them how Christ had died for us and that he would never deny Him. Showing them the grave that he had prepared, he declared that he would be willing to share in our Lord's sufferings and die for Him. It was with great reluctance that the soldiers carried out their orders and beheaded Phocas, who received the martyr's crown around the year 320.



The story of the humble gardener's kindness to his executioners and his courage in the face of death spread, and now, as pilgrim's came to visit his grave at the gate of the city, many miracles were reported. One of Christ's lowliest followers was recognized as a saint of God. We celebrate the witness of St. Phocas on July 2.

I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of ungodliness. [Psalm 84:11]

At the other end of the social spectrum, we find another example of sainthood in St. Oswald, King of Northumbria. With a higher social position comes honor and power, but also a greater chance of rivalry, betrayal and assassination. This happened to Oswald's father, King Ethelfrith, who was killed by rivals and was succeeded by his brother-in-law, Edwin, in 616.

Oswald fled to safety among the Scots. There he discovered the peace and tranquility of St. Columba's monastery on the island of Iona. Through the example and teaching of the monks, Oswald was converted from paganism to Christianity, was baptized, and became a devout follower of Christ.

When his uncle Edwin died in 633, Oswald returned to Northumbria and was crowned king. The new king

continued to be plagued by warring neighbors, but eventually was able to establish peace. He wished also for spiritual peace for the people of Northumbria and so sent to Iona requesting monks to come and preach the faith in his land.

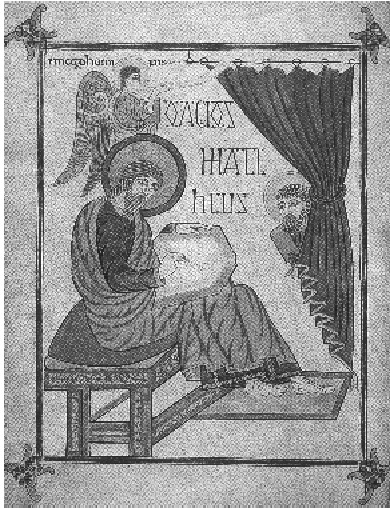
After the first monk who had been sent returned to Iona quickly with dismal reports, the Irish monk, Aidan, was chosen and was made a bishop for this work. His perseverance resulted in genuine conversions among the king's subjects.

Before Bishop Aidan gained sufficient proficiency in the English language, King Oswald went with him as he traveled about teaching, and the king acted as translator, ensuring that the people clearly understood the precepts of the faith.

King Oswald gave Bishop Aidan an island in this land, and the great monastery of Lindisfarne was established, soon flourishing with the vocations of Northumbrian men. The king also built churches for the people, and through his example - and without coercion - many of his subjects gave up the old life and became Christians.

Oswald was a true Christian ruler. Unlike most of his predecessors, he treated his subjects with fairness and generosity, being especially attentive to the needs of the poor. One story is told of a Paschal meal which he was sharing with Bishop Aidan. An attendant came to tell him that there was a crowd of poor people outside asking for assistance. The king sent his meal - a large silver tray laden with meat - to the people outside, providing them with food and silver that he ordered to be broken up and distributed among them. The bishop, wishing to acknowledge the king's generosity, took his hand and expressed the desire that this generous hand would live forever. This figure of speech was remembered many years later, when the king's relics remained incorrupt.

Unfortunately the temporal peace of Northumbria was not to last. After an 8-year reign, King Oswald was challenged by the violent pagan ruler of Mercia, Penda, who brought a great army of warriors against the king's forces. Oswald was killed on August 5, 642, praying for the souls of the soldiers with his last breath. Penda had his body dismembered and his head placed on a pole as a sign of his victory. But, as the saintliness of King Oswald had been acknowledged by his people during his lifetime, they now recognized his remains as holy relics, and took them to Lindisfarne monastery to be kept in the chapel for veneration. The presence of these relics brought about miracles of healing and reconciliation. Many years later, during the Danish invasions when the Lindisfarne monks had to escape with their precious



St. Matthew, from the Lindisfarne Gospel Book

Gospel books and relics, St. Oswald's head was placed in the same reliquary as the incorrupt body of St. Cuthbert and eventually buried in Durham Cathedral, where these relics remain today. We honor St. Oswald on his heavenly birthday, August 5.

All kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall do him service. [Psalm 72:11]

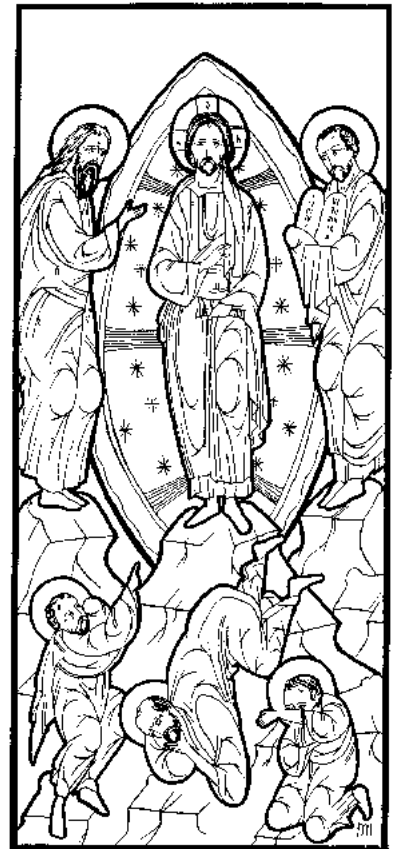
Parish News

During the months of July and August, the Church celebrates a number of important feast days. The Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary is July 2 (we will observe 2nd Vespers at 6PM). We will observe the Sunday in the Octave of Corpus Christi on Sunday, July 3, as we celebrate the great gift of the Holy Eucharist. On the Feast of the Transfiguration, Saturday, August 6, we will have Sung Mass at 10AM, followed by a pot-luck brunch; and the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (also called the Dormition of the Theotokos), August 15, will be celebrated on the Sunday following, August 21. By observing the yearly cycle of feast days, fasting times, and celebrations we enter more fully into the life of the Church.

Classes on the basics of the Orthodox faith are being held on Sunday mornings following coffee hour for catechumens and any others who are interested in refreshing your knowledge of the faith.

Fr. Nicholas, Kh. Rebecca, and Subdeacon Jerome (Jerry) Chiles will be attending the Parish Life Conference in New Jersey at the beginning of July and also the Archdiocesan Convention in Detroit at the end of the month. They will be reporting on these important gatherings of our church family in August.

Eldbrooke United Methodist Church, our "landlord" for the past six years, has now ceased to exist as a parish. Eldbrooke has been merged with Metropolitan United Methodist Church, and Methodist services will no longer be held on Sunday mornings in the River Road church. Our contract, and that of the other tenants (an after-school program, a Pentecostal congregation, a music teacher) with Eldbrooke will be honored during this next year, as decisions are made regarding the future of the Eldbrooke building. We may be able to move our service to a later hour in the near future - details to be announced. Meanwhile we continue in our search for a new place to meet and worship.



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>July 2005</h1>					1 St. Gall, BC, 553 [Eastern Region Parish Life Conference] FAST	2 Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary <i>6PM Vespers</i>
3 Sunday in the Octave of Corpus Christi [Comm. Pentecost 2] 8:30AM <i>Matins</i> 9AM Sung Mass	4 St. Andrew of Crete, BC, 740	5 Ss. Cyril & Methodius, BBCC, 9 th c.	6 Octave of Ss Peter & Paul FAST	7 Octave of Corpus Christi; St. Iltyd, Ab, 505	8 Feria FAST	9 Feria <i>6PM Vespers</i>
10 Pentecost 3 8:30AM <i>Matins</i> 9AM Sung Mass	11 St. Pius I, BM, c. 154	12 Feria	13 St. Anacletus, BM, 1 st c. FAST	14 Feria	15 St. Vladimir of Kiev, KC, 1015 FAST	16 Feria <i>6PM Vespers</i>
17 Pentecost 4 8:30AM <i>Matins</i> 9AM Sung Mass	18 St. Sergius of Radonezh, Ab, 1392	19 Feria	20 St. Margaret of Antioch, VM, c. 304 FAST	21 St. Praxedes of Rome, V, 2 nd c.	22 St. Mary Magdalene, Penitent, 1 st c. FAST	23 St. Apollinaris, BM, 1 st c.; St. John Cassian, Ab, 433 <i>6PM Vespers</i>
24 Pentecost 5 8:30 <i>Matins</i> 9AM Sung Mass	25 St. James the Greater, Apostle, 1 st c. [Archdiocesan Convention - through 7/31]	26 St. Anne, Mother of the BVM, 1 st c.	27 St. Pantaleimon, M, c. 305 FAST	28 St. Samson of Dol, BC, c. 565	29 St. Martha of Bethany, V, 1 st c. FAST	30 Ss. Abdon & Sennen, Mm, c. 303 <i>6PM Vespers</i>
31 Pentecost 6 8:30AM <i>Matins</i> 9AM Sung Mass						

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

Coffee Hour follows Sunday Liturgy. Catechumen classes and children's story time follow Coffee Hour.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>August 2005</h1>						
	1 St. Peter's Chains; St. Seraphim of Sarov, C, 1833	2 St. Stephen I, BM, 257	3 Finding of St. Stephen the Proto-martyr, 415 FAST	4 Feria	5 St. Oswald, K, 642 FAST	6 Transfiguration of Our Lord <i>10AM Sung Mass</i> <i>No Vespers</i>
7 Holy Name of Jesus [Comm. Pentecost 7] <i>8:30AM Matins</i> <i>9AM Sung Mass</i>	8 Ss. Cyriacus, Largus & Smaragdus, Mm, 304	9 Feria	10 St. Lawrence, Deacon & Martyr, 258 FAST	11 Feria	12 Feria	13 St. Maximus the Confessor, AbC, 662 <i>No Vespers</i>
14 Pentecost 8 <i>8:30AM Matins</i> <i>9AM Sung Mass</i>	15 Dormition [Assumption] of the BVM	16 St. Joachim Father of the BVM, 1 st c.; in the Octave of Assumption	17 in the Octave of Assumption FAST	18 St. Helen, Empress, 330; in the Octave of Assumption	19 in the Octave of Assumption FAST	20 in the Octave of Assumption <i>No Vespers</i>
21 Sun. in the Octave of the Assumption [Comm. Pent. 9] <i>8:30AM Matins</i> <i>9AM Sung Mass</i>	22 Octave of the Assumption	23 Vigil of St. Bartholomew	24 St. Bartholomew, Apostle, 1 st c. FAST	25 St. Hilda, Abbess, 680	26 St. Zephyrinus, BM, 219 FAST	27 Feria <i>No Vespers</i>
28 Pentecost 10 [Comm. St. Augustine] <i>8:30AM Matins</i> <i>9AM Sung Mass</i>	29 Beheading of St. John the Baptist	30 St. Fiacre, Hermit, 670	31 St. Aiden of Lindisfarne, BC, 651 FAST			

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

Coffee Hour follows Sunday Liturgy. Catechumen classes and children's story time follow Coffee Hour.