

✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

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

From a Homily of St. Gregory the Great

*Bishop and Confessor
and Doctor
d. 604AD*

feast day - March 12

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Our ancient enemy rose up against the first human being, our ancestor, in three temptations. He tempted him by gluttony, by vain glory and by avarice. And he overcame him when he tempted him, because he subjugated him through consent. He tempted him by gluttony when he showed him the forbidden food of the tree, and told him, "Taste it." He tempted him by vain glory when he said, "You will be like gods." He tempted him by adding avarice when he said, "knowing good and evil." Avarice is concerned not only with money but also with high position. We rightly call it avarice when we seek high position beyond measure. If grasping at honor was not related to avarice, Paul would not have said of God's only-begotten Son: "He did not think that being equal to God was something to be grasped." The devil drew our ancestor to pride by stirring him up to an avaricious desire for high position.

But the means by which he overcame the first man were the same ones which caused him to yield when he tempted the second.

He tempted him by gluttony when he said, "Tell these stones to become bread." He tempted him by vain glory when he said, "If you are the son of God, cast yourself down." He tempted him by an avaricious desire for high position when he showed him all the kingdoms of the world, saying, "I will give you all these if you will fall down and worship me." The second man overcame him by the same means he had boasted that he used to overcome the first man. As a captive he would depart from our hearts by the same avenue which had given him entrance when he possessed us.



St. Gregory the Great

But there is something else we have to consider too in this temptation of the Lord's, dearly beloved. When the Lord was tempted by the devil, he answered him with the commands of sacred Scripture. By the Word which he was, he could have plunged his tempter into the depths. He did not reveal the power of his might, but he only brought forth the precepts of Scripture. This was to give us an example of his patience, so that as often as we suffer something from vicious persons we should be aroused to teach rather than to exact revenge. Consider how great God's patience is, how great our impatience. If we are provoked by injuries, or by some attack, influenced by rage we either take vengeance for ourselves to the extent of our ability, or we threaten to do what we cannot. The Lord endured the devil's opposition, and he answered him with nothing except words of meekness. He put up with one he could have punished, so that this might all the more redound to his praise. He overcame his enemy not by destroying him but by suffering him for awhile.

St. Chad of Litchfield ~ Feast Day, March 2

During the last presidential election, we heard much about “chads”. After the reporters had exhausted their supply of words about such things as “dimpled chads” and “hanging chads”, they moved on to enlighten us about the country Chad and then to teach Americans - many for the first time - about St. Chad, who was bishop of Mercia in 7th century Britain.

The story of St. Chad's life (which is similar to that of other Holy men Christians revere as saints) seemed to resonate with many people as having something profound to say about disputed elections.

Born around the year 620, Chad was one of four brothers, all of whom became priests and two (Chad and Cedd) who were consecrated as bishops. Chad became a monk, with St. Aidan of Lindisfarne as his spiritual father. He eventually succeeded his brother, Cedd, as abbot of Lastingham Abbey in Yorkshire.

The Council of Whitby, in 664, proclaimed the Roman manner of calculating the date of Pascha (as opposed to the system used by the Irish) to be the Orthodox Catholic use. Soon after this conciliar decision, King Oswy called for the priest Wilfrid, who had spoken eloquently at Whitby, to be consecrated bishop of York.

Wilfrid traveled to Gaul and with great pomp and ceremonial was made a bishop. However, his prolonged stay in Gaul

left the people of Northumbria without a bishop and so, during his absence, Chad was chosen to lead the Church. En route to Canterbury to be consecrated by Archbishop Desduit, Chad learned of the Archbishop's death, so he received his consecration from a “questionable” source - British bishops still following the Celtic customs now considered “non-canonical”.

However, the holy manner of this humble man and his dedication to the care of his flock soon made him beloved by the people. In the words of St. Bede, “Chad immediately devoted himself to maintaining the truth and purity of the Church, and set himself to practice humility and continence and to study.”

When Wilfrid finally returned from Gaul, he found Chad in his place as bishop of York, so he acquiesced to Chad and retired to a monastery at Ripon. But by now (669), a new Archbishop of Canterbury had been appointed - Theodore of Tarsus, sent by the pope in Rome after the British candidate died traveling to Rome for consecration.

The controversial bishopric was brought to the attention of the new archbishop. Theodore first decided to reinstate Wilfrid as the rightful and properly consecrated Bishop of York. So now, Chad graciously gave way and retired to a monastery, exclaiming that he had never felt worthy of the position. But, as described by Peter Brown in *The Rise of Western Christendom*, “Within a few years, this man [Theodore], a native of what is now southeastern Turkey, who remembered the city of Edessa and the great churches and monuments of Constantinople, found himself at Lindisfarne, blessing a church made of carved oak, thatched with reeds...Used to the small cities of Asia Minor and Italy, where the bishop was expected to act as a 'father' to the faithful in a small region, the vast ecclesiastical 'empire' of Wilfrid shocked him.” Because of the great distances and also due to newly successful missionary efforts in the Kingdom of Mercia, Theodore made the decision to redefine the diocesan boundaries. Taking part of the area which had been in Wilfrid's diocese, he created a new diocese of Mercia, with Litchfield as the see city, and appointed (and re-consecrated) Chad as its bishop.

This humble bishop now returned to the tasks of tending to a larger flock beyond the monastery walls. As he had previously done, he walked from village to village, wherever he went (“after the example of the Apostles”, according to Bede), refusing to ride about on a horse like a nobleman. But the Archbishop, who was concerned for the health of his clergyman, lifted him up to a horse and ordered him to ride about his diocese. Chad humbly obeyed his superior.



The work in the new diocese was difficult, but Bishop Chad's efforts bore much fruit. Perhaps the most dramatic conversion that St. Chad aided was that of the king's two sons. Many years before, King Wulfhere had been baptized, but he had apostatized and returned to the pagan ways of his ancestors. His Christian wife had tried to raise their children as Christians, but the sons were kept from embracing the faith by their father. The brothers met Bishop Chad and, through many conversations, came to accept Christianity. King Wulfhere was so furious that he murdered his own sons in rage. Immediately, the king's wife and daughter fled from him and entered a convent. In his loneliness, the king began to repent of his sins and eventually went to the bishop for forgiveness and to return to the Church.

Bishop Chad had a heavenly vision seven days before his death and he spent those days in prayer and giving last instructions to his monks. He reposed in the Lord on March 2 in the year 672, having lived a humble and faithful life devoted to the service of our Lord. Chad was immediately declared a saint by his people and many miracles of healing were reported near his relics.

May we remember this story of humility in the face of disputed and conflicting elections as we embark on another national election, and may the prayers and witness of St. Chad help us as we strive for holiness in our own lives.

Parish News



The Parish Council has elected officers for the 2004 term: Jim O'Neill, Chairman; Bryan Green, Vice-chairman; Keivan Shahrokhi, Secretary; Karl Tsuji, Treasurer. Thank you to all of our council members for their willingness to serve.

During Lent we will again have classes at parishioner's homes on Wednesdays. The evening will conclude with the brief service of Compline. This year we will examine what Scripture and Tradition have to say about the Passion of Christ. We will meet at 7:30PM: on March 3 at the Greens' house (11800 Prestwick Rd., Potomac); on March 17th at the Hawfields' house (5016 Euclid Dr., Kensington); on March 31 at the Alford's house (7326 Poplar Ct., Falls Church). Directions will be provided at Church or call Fr. Nicholas for details.

We will keep the Eve of St. Gregory's Day on March 11th with Sung Mass at 7:30PM and the Eve of the Annunciation, March 24th, with Sung Mass at 7:30PM. Both will be followed by Lenten potluck suppers.

Remember that confessions are heard during the Psalms at Matins, after Vespers and by appointment. Also remember to pick up your Lenten coin box for the Archdiocesan *Food for the Hungry* collection, available in the back of the chapel.

The Season of Lent - by Fr. Patrick Reardon

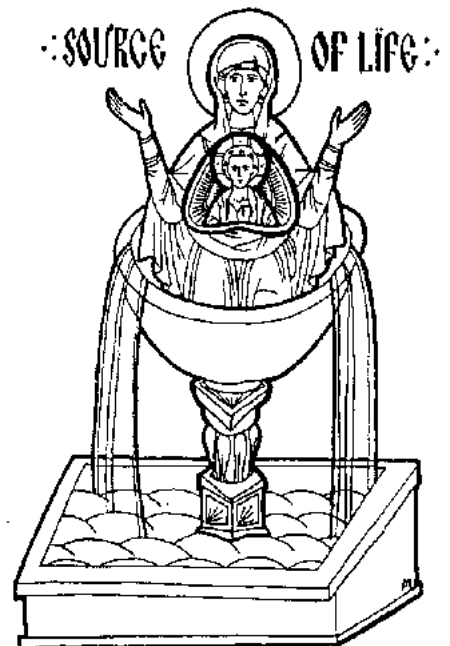
Originally the word Lent, now associated exclusively with the observance of the liturgical year, was simply the Anglo-Saxon for "spring" and had no directly religious significance. In English usage, however, its reference was gradually limited to mean the season of preparation for Easter that does, in fact, occur in spring.

In many other languages of Western Christianity the word for Lent is some variant of "forty," derived from the Latin "*quadragesimale*". Traditionally this is a period of 40 days of fasting in imitation of the Lord himself, who observed exactly that length of time in fasting prior to the beginning of his earthly ministry. It was also associated with the 40-day fast of Moses on Mount Sinai and of Elijah as he journeyed to that same mountain.

As early as the second century we already find Easter being the preferred time for the baptism of new Christians. The reasons are rather obvious. It is in the Sacrament of Baptism, after all, that Christians are mystically buried and rise with Christ (cf. Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12).

It was important to earlier believers that some period of prayer and fasting, by way of preparation, should precede the ritual of baptism. Even the Apostle Paul prayed and fasted for three days prior to being baptized (Acts 9:9,11,18). In *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles (Didache)*, a work from Syria before A.D. 100, there is the prescription that says: "Prior to Baptism, both he who is baptizing and he who is being baptized should fast, along with any others who can. And be sure that the one who is to be baptized fasts for one or two days beforehand" (7.4). One notes in this context that this fasting is a community effort, involving more than the personal devotion of the one being baptized.

That communal aspect of the pre-baptismal fasting is even clearer in a text some half-century or so later. Writing a defense of the Christians to the Emperor Antoninus Pius, the Christian apologist Justin described how newcomers to the faith went about getting themselves baptized: "As many as are persuaded and believe that what we teach and say is true, and



undertake to live accordingly, are instructed to pray and entreat God with fasting, for the remission of their past sins, while we pray and fast with them. Then they are brought by us to where there is water, and are regenerated in the same manner in which we were ourselves regenerated" (*First Apology* 61). Written in Rome, this text also shows that the pre-baptismal fast was not a practice limited to Syria.

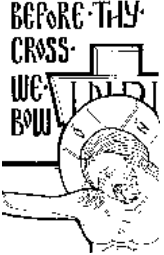


Indeed, within the next half-century we find that discipline referred to in North Africa. In chapter 20 of his treatise *On Baptism*, the Christian apologist Tertullian remarks: "They who are about to be baptized ought to pray with repeated prayers, fasts, and bending of the knee, and vigils all the night through, along with the confession of all their prior sins." Tertullian does not explicitly say that the fasting period should last 40 days, but he does link it to the 40-day fast of Jesus recorded in the Gospels.

Gradually the Christians did settle on a period of 40 days, and the custom was so firmly in place by year 325 that the Council of Nicaea, the same council that definitively fixed the canon of the New Testament, also determined that the 40 days preceding Easter should be a special time of prayer and fasting in preparation for the baptisms to be done on that day. Such were the origins of the season of Lent, which Christians from the fourth century onwards were very convinced were rooted in the time and teaching of the apostles themselves.

The fasting observed during this season is not, needless to say, total. Over the centuries it especially came to mean simply a tougher, more disciplined diet, excluding more "substantial" foods like meat, eggs, and dairy products. Such fasting is accompanied by other practices of restraint, to encourage concentration on the things of God and the health of the soul. For example, many Christians foreswear watching television during this season. These disciplines are normally part of a stricter seasonal regimen, of which the most important components are spending more time in worship and devoting more attention to the study of Holy Scripture.

Since almsgiving is supposed to be a normal part of Lent as well, many Christians give as alms the money saved from the restricted Lenten diet. In this way, all three traditional ascetical practices (prayer, fasting, almsgiving - cf. Matthew 6) receive special attention during Lent.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>March 2004</h1>						<i>Key:</i> <i>Ab = Abbot</i> <i>B = Bishop</i> <i>C = Confessor</i> <i>D = Doctor</i> <i>K = King</i> <i>M(m) = Martyr(s)</i>
	1 St. David of Wales, BC	2 St. Chad, BC	3 Ember Wednesday in Lent <i>7:30PM Class & Compline</i>	4 St. Lucius of Rome, BM	5 Ember Friday in Lent	6 Ember Saturday in Lent - Ss. Perpetua & Felicitas, Mm <i>6PM Vespers</i>
7 2 nd Sunday in Lent <i>8:30AM Matins</i> <i>9AM Sung Mass</i>	8 St. Felix of Dunwich, BC	9 St. Gregory of Nyssa, BCD	10 40 Martyrs of Sebaste, Mm	11 St. Sophronius, BCD <i>7:30PM Sung Mass, Lenten potluck following</i>	12 St. Gregory the Great	13 Feria <i>6PM Vespers</i>
14 3 rd Sunday in Lent <i>8:30AM Matins</i> <i>9AM Sung Mass</i>	15 Feria	16 Feria	17 St. Patrick of Ireland, BC <i>7:30PM Class & Compline</i>	18 St. Edward, KM; St. Cyril of Jerusalem, BC	19 St. Joseph, Spouse of the BVM	20 St. Cuthbert of Lindisfarne, BC
21 4 th Sunday in Lent [Comm. Repose of St. Benedict] <i>8:30AM Matins</i>	22 Feria	23 Feria	24 St. Gabriel the Archangel <i>7:30PM Sung Mass, Lenten potluck following</i>	25 Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary	26 Feria	27 St. John of Damascus, CD <i>6PM Vespers</i>
28 Passion Sunday (5 th Sunday in Lent) <i>8:30AM Matins</i> <i>9AM Sung Mass</i>	29 Monday in Passion Week	30 Tuesday in Passion Week St. John Climacus, Abbot	31 Wednesday in Passion Week, St. Innocent, BC <i>7:30PM Class & Compline</i>	1 St. Melito of Sardis	2 Friday in Passion Week <i>7:30PM Stations of the Cross</i>	3 Saturday in Passion Week

Confessions are heard during the Psalms at Matins, after Vespers, or by appointment

Coffee Hour follows Sunday Liturgy