

✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

March 2006 - Volume XI, Issue 3

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

St. Gregory the Great Orthodox Church (Antiochian Archdiocese - Western Rite)

*invites you to join in the joyful celebration of the
10th anniversary of our founding,
the 10th anniversary of the ordination of our pastor,*

*Fr. Nicholas Alford,
and the Episcopal visit of His Grace,
Bishop THOMAS*



Saturday, 18 March, 2006

*Vespers at 6:00 pm in the Chapel of
Ss. Peter & Paul Orthodox Church
10620 River Road, Potomac, Maryland
Dinner to follow in the Parish Hall*

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Sunday, 19 March, 2006

*8:30 am Matins, 9:00 am Divine Liturgy
celebrated in the Chapel
in the presence of His Grace, Bishop THOMAS*

*RSVP by 8 March
301-983-6192*

Parish News

Following the closing of Eldbrooke Methodist Church, our place of worship for the past seven years, St. Gregory's will begin meeting in the Chapel of Ss. Peter & Paul Church, 10620 River Road in Potomac this month. We are grateful for the hospitality of our "mother" church, which provided us with a place to begin our parish life ten years ago. Our Sunday schedule will begin with Matins at 8:30 and Sung Mass at 9AM and we will continue to have Vespers on Saturdays at 6PM. Holy day services will be held either in the chapel or in the main church. During Lent, we are invited to join with members of Ss. Peter & Paul for the Akathist service at 7PM on Friday evenings, beginning on March 10th, followed by a pot-luck supper and a program.

Thanks to everyone who has agreed to store many of our belongings during this interim period and to all who have helped with the move. We also ask for your help in providing transportation for those who have depended on Metro to get to church.

Holy Day services in March begin with the Ash Wednesday Liturgy, March 8, at 7:30PM in the Chapel of Ss. Peter & Paul Church. Please remember to bring your palms (by March 5) from last Palm Sunday to be burned for use at this service. On Saturday, March 25, we will celebrate the Feast of the Annunciation with a Sung Mass at 10:00AM in the main church at Ss. Peter & Paul.

As is the custom, all Orthodox jurisdictions will join for a Vespers service on the first Sunday in Lent, the "Sunday of Orthodoxy," celebrating the triumph of the Orthodox faith over heresy. This year's service will be held at Ss. Peter & Paul at 5:00PM. The Antiochian parishes will provide refreshments following the service.



Congratulations to Miriam and Nathan Hollenbeck, who were married on February 14 at St. Mary's Church in Falls Church. The wedding and reception were a wonderful parish effort. We are grateful to Fr. David Subu and the people of St. Mary's for their kind hospitality.

Thanks to committee members Stella Green, Carol Lackman, Jennifer Caldwell, and Jerry Chiles for their work in planning our tenth anniversary celebration. We look forward to the visit of Bishop THOMAS, who will be with us for Vespers, the dinner, and for Matins and Mass on Sunday. At Vespers, Bishop THOMAS will tonsure Keivan Shahrokhi to serve as a reader.

Please keep Amanda Painter in your prayers as she leaves for a semester in Seoul, Korea before returning to finish her schooling at Roanoke College.

A Reading from a Sermon by St. Peter Chrysologus

There are three things, my brethren, by which faith stands firm, devotion remains constant, and virtue endures. They are prayer, fasting and mercy. Prayer knocks at the door, fasting obtains, mercy receives. Prayer, mercy and fasting: these three are one, and they give life to each other.

Fasting is the soul of prayer, mercy is the lifeblood of fasting. Let no one try to separate them; they cannot be separated. If you have only one of them or not all together, you have nothing. So if you pray, fast; if you fast, show mercy; if you want your petition to be heard, hear the petition of others. If you do not close your ear to others you open God's ear to yourself. When you fast, see the fasting of others. If you want God to know that you are hungry, know that another is hungry. If you hope for mercy, show mercy. If you look for kindness, show kindness. If you want to receive, give. If you ask for yourself what you deny to others, your asking is a mockery.

Let this be the pattern for all men when they practice mercy: Show mercy to others in the same way, with the same generosity, with the same promptness, as you want others to show mercy to you. Therefore, let prayer, mercy and fasting be one single plea to God on our behalf, one speech in our defense, a threefold united prayer in our favor. Let us use fasting to make up for what we have lost by despising others. Let us offer our souls in sacrifice by means of fasting. There is nothing more pleasing that we can offer to God, as the psalmist said in prophecy: *A sacrifice to God is a broken spirit; God does not despise a bruised and humbled heart.*

Offer your soul to God, make him an oblation of your fasting, so that your soul may be a pure offering, a holy sacrifice, a living victim, remaining your own and at the same time made



over to God. Whoever fails to give this to God will not be excused, for if you are to give him yourself you are never without the means of giving. To make these acceptable, mercy must be added. Fasting bears no fruit unless it is watered by mercy. Fasting dries up when mercy dries up. Mercy is to fasting as rain is to earth. However much you may cultivate your heart, clear the soil of your nature, root out vices, sow virtues, if you do not release the springs of mercy, your fasting will bear no fruit.

When you fast, if your mercy is thin your harvest will be thin; when you fast, what you pour out in mercy overflows into your barn. Therefore, do not lose by saving, but gather in by scattering. Give to the poor, and you give to yourself. You will not be allowed to keep what you have refused to give to others.

St. Sophronius of Jerusalem ~ Feast Day March 11

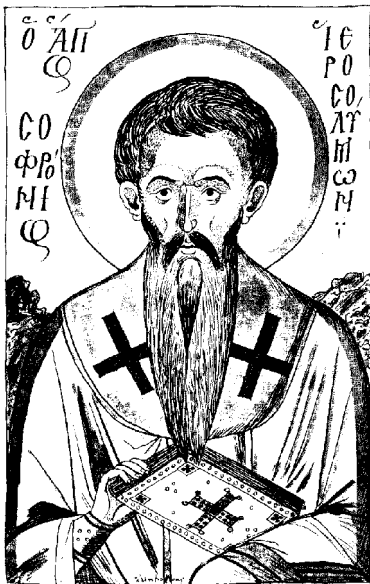
Christian literature - from Holy Scriptures, the teachings of the Fathers of the Church, and the lives of the saints to the writings of present-day theologians - is full of “the journey” as a metaphor for the spiritual life.

The liturgical year and the ceremonies and rituals of the Church use this metaphor to carry us forward and keep us moving on the path to righteousness. At Christmas and Epiphany, we join the shepherds in Bethlehem and follow the star with the Wise Men to worship and adore the Christ child. In Lent, we are moved to repentance in our remembrance of the 40-year journey of the Hebrew people through the wilderness and in Holy Week, as we walk the way of sorrow from His Palm Sunday entrance into Jerusalem to Golgotha with our Lord.

Throughout Christian history, many have taken this metaphor literally and have gone not just on spiritual journeys of the heart, but also on physical pilgrimages to holy places or have retreated to lonely places for greater contemplation.

On March 11, we honor a saint whose life exemplified both the inward spiritual journey and the outward pilgrimage, St. Sophronius of Jerusalem.

Born around the year 560 in Damascus, Sophronius entered the Monastery of St. Saba in Egypt as a young man, he spent time under the tutelage of St. John the Almoner, Patriarch of Alexandria, and later, he entered the monastery of St. Theodosius in Palestine. Here he took as his spiritual director the monk



John Moschus, and when John embarked on a long journey to visit the monasteries of Egypt, Sophronius accompanied him.

The two monks made their way to numerous monasteries and desert hermitages, collecting sayings and words of wisdom which John later published in two volumes entitled *The Spiritual Meadow*.

Sophronius' bodily journey corresponded to the spiritual path he was walking, which led him to greater austerities and more constant prayer. The two men expanded their travels from Egypt to Rome, and there, in 619, John Moschus died. Sophronius had promised his teacher that, wherever his death occurred in their travels, he would take his body for burial to either the Sinai desert or back to the St. Theodosius Monastery. Sophronius dutifully returned John's body to the monastery and then continued his pilgrimage in Jerusalem. He wrote the following verses, showing his joy at visiting the holy places:



*Holy City of God,
Jerusalem, how I long to stand
even now at your gates,
and go in, rejoicing!*

*Let me walk thy pavements
and go inside the Anastasis,
where the King of All rose again,
trampling down the power of death.*

*Through the divine sanctuary
I will penetrate the divine Tomb,
and with deep reverence
will venerate that Rock.*

*And prostrate I will venerate
the Navel-point of the earth, that divine Rock
in which was fixed the Wood
which undid the curse of the tree.*

*How great thy glory, noble Rock, in which was fixed
the Cross, the Redemption of mankind!*

*Exultant let me go on to the place
where all of us
who belong to the people of God
venerate the glorious Wood of the Cross.*

(From Sophronius' *Anacreonticon* 20, printed in *Jerusalem Pilgrimages Before the Crusades* by John Wilkinson)

Sophronius was present in Jerusalem in 629 when the Emperor Heraclius triumphantly entered the city, carrying on his back the True Cross, which he had rescued from the Persians who had stolen it in battle. Following this triumph, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Zacharias, who had been exiled into slavery, also returned but died soon after. He was followed in office by Modestus, who died in 634, and then the holy ascetic monk Sophronius - well-traveled and well-versed in the wisdom of the desert fathers - was elected Patriarch of Jerusalem.



Sophronius' physical pilgrimage was now over, but his journey of the heart had many more miles to go. During his Patriarchate, the Church was beset internally by the heresy of monothelitism, the denial of the two wills, human and divine, of Christ. Patriarch Sophronius worked hard to combat this error, holding a local council to publically condemn it, a decision confirmed at the 6th Ecumenical Council in 680-81.

There was also an external threat to the Church during this time. The Saracens, under Caliph Omar, were making their way through the Middle East, conquering cities as they went. Damascus fell to Omar in 636, and Jerusalem was conquered in 638. The Patriarch tried valiantly to gain mercy for his Christian flock and for this holiest of cities. He led Omar through Jerusalem, showing him the places that were venerated by the Church and received a promise from the caliph that Christians and their holy places would not be harmed.

But Omar did not keep his word. He began to harass and rob the Christians, to plunder the holy places, and he banished the Patriarch from the city. St. Sophronius, whose last earthly journey was not of his choosing, died in 644.

Despite all his troubles during his service as Patriarch, St. Sophronius was able to make many lasting contributions to the Church. He compiled the lives of several saints (among them St. Mary of Egypt, which he learned in his desert travels), he wrote poems, homilies and treatises, and compiled the service of the great Blessing of Water.

We are inspired by St. Sophronius' faith and perseverance in the midst of great trials, his pursuit of wisdom and his reverence for the holy places, and we ask for his prayers for our life's journey. Holy Sophronius, pray for us.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>March 2006</h1>						
			1 St. David of Wales, BC, 544	2 St. Chad, BC, 672	3 Feria	4 Feria
			FAST		FAST	6PM Vespers
5 Quinquagesima 8:30AM Matins, 9AM Sung Mass	6 Ss. Perpetua & Felicitas, MM, 203	7 Feria	8 Ash Wednes- day 7:30 Sung Mass	9 St. Gregory of Nyssa, BCD, 394	10 ⁴⁰ Martyrs of Sebaste, MM, 320	11 St. Sophronius of Jerusalem, BCD, c. 369
						6PM Vespers
12 ^{1st} Sun. in Lent [St. Gregory] 8:30AM Matins, 9AM Sung Mass 5PM Sunday of Orthodoxy	13 Feria	14 Feria	15 Feria	16 Feria	17 St. Patrick, BC, 461	18 St. Cyril of Jerusalem, BC, 386
						Bishop's Visit: 6PM Vespers dinner following
19 ^{2nd} Sun. in Lent [St. Joseph] Bishop's visit: 8:30AM Matins, 9AM Sung Mass	20 St. Cuth- bert of Lindisfarne, BC, 687	21 Repose of St. Benedict, abbot, c. 550	22 Feria	23 Feria	24 St. Gabriel the Archangel	25 Annun- ciation
						10AM Sung Mass (main church)
26 ^{3rd} Sun. in Lent 8:30AM Matins, 9AM Sung Mass	27 St. John of Damascus, CD, c. 760	28 Feria	29 Feria	30 St. John of the Ladder, Abbot, 649	31 St. Inno- cent, BC, 1879	

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

Coffee Hour follows Mass
Children are invited to join the Ss. Peter & Paul Sunday School