

# ✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

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

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## *A Reading from a homily by St. Peter Chrysologus*

*died c. 450  
feast day - December 2*

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**D**eary beloved, the work connected with the vigils has prevented us from preaching for a while. Weakness from the fast contributed to this, too. Today we shall give you a sermon on the Lord's resurrection. In relation to this, if Christ's birth from the Virgin is something divine, how much more so is His Resurrection from the dead! Therefore, let not that which is divine be heard with merely human interpretation.

*L*ate in the night of the Sabbath, Scripture says, *as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week.* The evening of the Sabbath - the day of this world does not know this; the usage of the world does not contain it. The evening terminates the day, it does not begin it. The evening fades into darkness; it does not grow bright. It does not change into dawn, because it does not know the sunrise.

**E**vening, the mother of night, gives birth to daylight! It exchanges the customary order while it acknowledges its Creator. It displays a new symbolic mystery. It is eager to serve its Creator rather than the march of time.

*L*ate in the night of the Sabbath, it says, *as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week, Mary Magdalen and the other Mary came to see the sepulchre.* Earlier, a woman (Eve) hastened to sin; now, later on, a woman hastens to repentance. In the morning a woman knew that she had corrupted Adam; in the evening a woman seeks Christ.

*M*ary Magdalen and the other Mary came to see the *sepulchre.* A woman had drawn a beginning of faithlessness out of Paradise. Now, a woman hastens to draw faith from the sepulchre. She who had snatched death out of life, now hurries to get life out of death.

*And behold, the Gospel continues, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven. The earth trembled, not because an angel came down from heaven, but because its ruler ascended from hell. And behold, there was a great earthquake. The heart of the earth is stirred. The depths of the earth leap up. The earth trembles, the huge mountains quiver, the foundations of the earth are battered. Hell is caught, and set in its place. Death gets judged - death which, rushing against guilty men, runs into its Judge; death which after long domination over its slaves rose up against its Master; death which waxed fierce against men but encountered God.*



**R**ightly, therefore, did the rule of hell perish, and its laws get blotted out. The power of death was taken away, and, in penalty for its rashness in attempting to harm its Judge, death brought the dead back to life. Thereupon bodies were yielded up. The man was put back together, and his life was restored, and now everything holds together through forgiveness, because the condemnation has passed over onto the Author of life.

*And behold there was a great earthquake...* Oh, if at that other time even some light whirlwind had blown down that death-bearing tree! Oh, if some smokelike cloud had darkened that woman's vision! Oh, if a dark cloud had enveloped the beauty of that deathly fruit! Oh, if the hand had trembled upon touching the forbidden fruit! Oh, if unholy night had darkened the day of sin, and taken away the sorrows of the world, the multiplying deaths, and the insult to the Creator! However, allurements always promote vices, and sweet things further sins, but austere and manly pursuits conduce to virtues.

*For an angel of the Lord came down from heaven.* Through the Resurrection of Christ and the defeat of death, men once more entered into relationship with heaven. Moreover, woman, who had entered into a deadly plan with the Devil, now enjoyed a life-giving conversation with the angel.

*For an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, and rolled back the stone.* Scripture did not say "rolled", but "rolled back" the stone. When rolled forward it was a proof of His death. When rolled back, it was a proof of his Resurrection. Blessed is the stone which could both conceal Christ and reveal Him! Blessed the stone which opens hearts no less than the sepulchre! Blessed is the stone which produces faith in the Resurrection, and a resurrection of faith, which is a proof that God's body has arisen! Here, the order of things is changed. Here, the sepulchre swallows death, not a dead man. The abode of death becomes a life-giving dwelling. A new kind of womb conceives one who is dead and brings him forth alive!

## Sequence Hymns

At the Paschal celebration on Easter Day, we sang, in addition to other hymns about the Resurrection, one of the several Sequence hymns appointed for the Liturgy on special feast days. Both the text and melody of this hymn, “Christians, to the Paschal Victim” (*Victimae paschali laudes*, #105 in the *St. Ambrose Hymnal*) were written in the early 11<sup>th</sup> century by Wipo of Bergundy, who died in 1030.

Sequence hymns were part of a gradual development that, in “domino” fashion, saw the evolution of several different artistic forms through the centuries.

The theory of music historians is that it all began with the Alleluia, chanted before the Gospel (except during Lent). Somewhere, at some time, chanters began to elaborate on the last syllable of the last alleluia until that “a” had become a long melismatic phrase. Although they were simply improvised at first, it became desirable to preserve some of the melodies for future use (and perhaps to restrain extravagant performances by individual singers!). In order to remember them, it became necessary to fill in those long phrases with more words. Eventually these became distinct compositions in themselves and were separated from the Alleluia to form the Sequence hymn.

The melody of *Victimae paschali laudes* was modified by Germanic composers, vernacular words were then added to the Latin ones, and this became the pre-Reformation chorale “Christ ist erstanden” (the melody of hymn 104 in the SAH). Martin Luther used the melody as the basis for his chorale “Christ Lag in Todesbanden.”

Because Wipo’s text is written in dialogue form, the hymn lent itself easily to dramatic presentation. It is believed that this, along with the chanting of the Passion Gospels in dialogue form, provided the inspiration for Medieval Mystery and Miracle plays, which eventually opened the door for the composition of Oratorios.

So, from the tiny “mustard seed” of a chanter’s ecstatic rendition of the Alleluia grew a mighty tree with many branches!

By the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Sequence hymns had become so numerous (and the quality of both texts and melodies so varied) that the Council of Trent barred the use of all but five of the hymns in Roman Catholic churches. Four of these are specified in the Orthodox Missal for use in Western Rite liturgies: “*Venie Sancte Spiritus* for Pentecost, “*Lauda Sion* for Corpus Christi, and *Dies Irae* for Requiem masses, in addition to the Easter Sequence. The



*St. Ambrose Hymnal* also includes a number of other Sequences: “Thou For Ever our Salvation” (#41) for Advent; “The Strain Upraise of Joy and Praise” (#74) for the Last Sunday of Epiphany; “Blessed Feasts of Blessed Martyrs” (#252) for feasts of the martyrs; “Joy and Triumph Everlasting” (#231) for All Saints; “Come, Pure Hearts, in Sweetest Measure” and “Choirs, Rejoice, Those Heralds Praising” (#247, 248) for feasts of Evangelists.

As we raise our voices in singing these beautiful hymns, let us remember that joyful chanter of so long ago and be thankful.

## *St. Boniface of Tarsus, Martyr*

### *Feast Day - May 14*



Time and time again we are reminded that God, in his infinite mercy, will receive even the most dissolute sinners if they repent of their sins and turn to him. The story of the Passion, which we heard many times in Holy Week, gives us the penitent thief as an example. The sermon of St. John Chrysostom, which we heard at the Paschal Vigil, reminds us that, even at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour, God will welcome sinners home.

Such a repentant sinner was Boniface, who served in Rome as the steward of the household of Aglae, a beautiful and wealthy pagan woman who lived a scandalous life. She was a well-known socialite who indulged in drunkenness, sexual promiscuity, and the dishonest acquisition of more wealth. Boniface was her right-hand man in these affairs. His only redeeming characteristic was his loyalty to his mistress.

The Christians of Rome were, at this time (the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century), experiencing relative peace, but in the East, persecution raged against the followers of Christ. When Aglae heard of the torture and killing of Christians and of how those who were spared took up the bodies of the martyrs, buried them with reverence, and then reported miracles of healing in connection with these relics, she determined to have some for herself. Perhaps she was feeling sorry for herself as the first signs of age and debauchery became apparent; or perhaps she wanted to add another “charm” to her collection of amulets of superstition.

Aglae commissioned Boniface to travel to Tarsus to retrieve the body of a martyred Christian. He jokingly replied that he might lose his life in this venture and that it might be his body

that would be brought back to her. Laughingly, she called him a “drunken old fool” and sent him on his way.

**T**he journey from Rome to Tarsus afforded Boniface much time for thought. It also brought him news of the Christians who were being martyred - of their steadfast refusal to deny Christ no matter what the cost to themselves; of their perseverance in the face of great pain; and of how they forgave their torturers even as they were being put to death. Boniface’s worldview - which hitherto had focused on pleasure and financial gain, no matter what the cost to others - was being turned upside down. He began to feel the first stirrings of repentance within himself.

**A**s he arrived in Tarsus, Boniface witnessed firsthand the trials of those who followed our Lord. His heart was so moved that he wanted to be numbered among those for whom Truth was valued above all the pleasures of this world.

**B**oniface called out to the soldiers that he, too, was a Christian, and he was immediately apprehended and subjected to torture. After enduring flogging and having his flesh burned, he was finally beheaded.

**A**s he had predicted in jest, Boniface’s body was now taken by servants of Aglae back to Rome for burial by his mistress.

**A**n angel appeared to Aglae to tell her of this and she went out to meet the servants as a changed woman. She buried the body of her steward and spent the remaining years of her life repenting of her sins and those which the two had committed together. She gave away her wealth to help the poor and built a church as a monument to Boniface.

**I**n the words of St. Nikolai Velimirovic of Ochrid, “martyrdom for Christ makes sinners into saints.” May St. Boniface pray for us that our repentance may lead us to holier lives.



*Thank you*

**M**any thanks are due to all who helped with the preparations for the beautiful Holy Week services, especially to “those who serve and those who sing,” and to those who helped with meals and flowers. It was a both a joy and a blessing to have Fr. David and Kh. Martha Lynch with us for Holy Week again this year (and Fr. David helped us show that we could have High Mass even in our small chapel).

## *Support a Mission Priest*

For several years, St. Gregory's has been offering a portion of our outreach funds to the Orthodox Christian Mission Center, "Support a Mission Priest" program. In the past, the recipient of our contributions has remained anonymous, but recently, OCMC has decided to provide a profile of those worthy priests whose work is enhanced by the gifts of others.



Fr. Gregory Wanjohi Kubui is the pastor of St. Nicodemus Orthodox Church in Gachika, Kenya. This is a well organized parish with 280 members and buildings which include a nursery school, a dispensary, and a polytechnic school. Fr. Gregory also serves three other groups of people - missions which do not have church buildings and which he is guiding spiritually and materially.

East Africa was converted to Orthodoxy beginning in the 1920's through the efforts of several charismatic African men who were seeking truth. In 1943, church groups in Uganda and Kenya were united under a constitution and correspondence with the Patriarch of Alexandria resulted in the reception of these groups into canonical Orthodoxy in 1946. In 1958, East Africa received its first Metropolitan and in 1972 three African priests were ordained as auxiliary bishops. Through the years since then, the Orthodox Church has continued to grow and thrive in this part of the world.

Fr. Gregory's family became Orthodox when he was a child, so he grew up in the faith. As he was finishing high school, the Makarios III Patriarchal seminary was being completed, and Fr. Gregory became a member of the first class of seminarians, graduating in 1985.

While we are a mission congregation ourselves, it is important for us to remember the needs of others and, of course, American dollars have far greater purchase power in less developed parts of the world. The modest amount of money which St. Gregory's sends for the work in Kenya helps to support Fr. Gregory, his wife, Presbyteria Martha, and their four daughters, aged 4 to 14. May God continue to bless and guide the work of Fr. Gregory and other Orthodox priests in East Africa, and may the contributions of those with material means continue to come to their aid. *For more information on the work of the Orthodox Christian Mission Center visit: <http://www.ocmc.org/>*

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>May 2005</h1>					<i>Ab = Abbot</i> <i>B = Bishop</i> <i>C = Confessor</i> <i>D = Doctor</i> <i>P = Pope</i> <i>M = Martyr</i>	
<b>1</b> Easter Day <i>9AM High Mass</i>	<b>2</b> Easter Monday	<b>3</b> Easter Tuesday	<b>4</b> Wednesday in the Octave	<b>5</b> Thursday in the Octave	<b>6</b> Friday in the Octave	<b>7</b> Saturday in the Octave  <i>6PM Vespers</i>
<b>8</b> Low Sunday <i>8:30AM Matins</i> <i>9AM Sung Mass</i>	<b>9</b> St. Mark the Evangelist, 1 <sup>st</sup> c. (tr) (Comm. St. Gregory Nazianzen, BCD, 389)	<b>10</b> Ss. Philip & James, Apostles, 1 <sup>st</sup> c. (tr)	<b>11</b> Finding of the Holy Cross (tr)	<b>12</b> St. Epiphanius of Salamis, BC, c. 403	<b>13</b> Feria  FAST	<b>14</b> St. Boniface of Tarsus, M, 290; St. Pa-chomius, Abbot, 346  <i>6PM Vespers</i>
<b>15</b> 2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Easter <i>8:30AM Matins</i> <i>9AM Sung Mass</i>	<b>16</b> St. Brendan the Navigator, 577	<b>17</b> Feria	<b>18</b> St. Venantius, M, 250  FAST	<b>19</b> St. Dunstan of Canterbury, BC, 988	<b>20</b> St. Pudencian a, V, c. 160  FAST	<b>21</b> Feria  <i>6PM Vespers</i>
<b>22</b> 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Easter <i>8:30AM Matins</i> <i>9AM Sung Mass</i>	<b>23</b> Feria	<b>24</b> St. Vincent of Lerins, C, 450	<b>25</b> St. Urban of Rome, BM, 230  FAST	<b>26</b> St. Augustine of Canterbury, BCD, 605	<b>27</b> St. Bede the Venerable, CD, 735  FAST	<b>28</b> St. Germanus of Paris, BC, 576  <i>6PM Vespers</i>
<b>29</b> 4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday after Easter <i>8:30AM Matins</i> <i>9AM Sung Mass</i>	<b>30</b> St. Felix I, PM, 274	<b>31</b> St. Petronilla, V, 1 <sup>st</sup> c.				

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

*Coffee Hour follows Sunday Liturgy*