

# ✠ 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 The Exposition of the Orthodox Faith by St. John of Damascus*

*d. c. 760  
feast day - March 27*

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Joachim took the noble and praiseworthy Anna in marriage. Then, even as the earlier Anna, although barren, had through prayer and a vow given birth to Samuel [I Kings 1:11], so did this Anna through supplication and a vow receive from God the Mother of God, so that not even in this should she be inferior to any of the illustrious mothers. Thus, Grace, for such is the interpretation of Anna, brings forth the Lady, for that is the meaning of the name Mary. And Mary really did become Lady of all created things, since she was accounted Mother of the Creator. And she was born in the house of Joachim at the Probatika and was brought to the Temple. From then on she grew up in the house of God, nourished by the Spirit, and like a fruitful olive tree became an abode of every virtue with her mind removed from every worldly and carnal desire. And thus, as was fitting for her who was to conceive God within herself, she kept her soul and body virginal, for He is holy and abides in holy ones. Thus, then, she sought holiness and was shown to be a holy and wondrous temple worthy of the most high God.

However, since the Enemy of our salvation was keeping an eye on virgins because of the prophecy of Isaias, who said: "Behold a virgin shall be with child and bring forth a son: and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us," the maid was betrothed to Joseph by the priests as "the sealed book is delivered to one that is learned," in order that He "who catcheth the wise in their craftiness" might ensnare him who ever glories in wisdom. And the betrothal was at once a safeguard for the virgin and a deception for him who was keeping his eye on virgins. Now, when the fullness of time came, an angel of the Lord was sent to her with the good news of her conception of the Lord. And thus she conceived the Son of



*The Presentation of the  
Theotokos in the  
Temple, November 21*

God, the subsistent power of the Father, “not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man” - that is to say, not of carnal conjunction and seed - but of the good pleasure of the Father and the co-operation of the Holy Ghost. To the Creator she gave that He might be created, to the Fashioner that He might be fashioned, and to the Son of God and God that He might from her innocent and undefiled flesh and blood put on flesh and become man. And thus she paid the debt for the first mother...

**A**nd so the Son of God became incarnate and was born of her. It was not as God-bearing man that He was born of her, but as God incarnate; not as a prophet anointed through the operation of the one anointing, but as one anointed with the entire presence of the one anointing - so that the one anointing became man and the one anointed became God; not by a change in nature, but by the hypostatic union. For, He was the same who anointed and who was anointed, as God anointing Himself as man. How, then, is she not Mother of God who from herself brought forth God incarnate? Actually, she is really and truly Mother of God, Lady, and Mistress of all created things, being accounted both handmaid and mother of the Creator.

## *St. Katherine of Alexandria, Virgin & Martyr Feast Day, November 25*

**I**t could have been a Washington story: she was young and beautiful, from a wealthy and influential family. She had received the best education that money could buy and her suitors were the most eligible bachelors from other leading families. She lived in tense times when it was important to be on the right side of the issues; it could be dangerous to challenge the authorities. But the story of St. Katherine of Alexandria goes far beyond the rise and fall of political careers in this county. Her decision to challenge the prevailing order and to stand up against the demands of the pagan emperor brought her the crown of martyrdom and an eternal place among the saints of God.

**K**atherine was born of noble parents (some accounts call her father a king) in late 3<sup>rd</sup> century Alexandria, one of the most important cities of the Roman Empire. Although Katherine’s father had died when she was a young girl, she had continued to move in privileged circles and, by the marriageable age of 18, she was being encouraged to “make a good match.” Katherine far outshone all of the young men she knew in her knowledge of philosophy and science and her rhetorical abilities. She declared that she would marry no one who was not her equal in every way.

**K**atherine's mother had become a Christian, but had done so secretly, as there was a persecution of Christians underway, ordered by the Emperor Maximian (305-313). But she knew that the time had come to introduce her daughter to the faith. To help Katherine in her decisions regarding marriage, she took her to her own spiritual father, a hermit who was living a life of prayer in a cave outside the city. The wise elder showed Katherine an icon of the Theotokos and the Christ child, told her to meditate on it and pray that she would then see the most worthy of all men.

**A**fter praying much of the night, Katherine had a dream in which the Christ child turned His head away from her and refused to look upon her. He chastised her for being ugly, of poor lineage, and for having no intelligence - the opposite of the very things she prided herself on. In contemplating the dream the next day, Katherine slowly began to take the first steps toward holiness. She began looking at herself through the eyes of our Lord and knew that she had to learn humility and to use her gifts for serving Him. The young woman sought instruction in the Christian faith from the elder and soon professed herself a follower of Christ - wholly devoted to defending Him against any who would deny Him - and she was baptized.



**T**he Emperor came to Alexandria for a great pagan festival and all the citizens - especially those from prominent families - were expected to join him in sacrificing to the Roman gods. Katherine refused and was outspoken in her denunciation of the activities.

**P**erhaps out of a desire to help a citizen “save face” and remain in good standing in the public mind, Maximian brought in his learned philosophers to persuade the girl to “come to her senses.” But Katherine - on fire with the zeal of her conversion - was able to debate so successfully with these men that they conceded the debate to her. Maximian's good will was now gone and in his fury, he had the philosophers executed. Fear of such a punishment did not deter Katherine, and she still refused to sacrifice to the Roman gods.

**T**he Emperor then ordered that the young woman be placed on a large wheel, a device for torturing prisoners in an effort to break their wills. But the angels were with Katherine and the wheel broke, so she was thrown into prison.

**B**y now, news of these events had spread all over Alexandria and among the curious who came to visit Katherine in prison were Augusta Vasilissa, the Emperor's wife, and Porphyrius, the general who commanded the Emperor's soldiers. Both of these

important people were so moved by Katherine's words and her courage that they, too, were converted to Christianity.



Finally, on November 25 (in the year 310 or 311), the Emperor had Katherine beheaded. Only a few years later, the new Emperor, Constantine, made Christianity legal and ended the persecutions carried out by his predecessors. The example of St. Katherine's steadfast courage helped many to come into the Church. Her relics were taken (some say by angels) to Mt. Sinai, in the Egyptian desert, where they are still venerated today.

May all who are tempted to make idols of beauty, wealth, social status or intelligence seek the prayers of St. Katherine. And may she come to the aid of all in positions of influence who courageously speak out for the truth.

## *A few notes on praying the Office*

It is very good to see a greater number of our people attending the offices of Matins and Vespers (Morning and Evening Prayer). The following reminders are offered to strengthen our offering of common prayer.

When we come into the chapel we need to begin to silence ourselves - our mouths, our minds and our bodies. Some talking is necessary for preparations before and after services, and it is certainly appropriate to quietly greet guests and assist them with service books, but other conversations can be saved for the parish hall. The same is true for conversations after services which could distract those remaining in the chapel to pray.

As we walk into the chapel it is customary to dip our finger in the holy water stoup at the door and bless ourselves with the sign of the cross, as a reminder of our baptisms. It is also customary to kiss the icon (typically of our Lord, St. Gregory, or of the feast of the day), venerating the holy person(s) it shows us. Then, remembering that the light of Christ banishes the darkness of the world and that we as Christians are to shine with that light, we may light a candle as we say our prayers, the candle continuing to burn as our prayers ascend to God.

The book needed for the service (*The English Office Noted*) is on the table in the back of the chapel. The variable parts of the service for Matins are listed in the bulletin; for Vespers they are listed on the bookmark placed at the beginning of the service.

We generally stand to sing, sit for the reading of the lessons, and kneel or stand to pray. As the Office is an act of

corporate prayer, we should work to pray with one voice. The Officiant and cantor set the tone and speed at which the chanting should proceed, and we should listen to one another, making sure that we stay together and that no voice is striving against another (in tempo or volume). It is simple to find the psalms for each office as we sing the psalms “of the day,” that is to say that on November 7<sup>th</sup> at Matins we sing the “Psalms for the Seventh Day at Morning Prayer” and so forth. The scripture readings recall the wondrous history of our salvation and instruct us in how we are to live as Christians, so we need to carefully “read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest” these sacred words.

**T**he Office Hymns, like the antiphons (sung before and after the canticles *Benedictus* and *Magnificat*), provide important teaching and meditation on the day or season. Some of these, especially those sung to their ancient tunes, are not easy to sing. Whether you sing or not, you should open the hymnal and read the text which proclaims the faith of the Church in song. The seasonal Office Hymns are repeated week after week, giving us ample opportunity to learn these great works. After the Office Hymn we sing a proper versicle and response; at Matins the response is in the bulletin, at Vespers it is printed on the bookmark (and the melody never changes!).



**F**or members of the congregation, ceremonial acts are private acts, involving the body in our worship: some will do more, others less. These acts are not required, but are an important aid to our worship. When entering or exiting a pew, we reverence the altar by bowing (or genuflecting when the Blessed Sacrament is reserved). For the Office, in general terms, we make the sign of the Cross on our lips at “O Lord, open thou our lips...” and sign ourselves in the usual manner at “O God, make speed to save us...” We bow (and/or make the sign of the Cross) at mention of the three persons of the Holy Trinity “Father, Son, and Holy Ghost” whether in the *Gloria Patri* or in a doxology at the end of a hymn. It is also customary to make the sign of the Cross at the conclusion of the Apostles’ Creed (“ $\text{X}$  and the life everlasting”) and Lord’s Prayer (deliver us from  $\text{X}$  evil), and at the beginning of the Gospel Canticles *Magnificat*, *Nunc dimittis*, and *Benedictus*). It is always appropriate to bow the head slightly at the holy Name of Jesus, as well as at the name of Mary or the saint whose feast is being celebrated. We also bow at “holy is his Name” in the *Magnificat*, bow (or genuflect) at “O come, let us worship and fall down” in the *Venite*, and bow at “Holy, holy, holy” in the *Te Deum* (and some may wish to kneel at “We therefore pray thee, help thy servants... precious blood”). At the conclusion of the Office we make the sign of the Cross at “The grace of our Lord...” and “May the souls...”

At St. Gregory's we sing different settings of the canticles during penitential seasons. As we approach Advent, remember to follow the rubrics in the Office book to find the page for the appropriate canticle.

These reminders are offered to assist in our singing the Lord's praise in the Daily Office. May our good and loving God hear our prayers and help us grow to be of one heart, mind and voice in His service.

## Parish News

We continue to pray for our catechumens, David and Jennifer Caldwell, and we welcome Maria Roeber to St. Gregory's as she has moved to Washington from Pennsylvania. We also send our *Axios* to Maria's father, Greg, recently ordained as a subdeacon to serve the new mission in State College, PA.

We have begun a series of classes on the Deuterocanonical books of Holy Scripture. The first class dealt with the Book of Tobit and the additions to the book of Daniel. The second class, on Tuesday, Nov. 9, will look at Judith, Esther, and I and II Esdras. The third class, on Nov. 16, will examine the Wisdom literature, and the final class (on Nov. 23) will cover the books of the Maccabees. Locations will be announced. For an excellent overview of the Septuagint, which includes these writings, see Rick Jones' web site: [http://www.geocities.com/r\\_grant\\_jones/Rick/Septuagint/spindex.htm](http://www.geocities.com/r_grant_jones/Rick/Septuagint/spindex.htm).



Our observance of All Souls Day will be on the eve (Nov. 1) with a Requiem Mass celebrated at 7:30PM followed by a pot-luck supper. Please submit names of the departed for remembrance at the altar to Fr. Nicholas.

We will celebrate the Feast of All Saints on the Sunday within the octave, Nov. 7. As we have in every year except 2003 (when we were busy moving our chapel up to the third floor), St. Gregory's will celebrate with an All Saints party after the Liturgy. All - adults as well as children - are encouraged to don costumes or bring "props" to represent a saint and be prepared to talk about that saint's life and witness to the faith. We will play games that help to illustrate sainthood. Coffee hour that day will be "pot-luck", so please bring a brunch-style dish to share.

The new Church year begins in the Western calendar on the First Sunday of Advent. On Nov. 28 we begin a four week period of preparation for the birth of Christ. This preparation should include prayer, fasting and confession. We will also be collecting canned goods for the *Food for the Hungry* program.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>November 2004</h1>						
	<b>1</b> Feast of All Saints <i>7:30PM All Souls Mass, Pot-luck supper following</i>	<b>2</b> Comm. Of All Faithful Departed (All Souls)	<b>3</b> Of the Octave St. Winifred, VM, 680  FAST	<b>4</b> Of the Octave Ss. Vitalis & Agricola, Mm c. 304	<b>5</b> Of the Octave St. Elizabeth 1 <sup>st</sup> century  FAST	<b>6</b> St. Raphael of Brooklyn, St. Leonard, Ab. 6th c. Of the octave  <i>6PM Vespers</i>
<b>7</b> Solemnity of All Saints <i>8:30AM Matins 9AM Sung Mass All Saints party &amp; potluck following</i>	<b>8</b> Patriarchs & Prophets of the Old Law	<b>9</b> St. Theodore, M., St. Benignus of Ireland, BC c. 468  <i>7:30 Class</i>	<b>10</b> Ss. Tryphon, Respicius & Nympha, Mm. 251  FAST	<b>11</b> St. Martin of Tours, BC, 397	<b>12</b> St. Martin of Rome, BM, 655  FAST	<b>13</b> St. Britius of Tours, BC, 444  <i>6PM Vespers</i>
<b>14</b> Pentecost XXIV (St. Gregory Palamas) <i>8:30AM Matins 9AM Sung Mass</i>	<b>15</b> Feria	<b>16</b> Feria  <i>7:30 Class</i>	<b>17</b> St. Gregory the Wonderworker, BC c. 270  FAST	<b>18</b> Feria	<b>19</b> St. Pontianus of Rome, BM c. 236  FAST	<b>20</b> St. Edmund, KM, 870  <i>6PM Vespers</i>
<b>21</b> Presentation of St. Mary the Virgin <i>8:30AM Matins 9AM Sung Mass</i>	<b>22</b> St. Cecilia, VM c. 230	<b>23</b> St. Clement of Rome, BMD c. 100  <i>7:30 Class</i>	<b>24</b> St. Chrysogonus, M c. 304  FAST	<b>25</b> St. Katherine of Alexandria, VM 4 <sup>th</sup> c. [Thanksgiving Day]	<b>26</b> St. Peter of Alexandria, BM 311  FAST	<b>27</b> Feria  <i>6PM Vespers</i>
<b>28</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday in Advent  <i>8:30AM Matins 9AM Sung Mass</i>	<b>29</b> Vigil of St. Andrew	<b>30</b> St. Andrew the Apostle 1 <sup>st</sup> century				

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

Coffee Hour follows Liturgy