

# ✠ 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 of Saint Augustine of Hippo*

*died AD430*

*Feast Day ~ August 28*

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**D**earest beloved brethren, when we keep the Dedication Feast of some altar or church, we do well to ponder with attention and devotion certain things connected with them, namely, how the workmen toiled to build them and by what means the Church doth consecrate them. And if thereby we are moved to live a more godly and righteous life, what we have seen done in these temples made with hands, will also in some wise be done in the upbuilding of our own souls. He lied not who said; *“The temple of God is holy; which temple are ye.”* And again: *“Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you.”* And therefore, dearly beloved brethren, since by the grace of God, and without any antecedent merits of our own, we have been made meet to become the temple of God, let us work as hard as we can, with his help, that our Lord may not find in his temple (that is, in us) anything to offend the eyes of his Majesty.

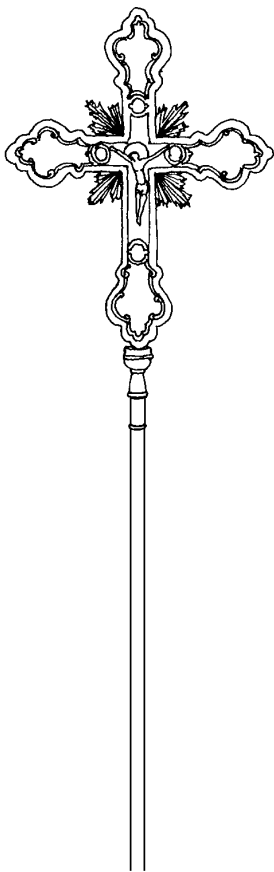
**L**et the tabernacle of our heart be swept clean of sin and adorned with goodness. Let it be locked to the devil, and thrown open to Christ. Yea, let us so work, that we may be able to open the door of the kingdom of heaven with the key of good works. For even as evil works are so many bolts and bars to close against us the entrance into life, so beyond doubt are good works the key thereto. And therefore, dearly beloved brethren, let each one look into his own conscience, and when he findeth any defilement there, let him first strive by prayers, fasting, and almsdeeds to cleanse his conscience, and so let him venture to receive the Eucharist.

**F**or if he acknowledge his iniquity, (meanwhile holding himself back from the altar of God) he will quickly obtain pardon from the mercy of God. For he that exalteth himself

shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Therefore, as I have said, if he acknowledge his iniquity, meanwhile humbly holding himself back from the altar of the Church till he have mended his life, he need have no fear that he will be excommunicate from the eternal marriage-supper in heaven. Thitherward let us come as living stones, that we may be quickly built in. For of this same Jerusalem it is said: *“Our feet shall stand in thy gates, O Jerusalem.”*

## Rogation Days

**R**ogation days - days set aside by the Church for petitions to God and his saints while the Litany is sung in procession and prayers are offered particularly for the bounty of the earth and protection against calamities of all sorts - have been a part of Christian observances from very early times.



**I**t is believed that the first Rogations days were a “baptizing” of a Roman pagan practice of making supplications for good crops on April 25 of each year. St. Gregory the Great strengthened and expanded this practice when the Roman people were besieged by a terrible plague which brought sudden and unexpected death to many of the population. He organized the orders of people in the processions (clergy, monastics, children, lay people) and called for the cross to be carried and bells to be rung. The 13<sup>th</sup>-century *Golden Legend* describes the processions in this way:

In this procession we carry the cross and ring the bells to make the devils flee in terror; for just as a king in the midst of his army has the royal insignias, namely, trumpets and standards or banners, so Christ the eternal King in the midst of his Church militant has bells for trumpets and crosses for standards. Any tyrant would be terrified if he heard in his land the trumpets and saw the banners of some powerful king, his enemy; and so the demons who are in that murky air are sore afraid when they hear Christ’s trumpets - the bells - and catch sight of his standards - the crosses.

**T**he Rogation days which are observed prior to Ascension Day were established by Bishop Mamertus of Vienne about the year 470, also in response to calamity. The area was experiencing frequent earthquakes and an Easter Sunday fire destroyed the king’s palace. So the bishop called for a fast and three days of processions with the singing of the Litany and prayers for the intercessions of the saints. *The Golden Legend* also describes the

use of the Trisagion (Holy God, Holy, Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us) as part of the Litany on these days. In Western liturgical practice today, this prayer is used only on Good Friday.

These latter Rogation days (called the “Minor Rogations” as compared to the “Major Rogation” of April 25) were soon adopted in other parts of the West. The Fifth Council of Orleans in 511 established the practice throughout Gaul; St. Augustine of Canterbury brought the practice to Britain after learning of it in Gaul, and the Council of Clovesho in 747 called for the practice throughout England. Pope Leo III (795-816) approved the use of these Rogation Days in Rome.

Through the centuries, Rogation processions evolved in more secular directions (such as the “beating of the bounds” in England, marking the geographic boundaries of parishes). The Roman Catholic church removed Rogation observances from the calendar in the 1970's but permission has lately been given to revive such practices.

The world continues to experience calamities of all sorts (earthquakes, wildfires, epidemics) and the secular world recognizes and marks the delicate balance between man and nature in such occasions as the recent “Earth Day”.

Western Orthodox Christians continue the Church’s ancient observance of Rogation days, now most often having a procession on the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Easter following Mass. We ask for the prayers of the saints to protect us from calamities and to grant us the benefit of the fruits of the earth. *All ye holy men and women of God, intercede for us.*



## *St. Brendan the Navigator* *Feast Day ~ May 16*

St. Brendan epitomizes the Irish monastic: he was born into a devout family, his brother becoming a bishop and his sister an abbess; he was destined for the monastic life from an early age; he was keenly aware of the supernatural; and he carried the Irish desire for *peregrinatio* to an extreme, traveling in search of an “Island of the Blessed.”

Born in 484 in the southwest of Ireland, Brendan was baptized by Bishop Erc, who foretold his monastic future and entrusted his earliest spiritual direction to St. Ita. Returning to the bishop for

further education at the age of 6, Brendan was ordained to the priesthood by him in the year 512, when he began his life as a monk. For many years, Brendan preached and taught and established monastic cells, eventually having spiritual responsibility for 3,000 monks. He led a very ascetical life and became known as a miracle worker.

A visiting monk who was a relative of Brendan's told the story of his travels to a fantastic island, a story which whetted Brendan's appetite for such travel. After many years of longing, he bade farewell in 565 to the majority of his monks, taking 33 of them with him, and embarked on a journey of his own that would last for seven years.



According to J. F. Webb, in the introduction to his translation of *The Voyage of Brendan*:

Pilgrimage to the Holy Land, the tombs of the apostles, and the shrines of the saints began as a popular movement in the fourth century and spread throughout the West during the fifth. The journeys undertaken were often hazardous and called for considerable endurance and sacrifice... Ireland devised its own form of pilgrimage, closely linked to the anchorite movement. The monk freely left his native land in order to release himself more completely from human ties and come closer to God in solitude [or with like-minded companions]. This voluntary exile was looked on as a battle in which the soldier of Christ went out to fight against the powers of darkness and to perfect himself through self-conquest.

The voluntary exile of such a pilgrim was also compared to that of Abraham who was commanded by God to leave his home and family in the land of Ur and journey toward a Promised Land.

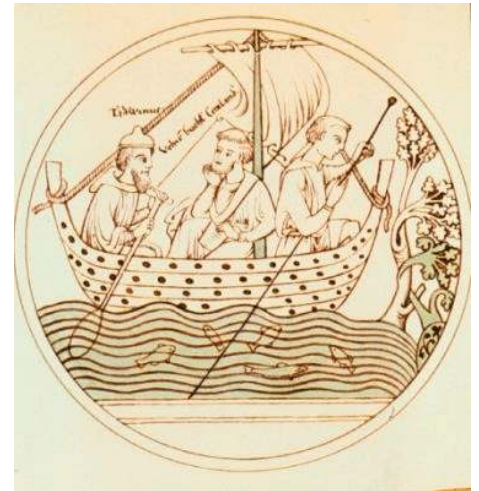
The stories of the adventures of St. Brendan and his monks were told and retold for centuries: stories of the various islands which the monks discovered, of never-aging monks whom they met and who gave them hospitality, of birds who sang Psalms and fierce beasts who obeyed the commands of God, of strange and wonderful fruit, of barren and also lush terrain never before seen by the monks, of crystal columns in the midst of the sea. The Latin version of this tale probably dates to the 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> century and translations were made into French, English, Saxon, Flemish, Welsh, Breton, Irish, and Gaelic. The story as it has evolved through the years includes many incidents borrowed from the folk tales of other traditions (such as the Arabian *Sinbad the Sailor*, Scandinavian myths, and early pagan Irish *imram*, or tales of thrilling sea voyages).

But the story also includes evidence of the innocent faith of monks who trusted completely in the mercy and care of God and who believed that his will would always be revealed to them if they waited for direction and looked for a sign. It is also a story of the disciplined life of monks who, no matter what danger or inconvenience they faced (hunger and thirst, storms or lack of wind for sailing, no harbor for landing), never failed to sing the daily Offices or celebrate the cycle of liturgical feasts and fasts. The monks clearly expected miracles to happen as well and were always quick to give thanks to God for every blessing they experienced along the way.

After his return from this fantastic voyage, Abbot Brendan also visited Wales, Britain, and the Scottish holy island of Iona. He ended his earthly pilgrimage at a monastery of his founding at Annaghdown.

Interest in the voyage of St. Brendan has continued into our day, some suggesting that the monks were the first Europeans to discover North America. Despite one negative reaction in a 12<sup>th</sup> century poem chastising the abbot for neglecting the care of 3,000 souls by going off on such a journey (the manuscript is preserved in the library of Lincoln College, Oxford), the stories have served as an inspiration for centuries. Christopher Columbus may have been thinking of this story when, before his voyage of 1492, he wrote about the Island of Saint Brendan, which could only be reached through the will of God. In 1976, the Irish explorer, Tim Severin, built a boat to the specifications in the story of St. Brendan's voyage, and successfully sailed from Ireland to Iceland and Newfoundland. His reports of seeing icebergs, whales, and other sights which would have been amazing to 6<sup>th</sup> century Irish monks lend credence to the stories.

Wherever our life's journey takes us, may we, like St. Brendan, maintain a life of prayer and trust in God's guidance. Holy Brendan, pray for us.



## *Farewell and Godspeed*

May 31 will be the last Sunday that Grete Roeber is with us before she enters the Monastery of St. Barbara in Santa Paula, California, to begin her monastic vocation. Grete has been so much a part of our community that we will greatly miss her presence here: her faithful attendance at all services (and classes and other events), her beautiful chanting, coordinating the coffee hours,

organizing events such as the book sale, chairing the outreach committee...

God has now called Grete to serve in a different capacity and we ask for his blessings on her as she begins a life devoted even more fully to prayer and worship. We give thanks for her time with us and ask that she pray for St. Gregory's as we will continue to pray for her.

## Parish News

Thank you to all who made our Holy Week and Easter celebrations so beautiful this year. This most intense season is blessed by the careful service of acolytes, the singing of the choir, the decorations, the food, the ringing of bells, and the joyful prayers of the faithful. *Christ is risen! Indeed He is risen!*

Thanks also to all those who helped with the service of Chrismation for the members of the St. John the Baptist mission in Lewistown. We are grateful to Fr. George Rados for allowing us to have the service at Ss. Peter & Paul Church and to all who participated in the service and the reception. We welcome Fr. Peter Jacobsen to our area, while he serves as the priest for this community until the former pastor, James Hamrick, can be ordained.

The month of May offers several special celebrations in the liturgical calendar. On the first Sunday, May 3, we celebrate the Finding of the Holy Cross, when St. Helena (mother of the Emperor Constantine) discovered the Cross on which our Savior had hung and restored it to the Church for veneration.

On May 10, we will celebrate the Sunday within the octave of the Dedication of our building (by Bishop THOMAS on May 6, 2006). We continue to give thanks for having found a permanent home for St. Gregory's and this annual observance is an opportunity to formally offer this thanks.

We will observe May 24 as 'Rogation Sunday,' ending the Liturgy by singing the Litany of the Saints in procession out to the gardens, where we will ask for God's blessings on the fruits of the earth (in our case, beautiful flowers to adorn the church).

Thursday, May 28 is Ascension Day, which we will mark with Sung Mass (preceded by Vespers at 7PM) at 7:30 on Wednesday, May 27. A pot-luck supper will follow the Mass.



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>May 2009</h1>						<b>1</b> Ss. Philip & James, Apostles <b>2</b> St. Athanasius, BCD, 373  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>3</b> Finding of the Holy Cross; Second Sunday after Easter	<b>4</b> St. Monica, Ma, 387	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> Dedication of St. Gregory's; St. John before the Latin Gate, 95	<b>7</b> St. John of Beverly, BC, 721	<b>8</b> Appearing of St. Michael the Archangel, c. 494	<b>9</b> St. Gregory Nazianzen, BCD, 389  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>10</b> Sunday in the Octave of the Dedication; Third Sunday after Easter	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b> St. Epiphanius of Salamis, BC, c. 403	<b>13</b> St. Boniface of Tarsus, M, 290	<b>14</b> St. Pachomius, Ab, 346	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b> St. Brendan the Navigator, 577, Ab  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>17</b> Fourth Sunday after Easter	<b>18</b> St. Venantius, M, 250	<b>19</b> St. Dunstan of Canterbury, BC, 988	<b>20</b> St. Pudenciana, V, c. 160	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>24</b> Fifth Sunday after Easter - Rogation Sunday; St. Vincent of Lerins, C, 450	<b>25</b> Rogation Monday; St. Aldhelm, BC, 709  (Memorial Day)	<b>26</b> Rogation Tuesday; St. Augustine of Canterbury, BCD, 605	<b>27</b> Vigil of the Ascension; St. Bede, CD, 735 Mass at 7:30pm	<b>28</b> Ascension Day; St. Germanus of Paris, BC, 576	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b> St. Felix I, PM, 274  <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
<b>31</b> Sunday after the Ascension						<i>Sunday Services:            Matins at 9AM, Sung            Mass at 9:30AM</i>

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

Coffee Hour follows Sunday Liturgy. Sunday School during coffee hour