

✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

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

A Reading from a Homily of St. Caesarius of Arles

died AD542

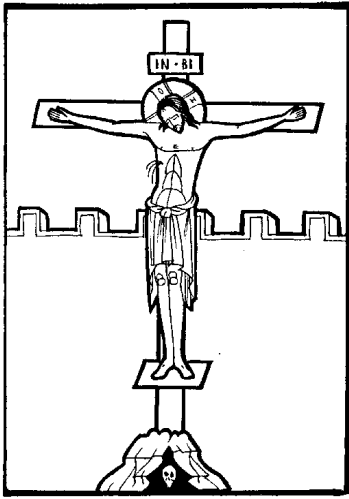
Feast Day ~ August 27

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When a man persecutes you, do not pay any attention to the form which God made or the soul which God breathed into him. What God created does not persecute you, but the malice which man made. Everything that God created praises Him. You have heard in the “canticle of blessings” read on every feast that all things praise God, everything in heaven and on earth: angels, men, stars, trees of the earth, rivers, and seas. Whatever God created in heaven, on earth, or in the sea praises Him. Have you ever heard, then, that avarice praises God? Have you ever heard that drunkenness praises God? Have you ever heard that dissipation praises God? Have you ever heard that heresies praise God? Why do all these things not praise God? Because they were not created by Him. A tree preserves what was created, but man destroys what was lifted up in him. If man safeguarded in himself the good which God created, that is, His image, he would always praise God by his life as well as with his tongue. Thus, our times were predicted, but it was foretold that there would be schisms in our day. Therefore, just as that church fought against the Devil, so also this church fights.

Does the struggle against the Devil ever cease? The Devil is called a lion and a dragon: a lion because of his violence, a dragon for his treachery. A lion rages openly, but a dragon secretly lies in wait. In the early days the Church fought against the lion; now, her battle is with the dragon. But, as the lion was conquered, so the dragon is conquered. What is the strength of a lion against that lion of which it is written, “The lion of the tribe of Juda has overcome”? Moreover, what is the strength of a dragon against the death of the Lord who hung a serpent on a cross? He triumphed over death which the Devil had craftily inflicted upon man. When Moses in the desert fastened a serpent up on the cross,



everyone who had been bitten by a serpent and looked upon this one was cured. Similarly, everyone who has been bitten by the craft of Satan should look upon Christ hanging on the cross, for there death was slain. The Lord always lives, but He was clothed with death in order to kill it. Death could not die, except in life. Just as bitterness does not disappear except in sweetness, nor cold except in warmth, so death is not dead except in life.

What is life? Our Christ. So life was clothed with death. He was crucified, He was slain, He died, and arose again the fullness of life. Death is destroyed and completely swallowed up, now that life has arisen, so that the Apostle could say of Him: “we know that Christ dies now no more, and death shall no longer have dominion over him.”

St. Sergius I, Bishop and Confessor

Feast Day ~ September 7

Political controversy in the Church is not a new thing. Ever since the Apostles and other disciples experienced disagreements about practices in the infant Church, there have been occasions of rivalry, power plays, and intrigue in dioceses and in the Church as a whole.

St. Sergius, pope of Rome from 687 to 701, certainly knew about such intrigues. Born in the Patriarchal city of Antioch, Syria, Sergius’ Christian family left Antioch, probably to escape the Arab Muslim invaders (from 638) and moved to Sicily. Sergius was educated in Palermo and then sent to study at the Schola Cantorum, or choir school, in Rome.

Sergius was ordained to the priesthood by Pope Leo II and was serving the Church of St. Susanna in Rome when Pope Conan lay dying in 687. Behind the scenes, a power struggle began with several contenders vying to succeed the pope. Knowing that the emperor had to confirm the selection of a new pope, the Archdeacon Pascal offered John, the Imperial Exarch in Ravenna, a bribe to rig the election in favor of him. The Exarch agreed and, upon the death of Pope Conan, the announcement was made for Pascal. At the same time, however, an Archpriest, Theodore, was put forward by another faction of the population. In the midst of the ensuing confusion, the majority of the people refused to recognize either Pascal or Theodore and called, instead, for Sergius. When the Exarch arrived back in Rome to demand his bribe money, he quickly agreed to the change, but insisted on

receiving his “fee”, so the Roman citizens paid the money in order to restore peace and to have Sergius confirmed.

During his fourteen-year pontificate, Pope Sergius had opportunities to affect the liturgical life and missionary endeavors of the Church. He restored to the Church the bishop, clergy and people of Aquilea who had followed the Nestorian heresy, when they recanted and embraced Orthodox Christology.

After his conversion, King Cadwalla of the West Saxons in Britain gave up his kingdom and traveled to Rome to be baptized by the Pope. Sergius happily conferred this sacrament, giving the king the baptismal name Peter, and when the newly-illuminated servant of God died shortly thereafter, the Pope arranged for his burial in the church of his name saint.



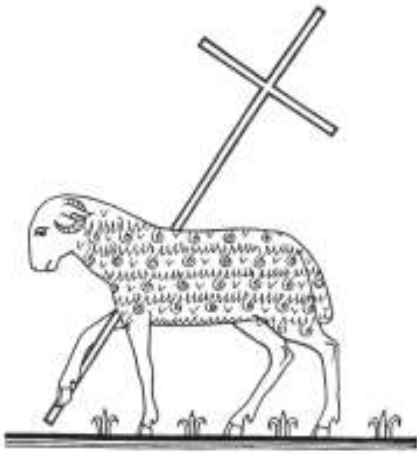
In 695, Pope Sergius consecrated St. Willibrord to be bishop for the Frisian people who had accepted Christianity in 678.

According to a liturgical calendar assembled by St. Willibrord, Pope Sergius is credited with extending to the West celebrations of feast days in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Purification or Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple, Annunciation, Dormition or Assumption, the Nativity of the Theotokos) which had begun in the East. He also instituted the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

But there was to be more controversy and intrigue during the pontificate of St. Sergius. The Emperor Justinian II called for another Council to approve disciplinary canons, something which had not happened at the Fifth and Sixth Ecumenical Councils. This “Quinisext” (fifth/sixth) Council, also called “in Trullo” from the name of the Trullus, the building in which it was held, enacted one hundred and two canons. The more than two hundred bishops who attended were all from the East and the canons reflect their perspective.

Although many of the canons were not controversial (establishing minimum ages for ordinations, prohibiting laymen from serving themselves Communion), there were several which greatly affected the unrepresented dioceses of the West. One ruling would have elevated the position of the Patriarch of Constantinople to that equal to the Patriarch of Rome. Fasting on Saturdays and celebrating the Liturgy on week days in Lent, which had long been customs in the West, were prohibited, and mandatory clerical celibacy, which Western bishops advocated, was condemned. The depiction of Christ as the Lamb of God was to be forbidden..

Pope Sergius refused to sign the decrees, responding that disciplinary canons which violated long-held local traditions should not be issued by one segment of the Church. The Emperor sent his captain of the body guard, Zacharias, to force the Pope to sign or to bring him back as a prisoner. The attitude of the people was made clear when Zacharias only escaped with his life through the mercy of the Pope who let him hide under his own bed!



Surrounded by mosaic images of Christ as the Lamb of God in the ancient churches of Rome and Ravenna, Sergius chose to add the beautiful Agnus Dei chant to the Liturgy (“O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us”) to reinforce St. John’s words referring to Christ. He maintained the right of Western bishops to continue their practice of Lenten weekday Masses, fasting whenever they deemed appropriate (there was great divergence at this time among the various Western dioceses), and upheld the desire for clerical celibacy although, even as late as the 12th century, this practice was not completely accepted in the West.

Justinian was soon deposed as emperor and several years later, a compromise was reached in which Western bishops agreed to accept those rulings which were not contrary to their local practice. However, this controversial Council - and the intrigue associated with it - served as a precursor to the later divisions which would eventually lead to schism.

Having served the Church faithfully and well, St. Sergius died on September 8, 701 and was buried in St. Peter’s Basilica. His feast day on our calendar is September 7.

As Western Rite Orthodox Christians, we can be grateful to St. Sergius for enriching our liturgical heritage and for insisting on the right to maintain ancient regional customs. We ask for the intercessions of St. Sergius, as we seek to live out our Orthodox faith in a Western manner.

Sources: *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Venerable Bede; Catholic Encyclopedia; *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, Leo Donald Davis; *Greek East and Latin West*, Andrew Louth; *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*.

Parish News

Observing the rhythm of the Church liturgical year - with its cycles of feasts and fasts, saints’ days and days for special prayers - helps Christians to stay focused on God as the center of our lives. We are reminded that we are a part of the Church,

Christ's Body on earth, and that we have a great company of saints and angels who are ready to help us on our journeys. There are a number of holy days in September which we will celebrate with extra services.

We begin these celebrations with the secondary feast of our patron saint, St. Gregory the Great - September 3, the date of his consecration as the Bishop of Rome - which we will observe with a Liturgy on the Eve, Wednesday, September 2, at 7:30PM (preceded by Vespers at 7:00 and followed by a pot-luck supper).

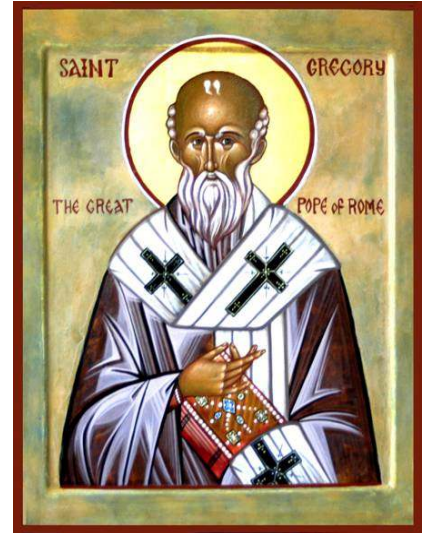
Vespers of the Blessed Virgin Mary will be sung in celebration of the Nativity of the Theotokos on Tuesday, September 8, at 7:30PM; Mass for the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross will be on Monday, September 13; and the eve of the feast of St. Michael and All Angels will be celebrated with a Liturgy on Monday, September 28. We return to our normal schedule of Saturday Vespers at 6PM on Saturday, September 5.

Three Ember Days occur on the Wednesday, Friday and Saturday following Holy Cross Day, when we are bid to fast and pray particularly for our bishops and other clergy.

Following the Liturgy on Sunday, September 6, we will bless those who are beginning another school year - students in public schools, those who are home-schooled and in college and graduate school, and those who teach.

Classes will begin this month for those preparing for Chrismation, but anyone who wishes to refresh his knowledge of the theology, history, and liturgical life of the Church is also invited. Times and places for these classes are yet to be determined but will be announced soon.

Our icon project has been completed and more than 1,000 beautifully laminated icons have been sent to the Philippines. This project was the "brainstorm" of Jennifer Caldwell who, after the announcement that 400 families had been received into the Church in the Philippines and that they were in need of all resources for parish and family life, volunteered to use her home-schooling materials to produce icons for the new Orthodox Christians. Using pictures of icons from sources such as calendars, church bulletins, and Christmas cards, Jennifer and those who helped her mounted the pictures on colored construction paper and laminated them. Josephine-Catherine Carandang, who has been coordinating the shipment of materials to the Philippine congregations, has packaged and mailed the contributions of St. Gregory's members. We pray that having these images of Our



Lord Jesus Christ, the Blessed Theotokos, and the saints will help to strengthen the faith of these new converts.

We offer our congratulations and say “*Axios!*” (he is worthy) to Fr. James Hamrick, the pastor of our newest Western Rite Orthodox neighbor, St. John the Baptist parish in Lewistown, Maryland. Fr. James was ordained on August 23. We also thank Deacon Mark Odell, who served a pre-Sanctified “Deacon’s Mass” that day so that Fr. Nicholas could attend the ordination.

How the Angels Do Battle for the Righteous

by St. Nikolai Velimirovic (from *Prologue From Ochrid*)

The angel of the Lord tarrieth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them. [Ps. 34:7]

The angel of the Lord will fight for those who fear God. This has shown itself to be true so many times, both recorded and unrecorded. The Archangel Michael fought in place of Joshua the son of Nun [Joshua 5:13]; an angel fought for the righteous King Hezekiah, and in one night destroyed the whole Chaldean army. How many times did angels visit the apostles and martyrs in prison, upholding them and loosening their bonds? It is a comfort to the righteous to know that God is all-seeing, and sees his misery; and that God is almighty and can save him from it; and that God is all-merciful and wills so to save him. God will send His angel of light to the help of the righteous, and the righteous will not fight with his adversary, for the angel will fight in his place. When the angel of God fights in his place, what army dare stand against him? What king would take the field against him? In an earlier psalm, the Prophet David says: “There is no king that can be saved by the multitude of an host, neither is any mighty man delivered by much strength; a horse is counted but a vain thing to save a man” [Ps. 33:15-16].



Oh my brethren, let us not doubt these words, but examine carefully every day how the angel of God leaves us in our misery when we sin, but hastens to our aid with joy and unspeakable power when we repent and implore God’s mercy.

Oh Lord God, our Creator, the King of numberless angels, forgive us and save us, and defend us by Thy holy angels. To Thee be glory and praise for ever. Amen.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>September 2009</h1>						
<i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i>		1 St. Giles, Ab, 708	2 St. Stephen of Hungary, KC, 1038 <i>Mass at 7:30pm</i>	3 Consecration of St. Gregory the Great, 590	4 St. Gorazd of Prague, BM, 1942	5 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
6 Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost	7 St. Cloud, C, 560; St. Sergius I, BC, 701 (Labor Day)	8 Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary <i>Vespers at 7:30pm</i>	9 Ss. Dorotheus and Gorgonius, MM, 303	10 Ss. Protus & Hyacinth, MM, c. 257	11 St. Paphnutius, BC, 4th C	12 <i>of the Octave (Nativity)</i> <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
13 Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost; St. Cyprian of Carthage, BM, 258	14 Exaltation of the Holy Cross <i>Mass at 7:30pm</i>	15 Octave Day of the Nativity	16 Ember Wednesday; St. Ninian, BC, c. 430; St. Cornelius, BC, 253	17 St. Lambert, BM, c. 705	18 Ember Friday	19 Ember Saturday; St. Theodore of Canterbury, BC, 690 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
20 Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost	21 St. Matthew, Evangelist & Apostle, 1 st c.	22 St. Maurice & Companions, MM, 3 rd c.	23 St. Thecla, VM, 1 st c.; St. Linus, BM, c. 80	24 St. Juvenaly, M., c. 1796; St. Peter the Aleut, M., c. 1815	25	26 Ss. Cyprian, BM & Justina, VM, c. 303 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
27 Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost; Ss. Cosmas & Damian, MM, c. 303	28 St. Wenceslas, KM, 938 <i>Mass at 7:30pm</i>	29 St. Michael & All Angels	30 St. Jerome, Priest CD, 420; St. Gregory the Illuminator, BC, c. 323			

Confessions may be made during the Psalms at Matins, following Vespers, and by appointment.

Coffee Hour follows Sunday Liturgy. Sunday School for children is during Coffee Hour.