

✠ 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 Sermon of St. John Chrysostom

*died AD407
feast day - January 27*

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We saw the glory, St. John the Evangelist said, *not of a prophet, or of an angel, or of an archangel, or of the higher powers, or of any other created nature - if, that is, there is another - but of the Lord Himself, of the King himself, of his own only-begotten Son of Him who is the Ruler of us all.*

Angels, then, have also appeared upon earth with much glory, as I have said - for example, to Daniel, to David, to Moses - but they did everything as slaves subject to a master. But He Himself did all things as Lord and Ruler of all, even when appearing under a mean and lowly form. In truth, even when he was in this guise, creation nonetheless recognized its Master.

How? I say this for there was a star from heaven calling Magi to adore Him, and a great host of angels, thronging on all sides, ministering to their Master and praising Him in song. And suddenly other heralds appeared and all of them, meeting one another, announced this ineffable mystery: the angels to the shepherds; and the shepherds to the townspeople; Gabriel both to Mary and to Elizabeth; and Anna and Simeon to those who were in the Temple. Not only were men and women exalted with joy, but also the infant not yet come into the light of day - I mean that inhabitant of the desert, of the same name as this Evangelist - leaped in the womb of his mother, and all were uplifted with hopes for the future.

Now, these things took place without delay at the time of His birth. But when He had revealed Himself more clearly, still other wonders, greater than the former, occurred. No longer star and sky, or angels and archangels, or Gabriel and Michael, but the Father Himself announced Him from heaven above, and, together with the Father, the Paraclete,

who descended upon Him at His voice and remained upon Him. Because of these events he truly said: “*We saw His glory - glory as of the only-begotten of the Father.*”

Yet he said this not because of these things only, but also because of those which took place afterwards. It was no longer shepherds only, or widows, or aged men, who announced Him to us, but the very nature of his words and deeds, sounding louder than any trumpet, and making themselves audible in such a way that their sound was at once heard even here. “*His fame spread into all Syria,*” Scripture says, and He revealed Himself to all, and all things everywhere shouted out that the King of the heavens had come.



Indeed, the demons everywhere fled and withdrew, and the Devil hid himself and departed, and death itself was repulsed for a time and afterwards was completely routed. Further, every kind of disease was destroyed, and the tombs sent forth their dead; the demons departed from those possessed, and diseases from the sick. And it was possible to see wonders and miracles which the Prophets had with reason desired to see and did not see. Men could see eyes being fashioned and behold Him demonstrating to all, in a short space of time and on a more excellent part of the body, that enviable power which all have desired to see in operation, namely, that by which God fashioned Adam from the earth. It was possible to see limbs repaired and made whole when they had been paralyzed and crippled, withered hands moving, paralyzed feet suddenly leaping, blocked-up ears made open, and the tongue, which previously had been kept silent by muteness, now speaking aloud. Even as some skilled architect who restores a house fallen to decay with age, so He restored our common human nature. Like the architect, He supplied parts that had been broken off, fastened together the separated and disjointed portions, and raised up again that which had completely fallen down.

But what could one say of the refashioning of the soul, which is much more wonderful than that of the body? The soundness of our bodies is a great thing, but much greater is that of our souls; in fact, as much greater as the soul is nobler than the body. And it is greater, not on this account only, but also because our bodily nature follows wherever the Creator wishes to lead it and does so without resistance, while the soul, being mistress of itself and having control of its deeds, does not obey God in all things unless it wishes. If it be unwilling and compelled by force to obey, He does not will to make it beautiful and excellent, since such conduct is not virtue. However, He has to persuade it to become such because it wills and chooses to do so, and this is indeed more difficult than that other healing.

Nevertheless, he succeeds even in this, and every kind of wickedness has been driven away. Just as He changed bodies which were healed, not only to health, but even to the highest state of good health, so he not merely rid souls of the worst evil, but also brought them to the very pinnacle of virtue. The tax-collector became Apostle; the persecutor and blasphemer and insulter was transformed into the world's herald; the magi became teachers of the Jews; a thief was proclaimed a citizen of Paradise; a harlot shone by reason of the greatness of her faith; the Canaanite woman and the Samaritan - the latter also another harlot - one became the herald of her people, and having caught the entire city in her net, so brought them to Christ; the other contrived by her faith and perseverance to drive out an evil spirit from the soul of her daughter. And others much worse than these were straightway numbered in the ranks of the disciples.



All things were at once changed: both the diseases of the body and the afflictions of the soul. Moreover, they were restored to health and the highest degree of virtue. And there were not two or three of these men, not five, or ten, or twenty, or a hundred only, but entire cities and nations were converted quite easily. What can anyone say worthily of the wisdom of the precepts, the virtue of the heavenly laws, the discipline of the angelic way of life? Such a life did he introduce to us, such laws did He establish for us, such conduct did He prescribe that those who made use of them would immediately become angels and like God, as much as is in our power, even if they happened to be the worst of men.

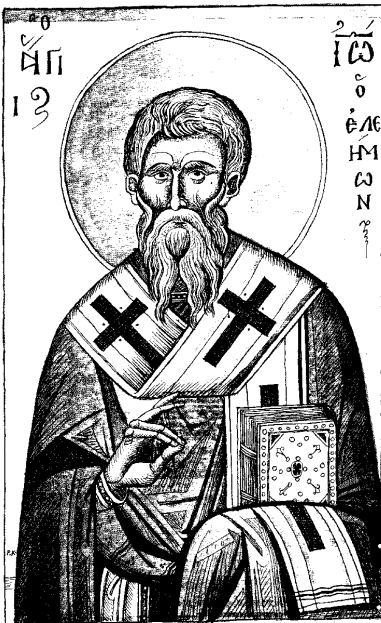
The evangelist, therefore, summing up these wonders - those worked in bodies, those in souls, those in the elements, the precepts, those gifts (ineffable and more sublime than the heavens), the laws, the way of life, obedience, the future promises, His sufferings - gave voice to this utterance, wonderful and full of sublime teachings, saying: *"We saw his glory - glory as of the only-begotten of the Father - full of grace and of truth."*

St. John the Merciful, Confessor

Feast Day ~ January 23

The New Testament is filled with stories of our Lord's admonitions to his listeners - and to us, today - to be merciful and generous to the poor, to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, to go out of our way to help those in need.

Many of the saints have taken these stories to heart and obeyed the admonitions literally, thus becoming closer to God and his kingdom. Of all the saints of the Church, the one who exemplifies this most dramatically is St. John, the 7th century Patriarch of Alexandria, who is known as St. John “the Merciful” or “the Almoner.”



The son of the governor of Cyprus, John was born in the year 555 and spent his childhood and youth enjoying the luxury that his father’s office provided. As serious Christians, his parents inspired in John a deep devotion for our Lord and His Church.

John married, had children, and helped with the administration of his family’s estate, but a deadly illness took the lives of his parents, his wife and all his children within a very short time. Having buried them all, John determined to devote the remainder of his life to works of mercy. He began to lead a life of great austerity and he made arrangements to use his wealth to establish hospitals and orphanages. His works of mercy included sending a ship full of provisions to the British Isles to help alleviate the hunger which resulted from a famine there.

Word of the works of this generous ascetic reached the Emperor Heraclius, who invited John to Constantinople and urged him to become ordained in order to serve others through the Church as a cleric. He eventually proposed John to serve as the Patriarch of Alexandria, a city in great need of strong leadership because of financial troubles and the threat of heresy.

Following his consecration in 608 at the age of 53, the humble Patriarch set about re-ordering the priorities of the patriarchal see and ensuring that the Church manifested the teachings of Christ, its head. He forbade Church officials from receiving substantial personal gifts from the wealthy (which he said constituted bribes) and at the same time, he began to use church funds to feed the poor of the city. At first, many spoke against the Patriarch for dispersing the assets of the Church, but soon his actions began to inspire generosity on the part of the wealthy, and contributions were always available to match needs.

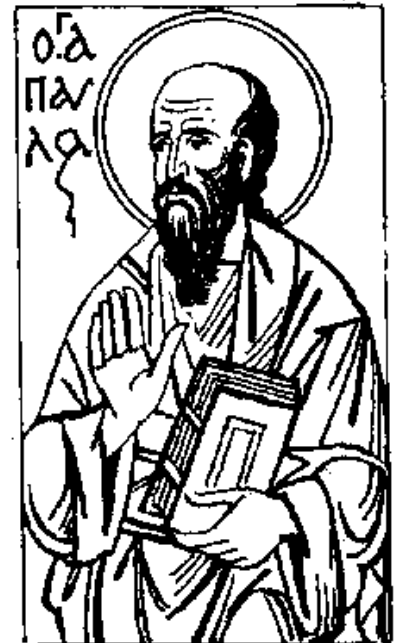
In his desire to be close to the people and available to them for counsel, St. John made it his custom to sit on a bench outside the cathedral every Wednesday and Friday so that anyone who wished could come to talk with him. When he heard of gossip against him, he would go to the gossip and beg his forgiveness. His admonishment of others was gentle but persuasive. One story is told of his concern for someone who was holding a grudge against another. Patriarch John requested that the man attend one of the smaller daily services which he was to celebrate. When the Lord’s

Prayer was being recited, John stopped at the words, “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us”, leaving the man to say those words alone. Hearing himself praying our Lord’s words aloud brought the man to tears of repentance and he promptly forgave his adversary.

As the Persian armies persistently hammered away at the Roman Empire, refugees came flooding into Alexandria. After the fall of Jerusalem in 614, 7500 fled to the city in need of shelter, food and clothing. St. John, the merciful, and his people came to their rescue. Once again, the Patriarch “raided” the church treasury to ransom Modestus, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, and to buy a promise from the Persian conquerors to spare the holy places from destruction.

Five years later, as the Persian armies invaded Egypt, St. John boarded a ship for his homeland. But he fell ill and died upon arriving on Cyprus in 619. His relics, which brought about miracles of healing, were eventually brought to Constantinople. Then, years later, the Turkish ruler presented the relics to King Matthias of Hungary, where they were enshrined in his royal chapel at Buda. Twice more - in 1530 and again in 1632, St. John’s relics were translated, finally resting in the Hungarian Cathedral of Presbourg. The feast day for St. John is celebrated on the day of his death, November 12, on the Eastern calendar, and in the West, on one of the days of translation of his relics, January 23.

May we, like St. John, be merciful to those in need and generous in our alms giving.



Parish News

We begin the feast days of January with a celebration of the Liturgy at 10AM for the Feast of the Circumcision on January 1, followed by a pot-luck brunch. As Epiphany falls on Sunday this year, we will have the service of Blessing of Water at Vespers the previous evening, Saturday, January 5, at 6PM. Chalk is also blessed at this service for use in house blessings throughout the Epiphany season. Please see Fr. Nicholas to schedule a convenient time for your house blessing and invite your friends and neighbors as an opportunity for evangelism.

Vespers for the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul the Apostle will be held on Thursday, January 24 at 7:30PM.

The annual March for Life will be held on Tuesday, January 22 this year. Orthodox Christians should meet under the Our

Lady of the Sign banner on the Mall to march together to the Supreme Court building.

Calendars for 2008 featuring photographs from the Holy Land (taken by Fr. Nicholas on the pilgrimage which he, Kh. Becky and Subdeacon Jerry made this spring) are now available. The calendars include the major feast days of the year and the parish schedule of services.

The annual Parish Meeting, at which new Council members are elected, a budget for the new year is presented, and reports are made on parish activities will be held on Sunday, January 27, at coffee hour following Mass. Please plan to remain for this important parish family meeting.

A Meditation on the Magi

by St. Nikolai Velimirovic,
from the *Prologue From
Ochrid*



The Lord Jesus, born in Bethlehem, was first worshiped by shepherds and wise men from the east - the simplest and the wisest of this world. In our day also, those who most sincerely worship the Lord Jesus as God and Savior are the simplest and the wisest of this world. Twisted simplicity and crazed wisdom have always been enemies of Christ's divinity and of His Gospel. But who were these wise men from the East? This question was closely investigated by St. Dimitri of Rostov [1651-1709]. He asserts that they were kings of small regions or groups of towns in Persia, Arabia and Egypt. At the same time, they were greatly learned in astrology. The wonderful star that heralded the birth of the new King appeared to them. According to St. Dimitri, this star appeared nine months before the birth of the Lord Jesus; that is, at the time when the most holy mother of God conceived Him. They spent these nine months in studying this star, in preparing for the journey and in traveling. They arrived in Bethlehem very shortly after the birth of the Savior of the world. One of them was called Melchior. He was old, withered, with long white hair and beard. He brought the Lord the gift of gold. The second man was called Caspar; ruddy of face, young and beardless. He brought the Lord the gift of frankincense. The third was called Balthazar; black-skinned and heavily bearded. He brought the Lord the gift of myrrh. After their deaths, their bodies were taken to Constantinople, from Constantinople to Milan and from Milan to Cologne. It can be added that these three wise men represented the three chief races of men that descended from Noah's three sons. The Persian represented Japeth, the Arabian Shem and the Egyptian Ham. Thus it can be said that, through these three, the whole human race worshiped our incarnate Lord and God.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>January 2008</h1>						
<p><i>Sunday Services:</i> <i>Matins at 9AM, Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i></p>		<p>1 Feast of the Circumcision; (New Year's Day) <i>Mass at 10am</i></p>	<p>2 St. Fulgentius, BC, 533</p>	<p>3 St. Genevieve, V, 512</p>	<p>4 St. Titus, BM, c. 96</p>	<p>5 St. Simeon Stylites, C, 460 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i></p>
<p>6 Epiphany</p>	<p>7 <i>of the Octave</i></p>	<p>8 St. Lucian & Companions, MM, c.290</p>	<p>9 <i>of the Octave</i></p>	<p>10 <i>of the Octave</i></p>	<p>11 St. Theodosius, Ab, c. 529</p>	<p>12 St. Benedict Biscop, Ab, 690 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i></p>
<p>13 First Sunday after the Epiphany</p>	<p>14 St. Hilary, BCD, 367</p>	<p>15 St. Paul the Hermit, C, c. 345</p>	<p>16 St. Marcellus, BM, 309, St. Honoratus, BC, 429</p>	<p>17 St. Anthony, Ab, 356</p>	<p>18 St. Prisca, VM, c. 270</p>	<p>19 St. Mark of Ephesus, BC, 1445 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i></p>
<p>20 Second Sunday after Epiphany; Ss. Fabian, BM & Sebastian, M, 3rd c.</p>	<p>21 St. Agnes, VM, 304; (Martin Luther King Day)</p>	<p>22 St. Vincent of Valencia, M, 304; St. Anastasius the Persian, M, 628 <i>March for Life</i></p>	<p>23</p>	<p>24 St. Timothy, BM, 97 <i>Vespers at 7:30pm</i></p>	<p>25 The Conversion of St. Paul</p>	<p>26 St. Polycarp, BM, 156 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i></p>
<p>27 Third Sunday after Epiphany; St. John Chrysostom, BCD, 407</p>	<p>28</p>	<p>29</p>	<p>30 St. Martina, VM, 228; St. Bathildes, Q Ma, 680</p>	<p>31</p>		

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

Coffee Hour follows Sunday Liturgy.