

✠ 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 by St. Leo the Great

*died AD461
feast day - April 11*

The Lord took chosen witnesses, and in their presence revealed his glory. That is to say, the form of body which he had in common with other men, he so transfigured with light, that his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment became exceeding white, even as snow. Now the chief purpose of this Transfiguration was to remove from the hearts of the disciples their fear of the Cross. So, before their eyes, was unveiled the splendor of his hidden majesty, that the lowliness of his freely-chosen suffering might not confound their faith. But nonetheless there was also thus set forth, by the providence of God, a sure and certain hope for holy Church, whereby the whole body of Christ should know with what great a change it is yet to be honored. For the members of that Body whose Head hath already been transfigured in light may promise themselves a share in his glory.

Also, that the Apostles might be strengthened, and brought forward into all knowledge, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias (that is, the Law and the Prophets), talking with him. This glorification of Christ took place before five witnesses, as though to fulfil that which is written, "At the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established." What can be more certain, or better attested, than this matter which is proclaimed by the trumpets of both the Old and the New Testament, and concerning which the witness of ancient testimony uniteth with the teaching of the Gospel? The pages of either Covenant strengthen one another, and the brightness of open glory maketh manifest and distinct him whom the former prophecies had promised under the veil of mysteries.

The unveiling of such mysteries roused the mind of the Apostle Peter to an outburst of longing for the things

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eternal, which despised and disdained things worldly and earthly. Overflowing with gladness at the vision, he yearned to dwell with Jesus there, where the revelation of his glory had rejoiced him. And so he said: “Master, it is good for us to be here; if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.” To this proposal the Lord answered nothing, thus signifying that what Peter wished was not wrong, but out of place, since the world could not be saved but by the death of Christ. And the Lord’s example was to call the faith of believers to this, that although we should have no doubts concerning the promise of eternal blessedness, yet we are to understand that, amid the trials of this life, we are to seek for power to endure rather than for glory.

Our New Home

This month, St. Gregory’s parish will finally move into our new home at 1443 Euclid Street NW, in Washington. We have spent more than three months working to improve the infrastructure of the building (lighting, flooring, air conditioning, etc.) and to prepare it for use as an Orthodox church. Our remodeling efforts will continue long after our move, as there are many things still to be done. We will wait to complete the adorning of the chapel until we have been there for awhile. As we have discovered in our former, rented homes, it has been the prayers of our community that have made a space a church. Whether it is a chapel in a former fire hall, a Methodist fellowship hall or Sunday School room, or a former Pentecostal church in a row house, it is in partaking of Christ’s Body and Blood, in hearing his Holy Word, in venerating the icons of the saints, in confessing our sins, in celebrating the festivals of the church year, in sharing fellowship with one another that we transform a material building into a holy temple.

On Saturday, August 19 (within the octave of the Dormition), we will move our furnishings in and then celebrate Vespers at 6PM and bless our new building for its new use. The following day, August 20, we will return to our former schedule of services: 9AM Matins and 9:30AM Sung Mass.

While we rejoice at having a home of our own, It will take some time for each of us to adjust to a new route to church, to the challenges of city parking, to the realities of a smaller space, so we will need to be patient and creative as we begin this new phase of our parish life.

What Should a WR Church Look Like? (Part 2)

In our continuing examination of what a Western Orthodox church should look like, we can look to the descriptions we have of ancient churches. St. Bede the Venerable (673-735), in his *Lives of the Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, describes in detail the church and chapel of the monasteries where he spent his life. He relates how the founder and first abbot, St. Benedict Biscop (d. 690), traveled to Rome to procure the items necessary for the proper adornment of these churches:

He brought back many holy pictures of the saints to adorn the church of St. Peter he had built: a painting of the Mother of God, the Blessed Mary ever-Virgin, and one of each of the twelve apostles which he fixed round the central arch on a wooden entablature reaching from wall to wall: pictures of incidents in the gospels with which he decorated the south wall, and scenes from St. John's vision of the apocalypse for the north wall. Thus all who entered the church, even those who could not read, were able, whichever way they looked, to contemplate the dear face of Christ and his saints, even if only in a picture, to put themselves more firmly in mind of the Lord's Incarnation and, as they saw the decisive moment of the Last Judgement before their very eyes be brought to examine their conscience with all due severity.

He brought back paintings of the life of Our Lord for the chapel of the Holy Mother of God which he had built within the main monastery, setting them, as its crowning glory, all the way round the walls. His treasures included a set of pictures for the monastery and church of the blessed apostle Paul, consisting of scenes, very skillfully arranged, to show how the Old Testament foreshadowed the New. In one set, for instance, the picture of Isaac carrying the wood on which he was to be burnt as a sacrifice was placed immediately below that of Christ carrying the cross on which he was about to suffer. Similarly the Son of man lifted up on the cross was paired with the serpent raised up by Moses in the desert.



As we complete the renovations of our new building and begin to arrange and adorn the chapel for worship, we will continue to examine the ways in which we may express our Orthodox faith and our Western heritage.

St. Laurence of Rome ~ Feast Day, August 10

It is in times of persecution and hardship that the godliness of the saints is most clearly revealed. St. Laurence, 3rd century deacon of Rome, is an example from the early years of the Church of those qualities which make one a saint.



Although history does not record details of his early life, it is thought that Laurence was a Spaniard who came to Rome for study as a young man. When he offered himself in service to the Church, he was placed under the tutelage of Archdeacon Sixtus, who found him to be a virtuous and faithful Christian.

In 257, the Emperor Valerian began a persecution of those who followed Christ, and his strategy for stamping out this religion was to eliminate the hierarchy, expecting laymen and those in lower orders to fall away quickly. When he had Pope Stephen killed, Archdeacon Sixtus willingly became his successor, knowing that he would not long survive. Pope Sixtus (II) made his gifted student the new archdeacon, responsible, along with the other six deacons of the city, for the care of widows and orphans and the keeping of the church treasury which was used for their care.

When the pope was very shortly arrested and led away to be killed, Laurence tried in vain to accompany him so that he, too, could share in the fate of those who were sacrificing their lives for Christ's sake. The pope assured Laurence that he would soon follow in his footsteps and that he should make the necessary preparations.

Laurence's life was spared at this time, perhaps because of the other evil desire which the Emperor and other public officials had - that of greed and envy of the Church's wealth. The archdeacon was brought before the prefect of the city, who spoke to him in falsely ingratiating terms. According to the report of the 4th century poet Prudentius, the prefect assured Laurence that he would not be subjected to cruelty, that all he wanted was some of the Church's treasure for the upkeep of the Emperor's forces. He had heard that Christians were to "render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's" and this need for some of the wealth of the Christians for the good of the Empire was surely understandable.

Having interpreted Pope Sixtus' admonition to "make the necessary preparations" as a directive to protect the charitable contributions of the Church, Laurence had already disposed of a good amount of the Church's money which he gave

to the poor and needy. He now asked for three days to prepare to comply with the prefect's wishes. During those three days, Laurence gathered together all those whom the Church had been caring for - the blind, the lame, the elderly, the orphans - and he brought them to the prefect. When the outraged official demanded to know the meaning of all this, Laurence replied that he had brought him the "treasure" of the Church. He preached to him of the folly of worshiping false idols and being a slave to greed and avarice.

For his supposed insolence, Laurence was tortured by being roasted on a gridiron, which he bore valiantly, knowing that he would soon join his holy father Sixtus in martyrdom. He prayed fervently for the conversion of the Romans. As his earthly life came to an end, Laurence's prayer began to be answered immediately. Several senators who witnessed his martyrdom were so moved by the truth of his words and by his courage that they soon sought baptism, and many others followed. A little more than fifty years later, the Emperor St. Constantine made Christianity the religion of the Empire and built a basilica over the tomb of St. Laurence, whose faithfulness had helped to bring about this miracle of conversion.

May we follow the good example of St. Laurence in recognizing God's true "treasures", may we boldly and faithfully confess Christ, and may we ask for the intercessions of St. Laurence for all who are in need of conversion.

Western Rite Conference

St. Peter's Church in Ft. Worth, Texas, was the host for this year's Western Rite Conference, held August 1-4. Fr. Nicholas, Kh. Becky, and Subdeacon Jerry Chiles attended, along with representatives from most of the congregations in the Western Rite Vicariate. His grace, Bishop BASIL, episcopal overseer for the Western Rite (as well as bishop for the Diocese of Wichita and Middle America) was present for all of the events, and Vicar-General, Fr. Paul Schneirla, presided at a meeting of the clergy.

This conference was hosted by St. Peter's ten years ago when their church building was still in progress. It was good to see the beautiful church - a structure designed and built to be a Western Rite Orthodox Church - and parish hall and the school building which has been added to the complex.



The conference included workshops on Church School materials, the liturgical arts (icon writing, vestment making, etc.), and chanting; participants celebrated Matins, Mass and Vespers; and wonderful meals were provided.

As is always true, the major benefit of attending a conference such as this is the camaraderie which participants share. It is so good to see friends from around the country who share our practices, our concerns and joys. It is also wonderful to receive the encouragement of Bishop BASIL, who is a truly godly bishop and a strong supporter of the Western Rite pastors and their congregations. Before returning to Washington we were able to visit Our Lady of Walsingham Church in Mesquite where Fr. Dan Keller is the pastor and see their new building as well.

We thank Fr. Anthony Miller and the people of St. Peter's for their hospitality.

Metropolitan's Appeal



With war raging between Israel and factions within Lebanon, Metropolitan PHILIP has appealed to the faithful of our archdiocese to come to the aid of the innocent civilians who are suffering in the midst of the violence. Lebanon has many Antiochian Orthodox churches and monasteries, and our Patriarchal Seminary, Balamand, is in that country.

In a letter sent to all parishes, the Metropolitan said: "My beloved faithful, Lebanon is part of our Patriarchate of Antioch and all the East. So many of the people of our Archdiocese have their spiritual and cultural roots in Lebanon...I spoke with Metropolitan ELIAS of Beirut and he told me of the deplorable and dire conditions in his archdiocese and the Archdiocese of Tyre and Sidon (South Lebanon). He asked for our fervent prayers and help for Lebanon. I assured him of our unceasing prayers and that we will do our part to help. Therefore, I appeal to you to give generously to help the suffering people of Lebanon...Let us beseech the most-holy Theotokos to intercede for the suffering people of Lebanon."

The humanitarian crisis due to the destruction of roads, electricity, and communications, and blockades preventing the arrival of relief from aid agencies, the wounded and displaced Lebanese people are in dire need of help. The contributions which we make through the Archdiocese will be given to the Lebanese hierarchs who can see that it directly benefits those most in need.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>August 2006</h1>						
		1 St. Peter's Chains; St. Stephen of Sarov, c. 1833	2 St. Stephen of Rome, BM, 257 FAST	3 Finding of St. Stephen, Protomartyr, 415	4 Feria FAST	5 St. Oswald, KM <i>6PM Vespers</i>
6 Transfiguration of our Lord <i>8:30AM Matins 9AM Sung Mass</i>	7 Holy Name of Jesus	8 Ss. Cyriacus, Largus & Smaragdus, Mm, 304	9 Feria FAST	10 St. Lawrence, Deacon & Martyr	11 Ss. Tiburtius, 288, & Susanna, 295, Mm FAST	12 Feria <i>6PM Vespers</i>
13 Pentecost IX <i>8:30AM Matins 9AM Sung Mass</i>	14 Vigil of the Dormition FAST <i>7:30 Sung Mass & pot-luck supper</i>	15 Dormition (Assumption) of the BVM	16 St. Joachim, father of the BVM FAST	17 Within the octave	18 St. Helen, Empress FAST	19 Within the Octave <i>6PM Vespers & Blessing of the Church</i>
20 Pentecost X <i>9AM Matins 9:30 Sung Mass</i>	21 Within the Octave	22 Octave of the Dormition	23 Vigil of St. Bartholomew FAST	24 St. Bartholomew, Apostle	25 St. Hilda, Abbess, 680 FAST	26 St. Zephyrinus, BM, 219 <i>6PM Vespers</i>
27 Pentecost XI <i>90AM Matins 9:30 Sung Mass</i>	28 St. Augustine of Hippo, BCD, 430	29 The Beheading of St. John the Baptist	30 St. Fiacre, Hermit, 670 FAST	31 St. Aiden of Lindisfarne, BC, 651		

Services at 1443 Euclid St. NW, Washington DC begin on August 19.

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

Coffee Hour follows Sunday Liturgy.