

✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

December, 2006 - Volume XI, Issue 12

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

A Reading from a Letter of Saint Leo the Great

*died AD461
feast day - April 11*

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It is of no avail to say that our Lord, the son of the Virgin Mary, was true and perfect man, if he is not believed to be man of that stock from which the Gospel tells us he came. Matthew says: "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." He then follows the order of Christ's human origin and traces the line of his ancestry down to Joseph, to whom the Lord's mother was betrothed.

Luke, on the other hand, works backwards step by step and traces the succession to the first of the human race himself, to show that the first Adam and the last Adam were of the same nature.

The almighty Son of God could have come to teach and justify men with only the outward appearance of our humanity, exactly as he appeared to patriarchs and prophets. This he did when he wrestled with Jacob, or entered into conversation, or when he did not refuse hospitable entertainment, and even partook of the food set before him.

Those outward appearances pointed to this man. They had a hidden meaning which proclaimed that his reality would be taken from the stock of his forefathers.

Hence God's plan for our reconciliation, formed before all Eternity, was not realized by any of these prefigurations. As yet, the Holy Spirit had not come upon the Virgin nor had the power of the Most High overshadowed her. Only then, would the Word become flesh within her inviolate womb, in which Wisdom would build a house for herself. Then, too, the creator of ages would be born in time and the nature of God would join with the nature of the slave in the unity of

one person. He through whom the world was created would himself be brought forth in the midst of all creation.

If the new man, made in the likeness of sinful flesh, had not taken our old nature; if he, one in substance with the Father, had not accepted to be one in substance with the mother; if he who was alone free from sin had not united our nature to himself, - then men would still have been held captive under the power of the devil. We would have been incapable of profiting by the victor's triumph if the battle had been fought outside our nature.

But, by means of this marvelous sharing, the mystery of our rebirth shone out upon us. We would be reborn in newness of spirit through the same Spirit through whom Christ was conceived and born.

Consequently the evangelist speaks of those who believe as those "who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

St. Spiridon, A Faithful Shepherd

Sometimes the most simple and humble people are those most prepared for heroic lives. Through innocent and virtuous living, they have developed complete trust in God and are able to endure great hardships for his sake.



*St. Spiridon
Feast Day - December 14*

St. Spiridon of Cypress was such a person. He was a farmer who spent his youth tending sheep and cattle, an occupation which provided solitude for communing with God. Spiridon married early and he and his wife were blessed with a daughter. When his wife died, Spiridon continued his simple life, but devoted more time in service to the Church. After a while, he was ordained to the diaconate and priesthood, and was eventually chosen as Bishop of the coastal city of Tremithus, the see city for a small diocese. The Christians here were poor in worldly possessions, but rich in their devotion to Christ. Bishop Spiridon continued farming and was able to help provide for the needs of his people. He had the gift of miracles and used this gift for healing and converting others to the faith.

When persecutions began under Maximian Galerius, Bishop Spiridon was called upon to renounce his faith in the Christian God. Instead, he unhesitatingly confessed Christ as his Savior, and for this he lost his right eye, the sinews of his left hand were cut, and he was sent for a time to work in the mines.

Returning to his pastoral duties, Bishop Spiridon was an inspiration to all his people. He was one of the “confessor” bishops who attended the first Council of Nicaea, and there joined with the others in helping to formulate the creed which sets forth the beliefs for which he had suffered.

Bishop Spiridon also defended St. Athanasius against his many detractors. In 348, having lived a long and faithful life, St. Spiridon fell asleep in the Lord. May we learn from him to lead faithful, simple lives in service to God. St. Spiridon, pray for us.

The History of Advent

For most of the world, Advent is a time to prepare, to get ready. From the frenetic rush to buy presents, decorate and plan holiday parties amidst the commercial world’s reminders of the number of shopping days ‘til Christmas, to the more intense time of prayer, fasting and alms-giving that the Church calls us to, it seems that the whole world - from Thanksgiving unto December 25 - is anticipating a great event.

How did this season come to be included in the Christian liturgical calendar, which centers around the great miracle of the Resurrection? While Epiphany (which celebrates Christ’s baptism, the coming of the Magi, and the acknowledgment of Jesus as Savior to Gentiles as well as Jews) was probably established on the calendar before Advent and Christmas, it was in the early years of Christianity that December 25 began to be celebrated as the birthday of Christ. That date had been observed in pre-Christian Rome as the day of the winter solstice and had been named by the Emperor Aurelian in 274 as the “Birthday of the Unconquerable Sun” (*Natalis Solis invicta*). Church of Rome “baptized” the already well-known festival. St. John Chrysostom reminded the Christians of Constantinople that the Romans had access to tax and census records and knew when Joseph took Mary to Bethlehem at that fateful time. The Arian heresy, which denied the human nature of Christ, probably contributed to the increased emphasis on Christmas, and by the end of the 4th century, December 25 was observed throughout the Christian world as the Nativity of our Lord.



Bishops began to exhort their people to prepare their hearts for this celebration. Sermons by Ss. Maximus of Turin (380-451) and Caesarius of Arles (470-543), among many others, called for observing a pre-Christmas time of preparation. St. Gregory of Tours (538-594) relates in his *History of the Franks*, that in 480, a predecessor had designated a period of preparation from St. Martins’ Day, Nov. 11. For the next 500 years, the

*O Virgin of
virgins, how shall
this be? For
neither before was
any like thee, nor
shall there be
after. Daughters of
Jerusalem, why
marvel ye at me?
The thing which
ye behold is a
divine mystery.*

season of Advent was observed throughout the West, but the length and type of practices varied widely from place to place and time to time.

Fasting has always been a central aspect of Advent observances. At first, “fasting” meant no food at all during the day, and this was limited in most places to Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Eventually, the fast was redefined as eating one meatless meal per day. (It was not until 1781 that the Roman Catholic Church formally differentiated the terms *fasting* and *abstinence*.) While the time of preparation was at first called “St. Martin’s Lent” and lasted from November 11, by the 9th century, the time had been reduced to four weeks in Rome.

The post-Schism West began to greatly reduce the physical requirements of Advent: in some dioceses in the 12th century, only the clergy were required to observe the fast; a local council at Salisbury in 1281 decreed that only monks were expected to fast in Advent. In 1362, Pope Urban V required only the papal clergy to fast. In the East, greater uniformity of practice in the observance of the Nativity preparations gradually developed and the current expectation is of a fast (similar to the Lenten fast) from November 15 to December 25.

The Western liturgical emphasis throughout Advent is on repentance, watching, and waiting. The Mass readings begin with Christ’s warnings regarding the end times and continue with St. John the Baptist’s calls to “repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand.” We are to prepare our hearts not only for remembering the birth of Jesus, but also for the second coming of Christ at the end of time.

This season is characterized by purple vestments (also used in Lent, the other penitential season) and the absence of the *Gloria in excelsis* at Mass and the *Te Deum* at Matins. However, unlike in Lent, we continue to sing *Alleluia* throughout the Advent season.

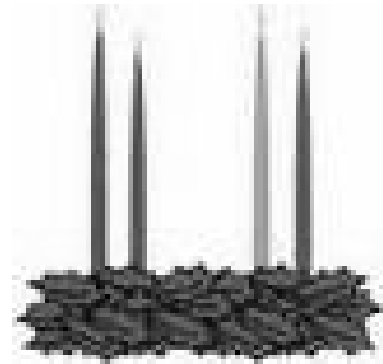
The series of *Magnificat* antiphons known as the “O” antiphons for use at Vespers on the 8 (in Roman usage) or 9 (English usage) days prior to Christmas were seasonal enhancements in use by the 8th century. Each of the antiphons refers to a prophecy of Isaiah, using names given for the expected Messiah (the final antiphon in the English use refers to the Virgin birth).

In more recent centuries, newer traditions have been added to our Advent observances. The Advent wreath is of German origin and provides a way of marking the weeks before Christmas. Children count the days of Advent by opening the windows on

Advent calendars, another practice of German origin. The non-liturgical service of Advent Lessons and Carols was begun in England in the early 20th century and has become a much-loved means of preparation.

In all these ways - through the discipline and liturgical practices of the Church and the popular customs of recent origin - we prepare our hearts and minds to celebrate with joy the fact that God took our flesh upon him and became man so that we might become partakers of his nature.

(Sources: *The Oxford Companion to the Year*, by Blackburn & Holford-Stevens; *The Shape of the Liturgy*, Dom Gregory Dix; *The Liturgical Year*, Volume I, Dom Prosper Guéranger; *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, Thomas Talley.)



Which Rite is Right?

From time to time St. Gregory's receives correspondence from people interested in the Western Rite. One frequently asked question is "why do you use the Tridentine Rite instead of the older Sarum Rite?" It is difficult to give the inquirer a short answer. His question both assumes that our liturgy dates only to the 16th century Roman Catholic Council of Trent, and that the Sarum liturgy (the liturgy of Salisbury Cathedral in England) is ancient. A look at Western liturgical history shows otherwise.

What are the origins of our liturgy? We use the ancient liturgy of Rome, written neither at the Counter-Reformation Council of Trent nor by our patron Pope St. Gregory the Great. Our liturgy is actually much older. The Roman Catholic liturgical scholar Monsignor Klaus Gamber wrote concerning the pre-Vatican II liturgy:

In the strict sense there is no 'Tridentine Mass,' for, at least at the conclusion of the Council of Trent, there was no creation of a new Mass order; and the 'Missal of St. Pius V' is nothing else but the Missal of the Roman Curia, which had seen the light in Rome centuries earlier... the Roman Rite, in important parts, goes back at least to the fourth century, more exactly to the time of Pope Damasus (366-384). By the time of [Pope] Gelasius (492-496) the Canon of the Mass had attained the form it has kept until now, apart from some modifications made under Pope St. Gregory (590-604). Since the fifth century, the only thing on which the Popes have unceasingly

insisted is that the Roman Canon must be adopted; their argument being that it originated with the Apostle Peter...

St. Gregory took the liturgy, already ancient in his day, removed more recent additions and gave the liturgy the structure we know today. In a somewhat similar manner, the Council of Trent removed a number of medieval accretions to restore the liturgy to its earlier form (and they standardized the rubrics directing ceremonial actions). In neither instance was a new liturgy produced. Some of the priest's private prayers, said silently, are of later origin (as are the addition of the rites before and after Mass), but what the congregation hears at Mass today is essentially what a congregation heard in Rome fourteen-hundred years ago.



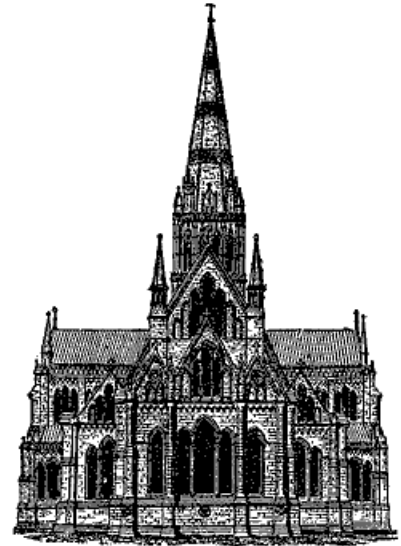
While the liturgy of the Church of Rome became the norm throughout the Western Church, there have been a number of local variations and alternatives. When St. Augustine of Canterbury first came to England, via Gaul, he was concerned that the church in Gaul used a different liturgy and wrote to St. Gregory for advice. St. Gregory, as recorded by the Venerable Bede, replied:

My brother, you know the customs of the Roman Church in which, of course, you were brought up. But it is my wish that if you have found any customs in the Roman or the Gaulish church or any other church which may be more pleasing to Almighty God, you should make a careful selection of them and sedulously teach the church of the English, which is still new in the faith, what you have been able to gather from other churches. For things are not to be loved for the sake of a place, but places are to be loved for the sake of their good things. Therefore choose from every individual Church whatever things are devout, religious, and right. And when you have collected these as it were into one bundle, see that the minds of the English grow accustomed to it.

Here St. Gregory, mindful that there may be local expressions of what is good and true, endorses the idea of “local liturgies” and these continued to develop until the Council of Trent.

The liturgy of Sarum (the old name for Salisbury) is simply a local, post-schism variation on the Roman Rite. It dates to no earlier than the 13th century, but quickly spread to be the dominate usage in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales until it was suppressed in 1549, at the beginning of the English Reformation (although it was restored briefly in the reign of Queen Mary). The Anglican historian J. Robert Wright has written:

Nineteenth-century scholars generally attributed its origins to St. Osmund, the second bishop of the diocese (1077-1099), a Norman nobleman who came to England with William the Conqueror; but this has been seriously questioned since no ascription of any liturgical regulations or innovations on his part can be traced before the fourteenth century. The opinion now prevailing is that Richard le Poore, dean of Salisbury from 1198 to 1215 and bishop of the diocese from 1217 to 1228, was the person most instrumental in the development of the Sarum Use.



In earlier times, the liturgy in England was intentionally Roman (though with minor local variations, as existed everywhere in the days before printing presses). The Anglo-Saxon Synod of Clovesho in 747 decreed, “That in one and the same manner we all celebrate the Sacred Festivals pertaining to Our Lord’s coming in the Flesh; and so in everything, in the way we confer Baptism, in our celebration of Mass, and in our manner of singing. All has to be done according to the pattern which we have received in writing from the Roman Church.” When the First Book of Common Prayer was compiled in 1549, the Sarum Use provided much material, though stripped of Catholic Devotion. The Western Rite Orthodox *Liturgy of St. Tikhon*, owes much of its beauty to the Sarum heritage preserved in the Book of Common Prayer.

There is considerable confusion about the Sarum Rite within Orthodox circles due to the publishing efforts of a non-canonical Western Rite group which has a sizeable internet presence. This group’s liturgical books, while attractively produced, are a modern construct based on the Sarum Use with material added from other sources. They make the claim that their liturgy is the only “authentic” Western Orthodox liturgy and thus sow confusion among the faithful, despite the fact that their claims cannot be backed up with reputable scholarship.

There are additional ancient liturgies still in use in Western Christendom today. The Ambrosian liturgy is used by the Roman Catholic Church in Milan and bears the name of the great 4th century saint who was the bishop of that city. The Gallican liturgy was used in Gaul between the 5th and 8th centuries and a modified form is used today by some Western Rite Orthodox groups in France. The Mozarabic liturgy, which dates to the 6th century or earlier, was used in Spain until after the great schism of the 11th century and is currently maintained only in a few Roman Catholic chapels in Toledo and Salamanca.

In the Antiochian Archdiocese we are blessed with two beautiful liturgies. The Roman Rite was the primary Western Orthodox

liturgy until the schism in the 11th century. The Liturgy of St. Tikhon (a variation of the Roman Rite) maintains what is best of the English liturgical heritage. The Holy Synod of Moscow and the Patriarchate of Antioch have both acknowledged that these liturgies are authentic expressions of the Holy Orthodox faith and we give thanks that we may express our Orthodox faith as Saints Columba, Patrick, Gregory and Augustine did before us.

Season's Greetings



Greetings are often nothing more than meaningless formalities between polite people as they pass each other on the street: “Hi! How are you?” “Merry Christmas! Happy New Year!” But greetings between Orthodox Christians are expressions of faith and belief. When St. Paul exhorted the Corinthians to “*greet one another with a holy kiss*”, he was telling them to offer the special camaraderie that exists between those with a shared faith. Liturgically, when the priest sings “*The peace of the Lord be always with you*”, and we respond, “*And with thy spirit*”, we are being reminded that Christ has given us that peace “which passeth all understanding.” Our Paschal greetings of “*Christ is Risen! Indeed he is risen!*” represent the joy we feel when, after the long Lenten preparation, we celebrate our Lord’s triumph over death. It is a greeting that we know is repeated throughout the world and has been through time. Other Christian greetings have the same effect: “*Glory be to Jesus Christ; glory forever*” is a statement of conviction and intention. “*Christ is in our midst; He is and always will be*” expresses our belief in a loving and personal God. And now, as we prepare to celebrate once more the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, we greet one another with “*Christ is born! Glorify Him!*” May we so live our lives that we indeed glorify Christ and show His light to others.

Advent and Christmas at St. Gregory's

We will celebrate Mass for the Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary on the eve, Thursday, December 7, at 7:30PM, followed by a pot-luck supper. Our annual service of Lessons and Carols will be on Saturday, December 16 at 6PM. Following the Sunday morning Liturgy on December 24 we will decorate for Christmas and that evening Confessions will be heard at 8:30PM, Carols will be sung at 9:30PM and the Sung Mass will be at 10PM.

Please remember to bring canned goods throughout December and January for the “Food for the Hungry” collection.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>December 2006</h1>					1 St. Eligius, B, 660 FAST	2 St. Peter Chrysologus, BCD, c. 450 6PM Vespers
3 Advent I 9AM Matins 9:30 Sung Mass	4 St. Barbara, VM, c. 306; St. Clement of Alexandria, BC, c. 210	5 St. Sabbas, Ab, 532	6 St. Nicholas, BC, c. 342	7 St. Ambrose, BCD, 397 7:30PM Sung Mass, Pot-luck supper	8 Conception of the BVM	9 Feria 6PM Vespers
10 Advent II 9AM Matins 9:30 Sung Mass	11 Within the Octave; St. Damasus, BC, 384	12 Within the Octave	13 Within the Octave; St. Lucy, VM, 304; St. Herman of Alaska, C, 1837	14 Within the Octave	15 Octave of the Conception; St. Maurus, Ab, 6 th c.	16 St. Euse- bius, BM, 371 6PM Advent Lessons & Carols O Sapientia
17 Advent III (Comm. St. Lazarus) 9AM Matins 9:30 Sung Mass O Adonai	18 Feria O Radix Jesse	19 Feria O Clavis David	20 Ember Wednes- day; Vigil of St. Thomas 7:30PM Vespers O Oriens	21 St. Thomas the Apostle O Rex gentium	22 Advent Ember Friday O Emmanuel	23 Advent Ember Saturday 6PM Vespers O Virgo viginum
24 Vigil of the Nativity (Ad- vent IV) 9AM Matins 9:30 Sung Mass 8:30PM Confession 9:30 PM Carols 10:00 Sung Mass	25 Nativity of Our Lord	26 St. Ste- phen, Proto-martyr	27 St. John, Apostle & Evangelist 7:30PM Vespers	28 Holy Inno- cents, Mm	29 Within the Octave	30 Within the Octave 6PM Vespers
31 1 st Sun- day after Christmas 9AM Matins 9:30 Sung Mass	1 The Circumcision of Our Lord 9:30AM Matins 10AM Sung Mass Brunch following	2 St. Fulgentius, BC, 533	3 St. Genevieve, V, 512	4 St. Titus, BM, c. 96	5 St. Simeon Stylites, C, 460	6 Epiphany of our Lord 9:30AM Matins 10AM Sung Mass Brunch following

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

Coffee Hour follows Sunday Liturgy.