

✠ 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 of Damascus for the Falling Asleep of the Blessed Virgin Mary

*died c. AD760
feast day - March 27*

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What is this great mystery about you, O holy mother and virgin? “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.” Blessed are you for generations of generations; you alone are worthy to be called blessed. Behold, all generations do call you blessed, as you have said. The daughters of Jerusalem - that is, the church’s daughters - saw you, and the royal princesses - the souls of the just - proclaimed you blessed and will praise you for all ages.

The prophets, then, proclaim you. The angels serve you, the apostles revere you, the virginal mouthpiece of God takes care of the ever-virgin who was Mother of God. Today the angels minister to you as you go home to your Son, joined by the souls of the just, of patriarchs and prophets. The apostles are your escort, with a countless throng of inspired Fathers gathered from the ends of the earth as in a cloud, by your Son’s divine command, in this holy and sacred city, Jerusalem. In their godly enthusiasm, they sing holy hymns to you, the source of the Lord’s body that is for us a stream of life:

Oh, see how the source of life is carried over into life, through the midst of death! See how the one who overcame the defining limits of nature in her childbearing now gives way to those same limits, and submits her unsullied body to death! It was only right for that body to “lay aside what is mortal and put on immortality.” [I Cor. 15:53], since the Lord of nature himself did not refuse the test of death. He died in the flesh, and by that death destroyed death, bestowed incorruptibility in corrupt nature, and made death the source of resurrection. See how the maker of all things receives into his own hands her holy soul, now separated from that tabernacle that received God. He rightly honors her who was by nature his handmaid, but

whom by his saving plan he made to be his mother, in the unfathomable ocean of his love for humanity.

St. Caesarius of Arles, Bishop and Confessor

Feast Day - August 27

Anyone who tries to lead the Christian life will, of necessity, be concerned with discipline. In order to strive for perfection, we must learn to reign in selfish passions, to curb the appetites, and to set our minds on heavenly things.

In the saints, the Church has given us models for helping to develop this discipline. By their examples, and through their intercessions, we can learn to lead Christ-like lives. St. Caesarius of Arles, whose feast day we celebrate on August 27, is one of the shining examples of such a saint.

The first lesson that we can learn from St. Caesarius is that of generosity. He was born in 470 in Burgundy and it is said that, even as a young child, he gave away his clothing to those he saw who were in need. Later, when he had become a bishop, he gave away the church's treasures - even melting down censers and chalices - to pay for the care of those suffering from the ravages of war. He sold gifts from kings to ransom prisoners, and he established hospitals for the care of the sick and wounded. St. Caesarius shows us that concern for others and charity toward them is an important step in developing discipline.

At the age of 18, Caesarius convinced his bishop to allow him to live as a monastic, serving first in his local church and then entering the monastery at Lerins. The devout young monk practiced such severe austerities that his health began to suffer, so the abbot sent him to Arles to seek the advice of the archbishop, Eonius, who was a relative. Eonius wisely kept Caesarius under his wing for a while, ordaining him deacon, later priest, and then appointing him as abbot for a monastery which had been built on an island in the Rhone River outside the city of Arles.

St. Caesarius teaches us another step in developing discipline from this stage of his life. He found that the monks of his monastery had not been accustomed to praying all the office on a daily basis. So he set about establishing the regular routine of singing the office seven times a day and once in the night. Abbot Caesarius encouraged the lay people in the area to join the monks at prayer whenever their work allowed them time, and taught that



*The Feast of the
Visitation - July 2*

prayer should be from the heart and not just from the lips. Thus, he established regular prayer as a part of the discipline of Christian living

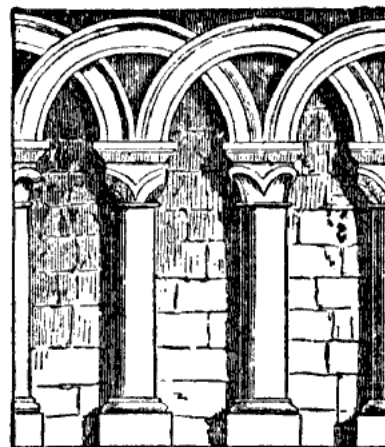
When Eonius died, Caesarius was the unanimous choice to succeed him as archbishop of Arles. Even though the abbot hid among the tombs in a cemetery in an attempt to escape this responsibility, he eventually accepted God's will for him and became Archbishop in 501 at the age of 30.

Now Caesarius faced the challenges of attacks on the Church from within. The heresy of "semi-pelagianism" was spreading among the clergy and people at this time, and Caesarius held several diocesan councils to refute the idea that faith is initiated by man alone and that God predestines some to damnation. St. Caesarius required his clergy to study and preach the faith based on the teachings of the Fathers, and he was beloved as a preacher of the Word, always speaking to the people in clear, down-to-earth terms. We are blessed to have many of his sermons available to us today. St. Caesarius teaches us that to achieve a disciplined life, the Christian must always seek the Truth and be faithful to apostolic teaching.

St. Caesarius lived in turbulent times. His people were caught up in the struggle for rule between the Visigoths, the Ostrogoths and the Franks. Twice the shepherd was taken from his flock and sent into exile - first because of his Burgundian heritage and later because he had come to the aid of prisoners of war. In all of this violence and instability, St. Caesarius never ceased to show Christian love toward all, and to make no distinction between life in the Church and life in the world.

While in exile in Bordeaux, he saved the people of the city from destruction by fire through his prayers. When he was taken as a prisoner to King Theodoric in Ravenna, he so impressed the king with his humility and kindness that the king immediately set him free and sent him costly gifts (which were, of course, sold to ransom captives). We learn from St. Caesarius' example that to lead a disciplined Christian life, one must never be duplicitous or two-faced in his relations with friend or enemy. The Christian must show the love of Christ to all.

St. Caesarius took advantage of his time in Ravenna to travel on to Rome and to meet with Pope Symmachus. The result of their meeting was the issuing of several decrees to protect the church in Gaul from some abuses which had existed, especially regarding the administration of finances.





*The Feast of the
Dormition - August 15*

St. Caesarius returned to Arles in 514 and was able to lead his people for 28 more years. When he recognized that he was nearing death, he asked to be carried in a chair to a monastery of nuns which he had founded nearby with his sister as the first abbess. The nuns were engaged in working with wool and embroidery, making and mending clothing for themselves and others in the city. In addition to the hours of prayer, their rule called for two hours of reading from scripture and the Fathers each day, and some of the nuns were also engaged in transcribing and illuminating manuscripts. St. Caesarius had a special affection for these nuns and they for him. He now tried to prepare them for his death and, returning to his cathedral, he ended his earthly life of service among his clergy on the eve of St. Augustine's day, August 27, 542.

May we, through the prayers and example of St. Caesarius, attain the discipline necessary for leading a Christian life. May we exercise charity, pray regularly, seek the Truth, and show Christ's love to all as we seek perfection.

Thoughts on Orthodox Missions *by Dana (Symeon) Kees*

What is our motivation for Orthodox missions? In other words, why do we want secular people to become Orthodox Christians and endeavor to bring unchurched people into the Orthodox Church? The answer is simple: Love.

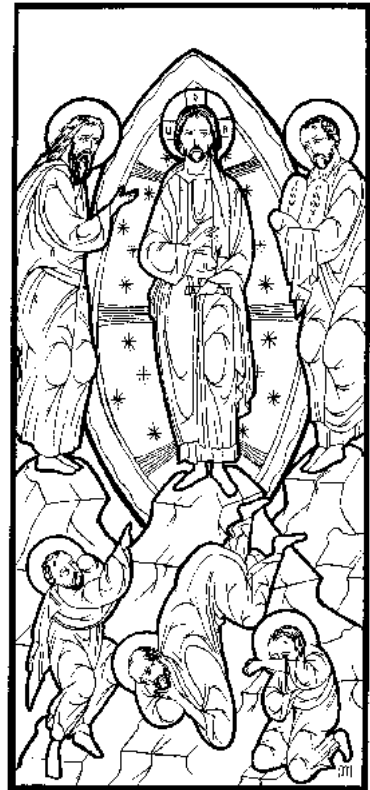
The Orthodox way of life is the way of love. We commune with Divine Love, are transformed by Love, and express love through our actions in the world. As St. Paul said, if we don't have love we are nothing. As the Orthodox way of life is the way of love it is also the way of healing, the therapeutic way. Our society is full of spiritual sickness and confusion because individual persons have spiritual sickness and confusion within them. (This is part of our shared human experience.) With hearts full of humility and compassion we reach out in love to bring people into the Church, the spiritual hospital where Christ, the Great Physician, heals our wounds and makes us well. Within the Church we experience the spiritual care of the soul, the kind of care we all need. If our hearts are really filled with love for those around us, can we restrain ourselves from bringing others to the fountain that heals and renews life?

The Orthodox way isn't just a path for educated religious people who read novels by Dostoyevsky and study Orthodoxy with intellectual curiosity. Our way of life is also for the ordinary people who don't have time to read books on philosophy or surveys of Byzantine history because they're too busy working for a living. It's also for people who do have the spare time to read these kinds of books, but would rather do something else. It's for environment-friendly types who love the beauty of the earth and want to live a holistic spiritual existence. It's also for those who haven't even thought much about spirituality, or even know what the word means. It's for the pizza guy who delivers dinner, the girl who's behind the counter in the coffee shop, the dad who works long hours at the office, and the mom who needs something more for herself and her kids. It's for the child learning to walk, the college student who drinks too much, and the retired couple settled into a routine. The Orthodox Church is for anyone who needs the healing grace of God in their lives. It's for human beings. It's for us all.

How do we introduce people, like those described above, to our way of life? We have several approaches rooted in our Tradition. The earliest approach may be called "go and tell." The Holy Apostles dedicated their lives to traveling throughout the world to teach people the way and to establish local churches. Most of them were killed, a fact that shows the depth of their love and the importance of their mission.

Another approach is "come and see." We have a saying that goes something like this: "If you want to know what we believe, come and see how we pray." Many people discover the Orthodox way of life by visiting a local Orthodox church, a holy temple where the presence of the Creator God dwells among His community. Within this temple visitors should see the beauty of heaven on earth, revealed through the smoky incense in our ancient liturgy, music, and art. They should also see the beauty of heaven in our hearts. Everyone who walks through the doors of our churches should be greeted with personal care, genuine hospitality, and other expressions of divine love.

I'll call the third approach "personal witness." (We need to remember that we are always persons within the family of the Church. A person is not an isolated individual.) This approach consists of showing people the Orthodox way of life by living it, daily. By living the Orthodox way, the way of participation in the divine life, Christ reveals Himself through us. Because people see the Orthodox Church when they see us, we have to live a life of constant prayer and repentance to overcome our self-centeredness and imperfection. We hope that when people encounter us they don't see our sinful pride and ugliness (since



*The Feast of the
Transfiguration -
August 6*

we're still in the healing process), but will instead see (with God's help) the image of Christ within us.

May we, guided by the Holy Spirit, continue to proclaim the good news, walk the path that leads to our own healing (salvation), and reach out into a dark world to lead others into the light. "I am the light of the world," Christ said, "He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life" (John 8.12, NKJV).

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The Gardens at St. Gregory's

Our scriptures are filled with references to gardens and to planting [*And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden - Genesis 2:8*] We recognize the earth and all its bounty as God's wonderful creation, and give thanks to the Creator for all his goodness to mankind.



We are especially grateful for flower gardens in the midst of the city and are pleased that the small gardens at St. Gregory's have an added appeal. Both in front of the church and at the rear patio, the gardens contain flowers which for centuries have been associated with St. Mary and with aspects of our faith. Our gardeners - Lien (assisted by her friend, Kara), Stella, Scott, and Jerry (in charge of weeding and watering) - gave us flowers which will thrive in our climate but will also remind us of the faith and inspire us to greater devotion.

Church gardens are as old as the Church. Our Lord and his Apostles frequently retired to the Garden of Gethsemane for prayer and bounteous greenery and blossoms still grow around the churches and shrines in the Holy Land where Christ himself dwelt on earth. When Christian monasticism spread from the desert to more fertile land, monks and nuns created beautiful gardens, planting food crops for the community, medicinal herbs for use with the sick, and fragrant flowers for adorning the chapel. In the 4th century, St. Benedict had a rose garden at his monastery of Monte Cassino, and in the 7th century, St. Fiacre dedicated his garden to the Theotokos.

Especially during the Middle Ages in the West, many plants were given names that reflected some aspect of our Lady's

person, life or virtues (Madonna lily, Lady slipper, Lady's mantle) and some flowers began to be used for teaching (such as St. Patrick's shamrock for teaching the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and the dogwood for showing the five wounds of our Lord). A rich treasure of religious folklore grew up around many plants and flowers.

The following is a sampling of some of the plants in our gardens and their religious name or association:

Bleeding heart = St. Mary's heart. *Carnation* = represents Mary's love of God. *Columbine* = "Lady's Slipper", said to have grown up under our Lady's feet as she went to visit St. Elizabeth. *Easter lily* = The symbol of purity, often associated with Mary in paintings (our lilies are from the altar at Pascha). *Hosta* = "Assumption Lily" (the white blossoms are usually present in mid-August around the feast of the Dormition, or Assumption, of the Theotokos. *Impatiens* = "Mother's Love." *Marigold* = Mary's gold, or the gift of the Magi. *Rose* = Mary is often called the "Mystical Rose". *Scabiosa* = "Mary's pincushion". *Thyme* = represents the Virgin's humility.



Also planted in our patio garden are "Resurrection Lilies", transplanted from Stella's family home in California. True to their name, these bulbs sent forth stalks in the spring and have since withered as if dead. We anxiously await the blossom that will appear in August, reminding us of the Resurrection of our Lord and of our own resurrection at the last day.

Whenever you arrive for church, or during coffee hour, stop to admire the beautiful flowers in our gardens and say a prayer of thanksgiving for God's marvelous creation.

Parish News

At the Eastern Region Parish Life Conference, held July 4-8, we will have a Western Rite Vespers service for the first time. On Friday, July 6, at 5:00 pm, St. Gregory's will be joined by the clergy and people of Holy Trinity in Lynchburg and St. Patrick's in Warrenton, in leading this wonderful opportunity for Western Rite and Eastern Rite Christians to lift our voices in prayer and song together. Nathaniel Green, Karl Tsuji, and Camrin Emmons-White will represent St. Gregory's as our Bible Bowl team at the Conference. Fr. Nicholas will also attend the Archdiocesan Convention in Montreal July 23-28, and Kh. Becky will attend the Sacred Music Institute at Antiochian Village July 11-14, giving a talk on Western Rite choral music for Holy Week and other occasions in the church year.

We will not have Saturday Vespers during the month of August, but will have Sung Mass and potluck supper for the Feasts of the Transfiguration on August 6 and Dormition on August 14. A cookout/picnic at the church will be planned for later in the summer.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>July 2007</h1>						<i>Ab - Abbot or Abbess B - Bishop C - Confessor D - Doctor Dn - Deacon K - King M - Martyr P - Penitent V - Virgin</i>
1 Fifth Sunday after Pentecost <i>Matins at 9AM Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i>	2 Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary	3	4 St. Andrew of Crete, BC, 740 <i>Parish Life Conference begins, Hunt Valley, MD</i>	5 Ss. Cyril & Methodius, BB & CC, 9 th c.	6 Octave Day Ss. Peter & Paul, Apostles; St. Palladius, BC, c. 450 FAST	7 St. Iltyd, Ab, 505 <i>Vespers at 6PM</i>
8 Sixth Sunday after Pentecost <i>Matins at 9AM Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i>	9	10 St. Felicitas & Seven Holy Brothers, MM, c. 150	11 Solemnity of St. Benedict, Abbot, c. 540 FAST	12 St. Pius I, BM, c. 154	13 St. Anacletus, BM, 1 st c. FAST	14 <i>Vespers at 6PM</i>
15 Seventh Sunday after Pentecost comm. St. Vladimir, KC, 1015 <i>Matins at 9AM Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i>	16	17 St. Alexius, C, 5 th c	18 St. Sergius of Radonezh, Ab, 1392 FAST	19	20 St. Margaret of Antioch, VM, c. 304 FAST	21 St. Praxedes of Rome, Virgin, 2 nd c. <i>Vespers at 6PM</i>
22 Eighth Sunday after Pentecost comm. St. Mary Magdalene, P <i>Matins at 9AM Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i>	23 St. Apollinaris, BM, 1 st c.; St. John Cassian, Ab, 433	24 Ss. Boris & Gleb, MM, 1015; Vigil of St. James	25 St. James the Greater, Apostle, 44 FAST	26 St. Anne, Mother of the BVM; St. Jacob Netsvetov, C, 1864	27 St. Panteleimon, M, c. 305 FAST	28 St. Samson of Dol, BC, c. 565 <i>Vespers at 6PM</i>
29 Ninth Sunday after Pentecost comm. St. Martha of Bethany, V, 1 st c <i>Matins at 9AM Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i>	30 Ss. Abdon & Sennen, MM, c. 303	31 St. Germanus of Auxerre, BC, 448				

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<h1>August 2007</h1>						<i>Ab - Abbot or Abbess B - Bishop C - Confessor D - Doctor Dn - Deacon K - King M - Martyr P - Penitent V - Virgin</i>
			1 St. Peter's Chains; St. Seraphim of Sarov, C, 1833 FAST	2 St. Stephen I, BM, 257	3 Finding of St. Stephen the Protomartyr, 415; St. Nicodemus, M, 1 st c. FAST	4 <i>No Vespers</i>
5 Tenth Sunday after Pentecost <i>Matins at 9AM Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i>	6 Transfiguration of our Lord	7 Holy Name of Jesus	8 Ss. Cyriacus, Largus & Smaragdus, MM, 304 FAST	9	10 St. Lawrence, DnM, 258 FAST	11 <i>No Vespers</i>
12 Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost <i>Matins at 9AM Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i>	13 St. Maximus the Confessor, Ab, 662	14 Vigil of the Dormition <i>Sung Mass at 7:30PM</i>	15 Dormition of the Blessed Virgin Mary FAST	16 St. Joachim, Father of the BVM, C, 1 st c.	17 FAST	18 St. Helen, Mother of St. Constantine, 330 <i>No Vespers</i>
19 Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost <i>Matins at 9AM Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i>	20	21	22 FAST	23 Vigil of St. Bartholomew <i>Vespers at 6PM</i>	24 St. Bartholomew, Apostle, 1 st c. FAST	25 St. Hilda of Whitby, Ab, 680 <i>No Vespers</i>
26 Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost <i>Matins at 9AM Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i>	27 St. Caesarius of Arles, BC, 542	28 St. Augustine of Hippo, BCD, 430	29 Beheading of St. John the Baptist FAST	30 St. Fiacre, Hermit, 670	31 St. Aiden of Lindisfarne, BC, 651 FAST	