

✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

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A Reading from a Homily on the Dedication of a Church by St. Augustine of Hippo

*died 430AD
feast day - August 28*

Inside:

The Dedication of Churches
..... 2
Ss. Alhelm & John of Beverly
..... 4
Parish News 6
Calendar insert

Jerusalem is built as a city, saith the Psalmist. The “Is” signifieth present time. That, brethren, is as much as to say “Jerusalem is still in the process of being built.” However, when David spake these words, it was no longer in building for it was already a complete city. And I know not in what sense he speaketh thereof as still in building, save as of that Jerusalem whereunto in faith we must come as living stones, even as Peter saith, *Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house*. Now a spiritual house is a temple of God, and holy. But what is this: “lively stones”? Thou art alive if thou art a believer. And what then is this: “Lively stones are built up”? If thou art a believer, thou art in process of being built up in such wise that thou art becoming the very temple of God. For the Apostle Paul saith, *The temple of God is holy, which temple are ye*.

This city then is still in building. Stones are being hewn out of the mountains by the hands of them that are preaching the truth, and are being cut square, that they may be fitted into an eternal structure. Many stones are still in the hands of the Builder. And they must not escape from his hands if they are to be well and truly built into his temple’s structure. This then is that Jerusalem which is being built as a city; and its foundation is Christ. So saith the Apostle Paul, *Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ*.

First, a foundation is laid in the earth. Then the walls are built thereon. And the weight of the walls presseth downward upon the foundation beneath them. But if our foundation is in heaven, then must we be so built as to press, not downward, but upward. The structure of this spacious basilica, wherein ye now see me speaking, was built up by mortal hands. And because mortal man built it, they laid the foundations of it beneath us, in the earth. But we who are being built up as a spiritual house, have our foundation above

us, in heaven. Thitherward let us come as living stones, that we may be quickly built in. For of this same Jerusalem it is said, *Our feet shall stand in thy gates, O Jerusalem!*

The Dedication of Churches

Since the beginning of time, men have instinctively recognized the presence of the holy and have set aside places and objects where that presence is particularly felt and acknowledged. Stonehenge, Aztec temples, sacred oaks and rivers - all attest to the innate human desire to reverence and worship God in dedicated places.



The ancient Hebrew people, our ancestors in the faith, were chosen for the special purpose of establishing a covenant with God and preparing the way for the coming of the Messiah. God gave them the law on a sacred mountain (Sinai) and they placed this law in a vessel consecrated for that special purpose (the Ark of the Covenant). King Solomon built a magnificent temple where God could be approached, using the finest materials to build a structure worthy of giving honor to the one true God.

We read in the pages of the Old Testament of the utter despair of the Hebrews when the Temple was destroyed and they were conquered and taken into exile. But in 516 BC the Temple was rebuilt, and it was to this Temple that God himself came, when he took flesh and dwelt among us to save us and redeem us.

Christ was brought by his blessed mother and Joseph to this Temple and he was found here as a young boy talking with the elders. But later, he rebuked the Jews for their abuses in the Temple and he told them that the Temple would be destroyed again. It was the rulers of this Temple who delivered the Savior up to death on the Cross.

Those of us who follow Christ also set aside special places for worship. From the caves, catacombs and house churches of the earliest Christians to the most glorious cathedrals, Christians have dedicated houses of prayer where we partake of the Sacraments which Christ himself instituted.

The historian Eusebius described church dedications, speaking of the church at Tyre, rebuilt after the persecutions of Diocletian in 314 and the consecration of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem in 335. The Spanish nun, Egeria, who

made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land sometime in the early 5th century, described in her diary (portions of which were discovered in the 19th century) the celebration of the anniversary of the dedication of the churches in Jerusalem:

Those are called the days of dedication when the holy church which is in Golgotha, and which they call the martyrium, was consecrated to God; the holy church also which is at the Anastasis, that is, in the place where the Lord rose after his Passion, was consecrated to God on that day. The dedication of these holy churches is therefore celebrated with the highest honor, because the Cross of the Lord was found on this same day. And it was so ordained that, when the holy churches above mentioned were first consecrated, that should be the day when the Cross of the Lord had been found, in order that the whole celebration should be made together, with all rejoicing, on the self-same day. Moreover, it appears from the Holy Scripture that this is also the day of dedication, when holy Solomon, having finished the House of God which he had built, stood before the altar of God and prayed, as it is written in the books of the Chronicles. So when these days of dedication are come, they are kept for eight days. And people begin to assemble from all parts many days before... Now on these days of the dedication the adornment of all the churches is the same as at Easter and at Epiphany, also on each day the procession is made to the several holy places, as at Easter and at Epiphany...



At first, churches were dedicated or consecrated through the celebration of the Liturgy and the placing of relics of the saints in the church, but more elaborate rituals gradually developed. The custom of re-dedicating profaned churches continued, especially after events such as the French Revolution, where a common day of dedication to be celebrated by all the churches of a diocese was established. A Mass for this purpose was compiled in the early 19th century.

The Psalms, antiphons, and other chant texts called for in the various dedication celebrations make use of scriptural references to worship and to holy places: “O how awesome is this place. This is none other than the house of God and this is the gate of heaven.” from Genesis 28 is Jacob’s response to his dream of the ladder of ascent into heaven. “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people. And God himself shall be with them, and be their God.” from Revelation 21 is St. John’s reminder to persecuted Christians that God had sanctified earth by His presence and would return to restore heaven and earth.



The hymns which were written for dedication services refer to the earthly Jerusalem and the heavenly: “Blessed City, Heavenly Salem” (*SAH #271*), which dates from the 6th or 7th century, was designated during the Middle Ages to be sung at Vespers and its second half, which begins “Christ is Made the Sure Foundation” (*SAH #275*) for Lauds. “Only Begotten, Word of God eternal” (*SAH #324*), which is from a 9th century Mozarabic breviary, is a hymn of praise for the blessings received in the church. “Hail Thee, Festival Day”, composed by the 6th century poet Venantius Fortunatus for various festivals and celebrations in the church (Easter, Ascension, Pentecost) was adapted and expanded by others for additional occasions. The set of words for the dedication of a church (*SAH #263*) is from a York Processional for use at the anniversary celebrations of church dedications.

On the weekend of May 5 and 6, his grace, Bishop THOMAS will be with us to bless and dedicate our temple, our humble house of prayer (it will not be consecrated, as it may revert to non-church use someday if we need to move to a larger facility). We are grateful that the bishop, during last year’s visit to us on our 10th anniversary, admonished us strongly to find a home of our own; we are grateful to those who helped us find and purchase this building; and we are grateful to all who have worked so hard to refurbish it and make it beautiful for worship.

We will greet Sayedna THOMAS at Vespers on Saturday evening at 6PM, after which he will be our guest of honor at a dinner in the Parish Hall. Then on Sunday morning, following 9AM Matins, the Service of Dedication will take place.

This service will begin outside, as the bishop sprinkles the exterior walls with holy water, and then, as we proceed inside singing the Litany and invoking the intercessions of all the saints, the interior walls and all things used for worship will be blessed. We will continue with the Mass in honor of St. Gregory, the patron saint of our parish.

I was glad when they said unto me, we will go into the house of the Lord. [Psalm 122:1]

Saint Aldhelm and Saint John of Beverly

As we journey through life, seeking perfection by conforming our wills to God’s will, we are surrounded by many mentors - both among our fellow Christians and those saints - apostles, teachers, missionaries, martyrs and monastics - who have gone

before us. Through their examples, their writings and their intercessions, we are encouraged and made stronger in our quest for holiness. The church is the guardian of holy Tradition and asks her children to maintain and pass it on for future generations. We are not to be innovative or “original” but to be faithful to that Tradition which has been given to us.

In the month of May, we honor two saints whose lives exemplify this practice of following - and then being - mentors in the faith. St. Aldhelm, whose feast day is May 25, lived from 639-709, and St. John of Beverly, who died in 721, is honored on May 7. Both men, living a generation apart, received their early formation in Christian living at the ecclesiastical school founded by St. Theodore, the (Greek) Archbishop of Canterbury and headed by St. Adrian, the (African) monk who had accompanied him to the British Isles at the insistence of (Italian) Pope Vitalian in 669.

Aldhelm had been sent as a young man by his West Saxon family to Canterbury for his education in the Church under the guidance of Adrian, in what was considered the best school in England. There he studied Latin and Greek, Roman law, mathematics and music, as well as the Bible (in the Antiochian literal style of interpretation).

On leaving Canterbury, he entered the monastery of the Irish monk Maidulf, which became known as Malmesbury Abbey. Adhelm eventually succeeded Maidulf as abbot and admirably fulfilled his responsibilities for guiding and teaching his monks. The main written testimony to his work that we have is his treatise “On the Praises of Virginité” in which he gives the insights of Ss. Augustine and Jerome among others. He built churches dedicated to the holy Mother of God and to St. Michael. The austerities which he practiced included the Irish custom of reciting the Psalter at night standing in the shoulder-deep water of a pond.

After thirty years as abbot, Aldhelm was chosen as bishop for the newly-established Diocese of Sherbourn (which was later moved to Salisbury) and he had to be forcibly taken from his cell to be consecrated! However, he performed his episcopal duties with the same devotion and diligence that he had his monastic ones, and died five years later while traveling to visit his parishes. Miracles were attributed to him during and after his lifetime.

John, who was born in Yorkshire, also went as a young man to Canterbury to study with Adrian. As with Aldhelm and many others, John’s studies with Adrian contributed to his decision to



enter the monastic life, and he returned to the north of England to enter the double monastery of St. Hilda at Whitby.

When the see of Hexham became vacant, John was chosen as the new bishop. He made a great effort to continue, as much as was possible, the monastic life of prayer and contemplation while carrying out the duties of a bishop.



During Lent, Bishop John made it his custom to retire to a more remote area where, in addition to prayer and fasting, he would devote himself to serving and caring for some poor or ill person. In his History of the English Church and People, St. Bede tells us of the Lenten season in which Bishop John healed a young man who had been mute from his birth and who also had a skin disease. John prayed constantly for the man and combined his prayers with what we would now call “physical therapy” - helping the man to loosen his tongue little by little and to learn to form words. The bishop’s prayers and the ministrations of physicians also healed the young man’s skin disease and, thereafter, he never ceased to praise God for his health and for Bishop John.

With a restructuring of dioceses, John was eventually transferred to the see of York. He established a monastery at Beverly, a short distance from the city and it was to this monastery that he retired when the infirmities of age led him to resign his office. He had been a faithful pastor, a devout monk and a worker of miracles. St. Bede the Venerable, who was ordained to the diaconate and the priesthood by St. John, was one of his many spiritual children.

May we, through the examples and intercessions of Ss. Aldhelm and John of Beverly, strive to maintain and pass on - through our words and actions - the Orthodox faith which we have received.

Parish News

Many thanks are due to those who made our celebrations of our first Holy Week in our new home so wonderful. Thank you to those who served at the altar, who sang in the choir, who washed linens, who baked bread, who cleaned the church, and who prepared food. We met the challenges admirably, accommodating 40 extra souls for the Paschal Vigil and the meal afterward in our Parish Hall. Thanks to all who helped make it possible.

Thanks also to all those who traveled to Warrenton for the service with Bishop THOMAS when the members of that mission congregation were chrismated into the holy Orthodox Church, and to those who returned there for additional Palm Sunday and Good Friday services. This congregation has now officially received the name St. Patrick, and we rejoice with them as they continue on their journey of faith.

Thank you to Jennifer Caldwell for completing the assembling of 30 health kits for International Orthodox Christian Charities and to those who contributed items for the kits.

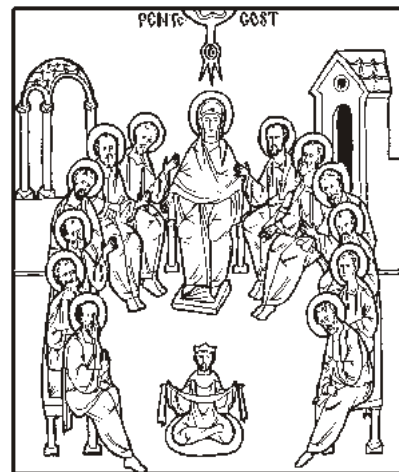
Thank you to Nathan Hollenbeck for leading the Lenten classes on almsgiving and for teaching our little ones the stories of the faith each Sunday.

We have now wished Amanda Painter good-bye, as she departs for a year of teaching English in South Korea, and later this month we will do the same for Scott Parker, as he leaves for study in London. We will continue to keep them in our hearts and prayers.

Fr. Nicholas, Khouria Becky, and Subdeacon Jerome Chiles will be on pilgrimage to the Holy Land May 7-16, visiting the sacred sites in Nazareth, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem. We will welcome Deacon Gregory Roeber (Maria and Grete's father) the weekend of May 12 and 13, when he will sing Vespers and celebrate a pre-sanctified "deacon's mass" for us. Grete will lead the music for the services. We are grateful to them for their assistance.

We begin our liturgical celebrations for May by celebrating second Vespers for the feast of the Apostles, Ss. Philip and James, at 7:30PM on Tuesday, May 1. We will celebrate the Ascension of our Lord on Thursday, May 17, with a Sung Mass at 7:30PM, followed by a pot-luck supper, and we end the month with the great feast of Pentecost on Sunday, May 27. At the Mass that day, we will hear the story of the coming of the Holy Spirit in as many languages as we can manage (and that's usually quite a number for a small parish!)

Please begin now to make plans to attend the Eastern Region Parish Life Conference July 4-8. The Conference will be hosted by Holy Cross parish in Linthicum and held in Hunt Valley, MD. The three Western Rite congregations will have the opportunity to lead a Western Rite Vespers service on Friday evening of the Conference. We look forward to participating in the workshops, meetings, and the Bible Bowl, and enjoying the fellowship of other Orthodox Christians from our region.



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesda	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>May 2007</h1>						
		1 Ss. Philip and James, Apostles 7:30PM Vespers	2 St. Athanasius, BCD, 373 FAST	3 Finding of the Holy Cross, 326	4 St. Monica, W, 387 FAST	5 Feria <i>Visitation of Bishop THOMAS</i> 6PM Vespers, Dinner following
6 4 th Sunday after Easter 9AM Matins 9:30 <i>Dedication of Building & Sung Mass</i>	7 St. John of Beverly, B, 721	8 Apparition of St. Michael the Archangel	9 St. Gregory Nazianzen, BCD, 389 FAST	10 Feria	11 Feria FAST	12 St. Epiphanius of Salamis, B, c. 403 6PM Vespers
13 5 th Sunday after Easter 9AM Matins 9:30 <i>Deacon's Mass</i>	14 Rogation Monday, St. Pachomius, Ab., 346	15 Rogation Tuesday	16 Rogation Wed-nesday; St. Brendan the Navigator, Ab, 577; Vigil of the Ascension FAST	17 Ascension of Our Lord 7:30PM Sung Mass, pot-luck supper following	18 Within the Octave; St. Venantius, M, 250 FAST	19 Within the Octave; St. Dunstan of Canterbury, BC, 988 6PM Vespers
20 Sunday after Ascension 9AM Matins 9:30 Sung Mass	21 Within the Octave	22 Within the octave	23 Within the Octave FAST	24 Octave of Ascension; St. Vincent of Lerins, CD, 450	25 St. Aldhelm, BC. 709 FAST	26 St. Augustine of Canterbury, BCD, 605 6PM Vespers
27 Pentecost 9AM Matins 9:30 Sung Mass	28 Whit Monday; St. Germanus of Paris, BC, 576	29 Whit Tuesday	30 Ember Day FAST	31 Thursday in Whitsun week		

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

Coffee Hour follows Liturgy; Children's Sunday School is during Coffee Hour