

# ✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

November, 2006 - Volume XI, Issue 11

---

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

---

## *A Reading from a Homily by Saint Caesarius of Arles*

*died AD 542*

*feast day - August 27*

*Inside:*

*St. Willibrord of Utrecht . . . 2*  
*Parish News . . . . . 5*  
*Presentation of the BVM . . 5*  
*Calendar . . . . . 7*

There are two cities, dearest brethren: the one is the city of the world, the other the city of paradise. The good Christian ever journeys in the city of the world, but he is recognized as a citizen of the city of paradise. The former city is full of labor, while the latter is restful; the one is full of misery, the other blessed; in the one there is labor, in the other repose; if a man lives wickedly in the one, he cannot arrive at the other. We ought to be pilgrims in this world, in order that we may merit to be citizens in heaven. If a man loves the world and wants to be a citizen of it, he has no place in heaven, for by the fact that we long for our true country we prove that we are pilgrims.

Let no one deceive himself, beloved brethren; the true country of Christians is not here, but in heaven. The city of Christians, their blessedness, their true and eternal happiness is not here. If a man seeks happiness in the world, he will not possess it in heaven. Our true country is paradise, our city of Jerusalem is that heavenly one; the angels are our fellow-citizens, our parents are the patriarchs and prophets, the apostles and martyrs, and our king is Christ. May we, therefore, so live in this earthly sojourn that we may be able to long for such a country as long as we are here, for if a man wills to lead a wicked life he will not be able to long for that true country.

Now to that country there has preceded us the multitude of patriarchs and prophets, also the glorious army of the apostles and martyrs, many thousands of confessors and virgins, and a considerable number of the faithful. All of these who have already been established in blessed rest daily await us with the extended arms of their charity. They equally long and pray that they may receive us with triumph and

exultation in that land of paradise after we are victorious in the combat of this world, where we must fight against the devil.



If we do well, despising diabolical sins and deadly pleasures in this world, we bring joy to all those in heaven. However, if we reject God and love the world, embracing sins and offenses, we make all those people sad, as we mentioned above, the angels, apostles, and martyrs in heaven, and at the same time we prepare an eternal fire for ourselves. Therefore, I beseech you, brethren, if we do not grieve for our own sakes, we ought to grieve at least for the sake of those whom we sadden when we lead a wicked life.

Behold, Christ with His angels awaits us in heaven, as we resist the devil and his angels. Let us not be afraid, brethren, because Christ not only waits for us, but He also helps us. Do not fear or fall into despair; the devil indeed rages, but Christ extends His consolation. He watches you fight. He assists you in difficulty, He crowns you when you are victorious, so do not despair or give up hope. Such a ruler you have over you, and are you afraid?

## *St. Willibrord of Utrecht, Bishop and Confessor* *Feast Day ~ November 7*

The arduous life of a missionary involves experiences and events which have been common to all who would take on the challenge of bringing the Christian message to a pagan people. From the first missionary journeys of the Apostles, and particularly St. Paul, to the work of missionaries serving today in African nations and countries now freed from the yoke of Communism, we hear similar stories of zeal and perseverance, trial and triumph. The life of St. Willibrord of Utrecht follows this familiar pattern. St. Bede the Venerable, who wrote his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* while St. Willibrord was still living, tells us much of the story, and fifty years later, the monk Alcuin wrote a *Life of St. Willibrord*, filling in more details.

Willibrord was born around the year 658 in the English kingdom of Northumberland. When he was only seven years old, his Christian parents sent their son to the Monastery of Ripon to be taught and guided in the Christian faith by the Abbot, St. Wilfrid.

Willibrord thrived in the monastery, where he devoted his time and attention to the disciplines of prayer and fasting,

worship and the study of holy Scripture. At the age of 20, he was given permission to leave Ripon and follow the monk (later St.) Egbert, who had traveled to Rathmelsigi, Ireland to learn the Irish monastic practices. Willibrord spent 12 years here and it was here that he felt his first desire to undertake the work of a missionary.

Some of the monks were sent to Friesland (Frisia) to tell the pagan inhabitants about Christianity, but after two years of preaching without success, they returned to Ireland. Willibrord had by now been ordained priest, and desired to make another effort to reach the hearts of the Frisian people. After 25 years of monastic training, he was ready for this mission, and so he was blessed to go to Friesland..

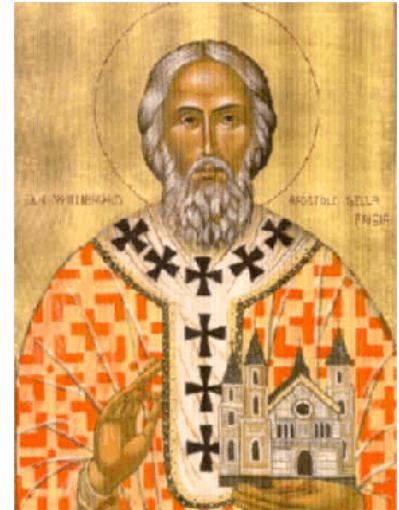
Willibrord and a group of ten other English monks - all Anglo-Saxons - departed to be missionaries to the Old Saxons of Friesland. Sailing from Ireland, they landed at the mouth of the Rhine River at Catwin, where the British had come for centuries to trade. This part of Friesland had been conquered by the Franks and Pepin, the Duke or “Mayor of the Palace” (and father of Charles Martel), greeted the missionaries courteously and gave them permission to carry on their work in this county.

Willibrord first wished for a Papal blessing on the mission, so he went to Rome and met with Pope Sergius I, receiving encouragement and relics for the churches that would be built. Returning to Frisia to begin his important work, Willibrord found the people now more receptive to the new religion, and many were soon baptized.

After several years of building up the kingdom of Christ in this land, Willibrord was asked to return to Rome to be made Archbishop for Friesland. Pope Sergius consecrated the monk, giving him the name Clement, in the Church of St. Cecilia on her first day, November 22, 696, and after only fourteen days in Rome, Bishop Clement returned to Frisia.

Pepin gave his royal castle at Utrecht for a monastery, the Church of Our Savior was built in the city, and Willibrord also restored St. Martin’s Church (which had been built earlier but destroyed by pagans). This church became the Cathedral. In 698, Willibrord founded an Abbey at Echternach, in the diocese of Trier (now in Luxembourg).

Pepin, who was a nominal Christian, was also affected by the work of the holy monk. Leaving his concubine, he returned to his lawful wife, Plectrudis. Pepin died in 714, but just before his death, his grandson (through Charles Martel, the son of the concubine) was born. Willibrord baptized the child, who in later



years became Pepin II (“the Short”), King of the Franks and father of Charlemagne.

**W**illibrord and his missionary companions ventured into areas not governed by the Franks but by the pagan King Radbod, who had been driven out by the Franks. Here they met with greater dangers. In Denmark, they were soundly rejected, but they left that land with 30 Danish slave boys, who were to be instructed in the faith.



**O**n their return voyage, bad weather caused the party to land on an island considered sacred by the pagan Danes and Frisians. Taboos on this island included killing any creature living there, eating anything growing on the island, or drawing water from a spring without maintaining total silence. St. Willibrord bravely chose to violate these taboos to show that they had no power over Christians. He killed some of the wild life to feed his companions while they were stranded, and he baptized several of the Danish children in water from the spring, speaking the words of baptism aloud. The local people marveled that these strangers did not fall dead at this “sacrilege”. Unfortunately, their leader required a human sacrifice for their “sin” and lots were drawn to choose the Christian martyr. Willibrord and the others were sent away unharmed, but a seed had been planted which would flourish in later years.

**G**radually more people became receptive to the Gospel and more churches were founded. Willibrord was assisted for a while by St. Boniface, who spent several years with him before moving to Germany.

**T**hrough all the years of his missionary labors, St. Willibrord was known for his patience and for miracles of healing as a result of his prayers. He was very diligent in preparing converts for baptism and strict in choosing those to be ordained to holy orders. He knew that the scandal of one unworthy shepherd could undo the good work of many others.

**I**n old age, weary from his labors, St. Willibrord retired from his episcopal duties to his monastery at Echternach and died on November 7 around the year 739. He was buried, by his wish, at the monastery. This faithful missionary had fulfilled the command to “go forth into all the world, preaching and teaching and baptizing.” Through his tireless efforts, the people of Frisia, Holland and Zeeland received the light of Christianity.

**M**issionaries before and after St. Willibrord have also had an undeterred sense of purpose; have experienced the phenomenon of success after a predecessor has failed and

greater success with the approval of a ruler. They have sometimes needed to diffuse idolatrous superstitions and have faced the possibility of martyrdom. May God bless and protect all who accept these conditions in order to bring the light of Christ to those who had been in darkness.

## *Parish News*

**A**s in past years, we will transfer the celebration of All Saints Day to the Sunday within the Octave, November 5. In addition to praising the saints in the Liturgy, at coffee hour afterward, we will hold our annual All Saints party. All are encouraged to come (in costume) prepared to share with others the story of a saint.

**O**n All Souls Day, November 2, a Requiem Mass will be celebrated at 7:30PM, preceded by Vespers of the Dead and followed by a pot-luck supper.

**W**e will offer Vespers for the Eve of the Feast of Patriarchs and Prophets of the Old Law on November 7 and the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Temple on November 20. Vespers for St. Andrew will be on November 30.

**P**lease mark your calendars now for the last weekend of January, 2007. We have received word that his grace, Bishop THOMAS will pay a return visit to St. Gregory's then to dedicate our new building. We look forward to Sayedna Thomas' visit and to the joyful purpose for his visit.



## *The Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Temple*

**W**hen a church in honor of St. Mary, built by the Emperor Justinian in Jerusalem where a portion of the Temple had stood, was dedicated on November 21, 543, a new feast was established for this day based on a story about the young child Mary in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century Protoevangelium of James. In the story, righteous Joachim and Anna vowed to dedicate their longed-for child to God and brought her to the Temple in Jerusalem for service there when she was still very young. (Historians such as Josephus attest to the fact that rooms were kept at the Temple for

a company of virgins whose service included making the priestly vestments and hangings for the altar.) According to the story, Mary, as a typical impetuous child, ran up the steps of the Temple and into the Holy of Holies, where she danced before the altar. Whether this story is legendary or actual fact, it is rich with symbolic meaning.

In the words of the Dom Prosper Guéranger:



The mystery of Mary's sojourn in the sanctuary of the Old Covenant is our best preparation for the approaching season of Advent. Mary, led to the temple in order to prepare in retirement, humility, and love for her incomparable destiny, had also the mission of perfecting at the foot of the figurative altar the prayer of the human race...In our name she addressed her supplications to Him whom she recognized as the Bridegroom, without, however, knowing that He was to be her own Son... How well did this ark of the New Covenant replace that of the Jews, which had perished with the first temple! It was for her, though he knew it not, that Herod the Gentile had continued the construction of the second temple after it had remained desolate since the time of Zorobabel; for the temple, like the tabernacle before it, was but the home of the ark destined to be God's throne; but greater was the glory of the second temple which sheltered the reality, than of the first which contained but the figure.

The observance of this Feast of the Presentation (or Entrance) of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Temple spread to Constantinople by the 8<sup>th</sup> century, and was celebrated in English monastic houses from the 10<sup>th</sup> century. It was introduced into France in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and in Rome in the 16<sup>th</sup>.

Again the words of Prosper Guéranger:

Holy Church declares that we can imitate thee, O Mary, in this mystery of thy Presentation, as in all others. Deign to bless especially those privileged souls who, by the grace of their vocation, are even here below dwellers in the house of the Lord: may they be like that fruitful olive enriched by the holy Spirit, to which St. John Damascene compares thee. But is not every Christian, by reason of his Baptism, an indweller and a member of the Church, God's true sanctuary...? May we, through thy intercession, follow thee so closely in thy Presentation even here in the land of shadows, that we may deserve to be presented after thee to the Most High in the temple of His glory.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>November 2006</h1>						
			<b>1</b> All Saints  FAST	<b>2</b> All Souls  <i>7:30 Sung Mass, pot-luck supper</i>	<b>3</b> Within the Octave of All Saints; St. Wilifred, VM, 680  FAST	<b>4</b> Within the Octave; Ss. Vitalis & Agricola, Mm, c. 304  <i>6PM Vespers</i>
<b>5</b> Within the octave of All Saints (Pentecost 21)  <i>9AM Matins 9:30 Sung Mass All Saints party</i>	<b>6</b> Within the Octave; St. Leonard, Abbot, 6 <sup>th</sup> c.	<b>7</b> Within the Octave; St. Willibrord, BC, 739  <i>7:30 Vespers</i>	<b>8</b> Patriarchs & Prophets of the Old Law  FAST	<b>9</b> St. Benignus of Ireland, BC, c. 468	<b>10</b> Ss. Tryphon, Respicus & Nympha, Mm, 251  FAST	<b>11</b> St. Martin of Tours, BC, 655  <i>6PM Vespers</i>
<b>12</b> Pentecost 22  <i>9AM Matins 9:30 Sung Mass</i>	<b>13</b> St. Britius of Tours, BC, 444	<b>14</b> St. Gregory Palamas, BCD, 1359	<b>15</b> Feria  FAST	<b>16</b> Feria	<b>17</b> St. Gregory the Wonder-worker, BC, c. 270  FAST	<b>18</b> Feria  <i>6PM Vespers</i>
<b>19</b> Pentecost 23  <i>9AM Matins 9:30 Sung Mass</i>	<b>20</b> St. Edmund, KM, 870  <i>7:30 Vespers</i>	<b>21</b> Presenta-tion of the Blessed Virgin Mary	<b>22</b> St. Cecilia, VM, c. 230  FAST	<b>23</b> St. Clement of Rome, BM, c. 100 [Thanksgiving Day]	<b>24</b> St. Chry-sogonus, M, c. 304  FAST	<b>25</b> St. Katherine of Alexandria, VM c. 4 <sup>th</sup> c.  <i>6PM Vespers</i>
<b>26</b> Pentecost 24  <i>9AM Matins 9:30 Sung Mass</i>	<b>27</b> St. Maximus the Confessor, c. 460	<b>28</b> Feria	<b>29</b> Vigil of St. Andrew  FAST	<b>30</b> St. Andrew, Apostle  <i>7:30 Vespers</i>		

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

*Coffee Hour follows Liturgy*