

# ✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

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

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## *A Reading from a Homily by St. Caesarius of Arles*

*died AD542*

*feast day - August 27*

*Inside:*

<i>St. Thekla</i> .....	2
<i>Orthodox Alaska</i> .....	4
<i>Parish News</i> .....	5
<i>The Royal Banners</i> .....	6
<i>Calendar</i> .....	7

If we reflect somewhat carefully on the salvation of our soul, we recognize that we are the true and living temple of God. God not only “dwelleth in buildings made by human hands” (Acts 7:48) or in those constructed of wood and stone, but above all in the soul which has been made according to the image of God and was formed by the hand of the Creator Himself. Thus the blessed Apostle Paul said, “The temple of God is holy, and you are that temple.” (I Cor. 3:17).

These temples are made of wood and stone in order that the living temples of God may gather there and come together into one temple of God. A single Christian is one temple of God, and many Christians are many temples of God. Also notice, brethren, how beautiful is the temple which is constructed from temples; just as many members form one body, so many temples form one temple. Now these temples of Christ, that is, devout Christian souls, are scattered throughout the world, but when judgment day comes they will all be gathered together and will form one temple in eternal life. Just as the many members of Christ form one body and have one head, Christ, so also those temples have Christ Himself as their inhabitant, because we are members of him who is our head. Thus the Apostle says, “May Christ inwardly dwell in your hearts through faith.” (Eph. 3:16, 17). Let us rejoice because we have merited to be the temple of God, but let us be afraid that we may violate the temple of god by evil deeds. Let us fear what the Apostle says, “If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him.” (I Cor. 3:17). God, who could without any difficulty form heaven and earth by the power of His word, deigns to dwell in you, and for this reason you ought to act in such a way that you cannot offend such an inhabitant. Therefore let God

find in you, that is, in His temple, nothing filthy or dark or haughty. If he suffers an injury there, He quickly withdraws, and if the Redeemer departs, the devil immediately draws near. What will be the condition of that unhappy soul, when it is deserted by God and possessed by the devil? Such a soul is deprived of light and filled with darkness; it is drained of all sweetness and saturated with bitterness; it destroys life and find death; it acquires punishment and loses paradise. Now since God has willed to make out of us a temple for Himself and deigns to dwell in us continually, with His help let us strive as much as we can to lay aside what is superfluous and to gather what is useful. Let us reject intemperance, preserve chastity, despise avarice, seek compassion, scorn hatred, and love charity. If we do this with God's help, brethren, we continually invite God into the temple of our heart and body.

## *St. Thekla ~ Feast Day, September 23*



The news is filled with stories of wayward youth - those who have rebelled against the rules of society and their families and who have begun lives of crime, or at the least, irresponsibility. In the Church, however, we hear of youth on a different path, of those who have seen the beauty and truth of Jesus Christ even before their parents and who have given their lives to following him against all odds. St. Thekla, one of the saints of our Patriarchate, is an example of such a young person.

Thekla was born in Iconium around the year 16. She was 18 years old and engaged to marry Thamyris, when St. Paul and St. Barnabas visited her town to preach the Gospel (as related in Acts 14). Although her parents and fiancé were strongly opposed to the talk of this new religion, Thekla was fascinated and wanted to be part of the crowds who gathered to hear Paul speak. Her mother forbade her to go, but Thekla discovered that, just by sitting at the open window of her room, she was able to hear every word. For three days, she took it all in, amazed at the difference in the life that Paul described and that which was planned for her as a soon-to-be matron in pagan Roman society.

Thekla's family and Thamyris were alarmed at the effect that Paul's preaching was having on her. They - and many others in the city - went to the governor and demanded that he put a stop to this disturber of the peace. So Paul and Barnabas were arrested and put in prison to await trial.

Hoping for more stories of Jesus and His teachings, Thekla secretly went to the prison, bribed the guard with pieces of her jewelry, and went in to Paul's cell where he continued teaching.

Discovering this clandestine activity of her daughter's, Thekla's mother went again to the governor and demanded an immediate judgment in the case against Paul. The governor complied by having Paul stoned and expelled from the city. He also chastised those who had listened favorably to the Apostle's preaching. The young girl responded by declaring that she had decided to forego marriage and instead would devote herself to living out the teachings of Christ as a virgin.

Thinking that the threat of severe punishment would be just the thing to bring Thekla to her senses, the governor sentenced her to be burned at the stake if she did not renounce this folly.

But Thekla was resolved, and so she went willingly to her punishment. But God had other plans for this courageous young woman, so a sudden thunderstorm with heavy rains caused the fire to be put out. Wanting to be rid of the whole affair, the governor ordered Thekla out of the city, never to return.

The young woman immediately sought to catch up with Paul and Barnabas, who were then traveling to the city of Antioch. There, Thekla again faced danger when a local nobleman, who found her attractive, tried to force his attentions on her. She fought him off, but he complained to the governor and, once again, Thekla was sentenced to death. This time, her escape from death was even more dramatic. The lioness which was sent into the arena to kill her became tame and harmless and then killed the bear that was sent in next. Other miraculous escapes followed and Thekla was finally sent away by the authorities.

Following St. Paul to Myra, the young woman now received his blessing to lead an ascetic life, so she traveled to the mountains of Syria where she began her solitary life of prayer and meditation.

Some years later, there was another escape by Thekla - this time when a man, seeing her praying in the mountains sought to attack her. As in the past, God provided a means of escape. A crevice opened up in the rocky mountainside and Thekla was able to climb through it to safety.

St. Thekla lived many more years and fell asleep in the Lord at the age of 90. Young women who had been inspired by St. Thekla's life came to form a monastery around her cell and to



build a chapel for her relics. 1900 years later, this monastery still thrives in the hills above the town of Ma'loula in Syria.

**W**e give thanks to God for the courage and conviction of the young Thekla and pray that she will intercede for all young people who would strive to follow Christ.

*Note: At Antiochian Village, there is a shrine containing a relic of St. Thekla. Annually, on a weekend nearest her feast day, a pilgrimage takes place, with those attending praying at her the shrine of St. Thekla. The pilgrimage will be on September 22-24 this year.*

## Orthodox Alaska

*by Jim O'Neill*

**I**n August, I had the chance to visit several villages in southern Alaska, including Metlakatla, Sitka, Ketchikan, and Juneau in the Southeast; Bethel in the West; and St. Paul in the Pribilof Islands.



**M**ost Alaska natives in the south are Orthodox, and many members of the Aleut and Tlingit tribes have Russian names and some Russian ancestors. (One town is filled with Old Believers). At Ss. Peter and Paul on St. Paul Island, many icons use the post-Giotto perspective style popular in Russia (and Russian America) during the colonial period, which began in the 1780s.

**S**itka was the Russian capital of Alaska until 1900. The Bishop's house there is one of only two surviving wooden buildings of the Russian colonial period and is open for tours. It was built by St. Innocent, Enlightener of Alaska and Equal to the Apostles (and later Metropolitan of Moscow). The parlor has a portrait of Tsar Alexander II and a clock made by St. Innocent. At the center of town is the Cathedral of St. Michael (1848), where I was able to venerate the wonderworking icon of Our Lady of Sitka.

**O**ur delegation from the Department of Health and Human Services was concerned with studying the health of these American citizens. We found that salmon and game are so plentiful that many Alaskans support themselves on a subsistence lifestyle, and even in Anchorage people who don't fish every time the weather clears are considered misfits. But subsistence doesn't offer the luxuries of a market economy. More and more

Alaskan youth, with few role models for economic prosperity and unable to get their hands on alcohol or marijuana, turn to the extremely unhealthy practice of “huffing” gasoline or glue to get high. We visited an innovative residential clinic in Bethel where youth dependent on huffing are taught the hunting skills of their ancestors (and to make great moose jerkey!), which seems to restore balance and purpose to their lives.

**M**any Alaskans can only reach cities by boat, seaplane, or foot. Because of the distance, Alaskans are developing many innovations in health care, from dental health aids (part-time clinicians for small villages) to tele-behavioral health (counseling by videolink).

**E**very part of Alaska I saw was beautiful - most of all, Sitka. I encourage everyone to visit and experience the special beauty of Orthodox Alaska.

## *Parish News*

**T**his month, we will begin expanding our liturgical celebrations in our new home. As we discover what will be possible considering work and travel situations (including that of the pastor), these may increase further. First, we will have Vespers of the Blessed Virgin and Litany of the Virgin on Thursday, September 7 (the Eve of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin). The Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross is September 14, and we will celebrate with Sung Mass on the Eve - Wednesday, September 13, at 7:30PM, followed by a pot-luck supper. On Wednesday, September 20, Vespers will be offered for the Eve of St. Matthew’s Day; and we will again celebrate a Sung Mass followed by pot-luck supper on Thursday, September 28, the Eve of St. Michael and All Angels.

**S**ome education classes will also be offered, beginning with a session on the various liturgical objects used in our services (vessels, vestments, etc.). We will review what these things are called, how they are used, and how they developed historically. Fr. Nicholas will lead this presentation in the chapel on Sunday, September 10, after coffee hour. We hope to resume children’s classes soon.

**W**e are enjoying the wonderful feeling of being in our own church home, but we cannot forget that there is much more work to be done on the building. At its meeting on August 27, the Council set a list of priorities (some of which are required by our bank) for continuing this work. Please see Property Committee



members (Brian Green, David Caldwell, Jerry Chiles) to offer your help in completing these projects. The hospitality committee (led by Jennifer Caldwell) will soon provide a list of items needed for the kitchen.

We look forward to celebrating the ordination of Alban Waggener to the priesthood at the St. Thekla Pilgrimage on Saturday, September 23. Fr. Alban and the people in Lynchburg have been given the name Holy Trinity Church by Metropolitan PHILIP. Fr. Nicholas has been traveling to Lynchburg for several months to help provide catechesis for this congregation, and we welcome them as our closest Western Rite neighbor parish.

## *The Royal Banners*

*The Royal Banners forward go,  
the Cross shines forth in mystic glow:  
where he in flesh, our flesh who made,  
our sentence bore, our ransom paid.*

*O Tree of beauty, Tree of light!  
Adorned with royal purple bright!  
Elect on whose triumphal breast  
those holy limbs should find their rest.*

*O Cross, our one reliance, hail!  
On this triumphant feast, avail  
to give fresh grace now to the saint,  
and pardon to the penitent.*



This hymn ( three verses of which are given above) was written by Venantius Fortunatus (530-609), poet and bishop of Poitiers. It was commissioned by Queen Radegunda, who had retired from court life and founded a convent near Poitiers, named in honor of the Holy Cross. Emperor Justin II had sent a piece of the True Cross for Radegunda's convent. In a joyous celebration on November 19, 569, this hymn was sung as the relic was carried in procession to the convent church.

The hymn became widely used in the West and was eventually prescribed for Good Friday at the procession of the Blessed Sacrament from the Altar of Repose and for Vespers in Passiontide. When the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (September 14) was established in the West after the triumphal return of the Cross by Emperor Heraclius (629) following its capture by the Persians, this hymn was also chosen as the office hymn for the feast.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>September 2006</h1>						
					<b>1</b> St. Giles, Abbot, 708  FAST	<b>2</b> St. Stephen, King of Hungary, 1038  <i>6PM Vespers</i>
<b>3</b> Pentecost XII  <i>9AM Matins 9:30 Sung Mass</i>	<b>4</b> St. Gorazd of Prague, BM, 1942	<b>5</b> Feria	<b>6</b> Feria  FAST	<b>7</b> St. Cloud, C, 560; St. Sergius I, BC, 701  <i>7:30PM Vespers of BVM</i>	<b>8</b> Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary  FAST	<b>9</b> Ss. Dorotheus & Gorgonius, Mm, 303  <i>6PM Vespers</i>
<b>10</b> Pentecost XIII  <i>9AM Matins 9:30 Sung Mass</i>	<b>11</b> Ss. Protus & Hyacinth, Mm	<b>12</b> Feria	<b>13</b> St. Cyprian, BM, 258  <i>7:30 Sung Mass &amp; pot-luck supper</i> FAST	<b>14</b> Exaltation of the Holy Cross	<b>15</b> Feria  FAST	<b>16</b> St. Ninian, BC, 430; St. Cornelius, BC, 253  <i>6PM Vespers</i>
<b>17</b> Pentecost XIV  <i>9AM Matins 9:30 Sung Mass</i>	<b>18</b> Feria	<b>19</b> St. Theodore of Canterbury, BC, 690	<b>20</b> Ember Day; Vigil of St. Matthew  <i>7:30PM Vespers</i>  FAST	<b>21</b> St. Matthew, Apostle & Evangelist	<b>22</b> Ember Day; St. Maurice & Comps., Mm, 3 <sup>rd</sup> c.  FAST	<b>23</b> Ember Day; St. Thekla, VM, 1 <sup>st</sup> c.; St. Linus, BM, c. 80  <i>6PM Vespers</i>
<b>24</b> Pentecost XV  <i>9AM Matins 9:30 Sung Mass</i>	<b>25</b> Feria	<b>26</b> Ss. Cyprian BM & Justina, VM, c. 303	<b>27</b> Ss. Cosmos & Damian, Mm, c. 303  FAST	<b>28</b> St. Wenceslas, KCM, 938  <i>7:30 Sung Mass &amp; pot-luck supper</i>	<b>29</b> St. Michael & All Angels  FAST	<b>30</b> St. Jerome, PrCD, 420  <i>6PM Vespers</i>

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

*Coffee Hour in the Parish Hall follows Mass on Sundays.*