

✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

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St. Gregory the Great Orthodox Church
A Western Rite Congregation of the Antiochian Archdiocese
13407 Roxbury Rd., Silver Spring, MD - stgregoryoc.org

*From a
homily of
St. John
Chrysostom
d. 407*

Behold an angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying: Arise, and take the child with his mother, and fly into Egypt: and be there until I shall tell thee. [Matt. 2:13]

There is something here which we should inquire into, touching the Magi and touching the Child. For even if they were not troubled, but received all things in submission, why is it that both they and the Child are not preserved from danger where they are: and why must they seek flight towards Persia, and He with His Mother go down to Egypt? But why not? Must He be allowed to fall into the hands of Herod; and being taken would He not be slain? Then it might not have been believed that He had ever taken flesh, and the greatness of the divine

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plan of our redemption would not have been believed. For although these things happened, and many other things took place afterwards in a merely human manner, yet there are some who have dared to say that His taking of our flesh was but a myth; into what blasphemy would they not have fallen had He done all things in a divine manner and of His own power?

The Wise Men he sends away quickly, sending them likewise as teachers into the land of Persia; frustrating the evil rage of the tyrant, so that he would learn that he had attempted that which was beyond his power, and so put away his rage and case from his futile efforts. For it is the way of the divine power not alone to scatter openly those that oppose it, but also simply to allow them to be deceived...

That which here took place could also strike terror in the heart of the tyrant. For consider to yourself how Herod felt, how he must have been choked with rage, at being so fooled and made to look ridiculous by the Magi. And what if he did not learn to be better? That cannot be imputed to Him who has ordered those things, but to the unmeasured fury of this person who would not take notice of things which ought to have brought him to his senses, and turn from evil-doing; but he rushes on the more, so that he earns a more grievous chastisement for his enormous folly.

But why, you will say, is the Child sent into Egypt? The Evangelist himself tells us the reason: That it might be fulfilled which the Lord spoke by the prophet, saying: *Out of Egypt have I called my son* [Mt. 2:15]; and so that at the same time the beginning of bright hopes might be made known to the whole world. For since Babylon and Egypt, more than the rest of the

world burnt with the fire of iniquity, the Lord, manifesting even from the beginning that He desires to restore both these regions to Himself, and bring them to worthier things, and by this at the same time intimating to the whole earth that His gifts were now to be looked for, to the one sends the Magi, and to the other goes Himself, together with His Mother.

These things also teach us something else, which in no little way encourages us to seek true wisdom. What is this? That from the very beginning we must look for temptations and dangers? See how this happened to Him, even in His swaddling clothes. For as soon as He was born the tyrant rages; then comes flight, and a journey into exile; and without cause His Mother is forced to fly into a land of strangers: so that you hearing of these things and being yourself thought worthy to serve God in a spiritual manner, should you see yourself suffering grievous afflictions, and placed in the midst of tribulations without end, might not be troubled, and might not murmur: Why is this? Should I not rather be honored and praised, and considered as worthy, and to be esteemed, since I have fulfilled the commandments of the Lord? But supported by His example, endure with courage; knowing that this is the lot of all spiritual men, that they are everywhere tried by afflictions...

Let us then bearing all these things in mind, put away from us all needless excuses and pretenses, and let us devote ourselves to the labor of seeking after holiness. We shall thus implore of Him that He aid us in our struggles, and so we shall come to the enjoyment of an eternal reward, to which may we all attain by the grace and mercy of Our Lord Jesus Christ.



St. Seraphim of Sarov

Feast Day ~ January 2

The path to sainthood can take many different forms. For those steadfast Christians in the early centuries when the Church suffered persecution, it was sudden martyrdom. For others, it has been a life of defending the faith against heretics who would dilute or distort the Truth. For some, it has been a life of service to the poor and needy, following Christ's teachings. For St. Seraphim of Sarov, it was a life spent in prayer and meditation, most often in solitude, a life of visions and miracles.

Born in 1754 into a family of merchants in Kursk, Russia, the child Prochorus was devout from an early age. When he was seven years old, his mother took him to the construction site in the cathedral of Kursk, a project her husband had been working on before his death. The child fell from scaffolding around the bell tower, but he survived the fall - which should have killed him - without harm. When Prochorus became seriously ill at the age of ten, he had a dream of the Mother of God promising to visit and heal him. Shortly afterward, a procession with the famous Kursk Root icon went by his home. His mother carried him outside in order to kiss the icon and he was healed of his illness.

After these experiences and having spent his childhood in devoted attention to the services of the Church and the lives of the saints, eighteen-year-old Prochorus received his mother's blessing to enter the Sarov monastery. The young novice began monastic life with the obediences of making bread and working at carpentry, and he approached everything with particular zeal. He was eventually given permission to take the ascetic practices of fasting and solitary prayer to greater lengths, eating only one small meal a day and abstaining entirely from food on Wednesdays and Fridays. He often went out into the nearby forest to spend time alone praying the Jesus prayer.



Prochorus became seriously ill again, with an illness which caused his body to swell and forced him to spend the next three years lying down. Again a miraculous healing occurred: while the other monks were praying for the novice, he had a vision of the Mother of God with other saints. She touched him with her staff (an action which left a scar on his side), and he was healed. In recognition of this miracle, the monks created a chapel in the infirmary.

After nine years of monastic life, when he was twenty-seven years of age, Prochorus was tonsured and given the name Seraphim. His visions continued as he began to see angels during the services and he even saw Christ himself going into the church on Holy Thursday. In 1793, Seraphim was ordained a hieromonk and spent a year serving in the monastery church every day. He then withdrew into the forest about five miles from the monastery in order to pray constantly. As has been typical of many saints, the wild animals came to him peacefully. This solitary life was not always peaceful, however. On one occasion, a band of thieves, assuming that he had treasures in his hut, attacked him and beat him severely. The only treasure the robbers found was an icon of the Mother of God, but they left the monk physically impaired, causing him to remain stooped for the rest of his life. When the thieves were caught and brought before the court, St. Seraphim interceded for them for leniency.

For nearly three years, St. Seraphim spent his time on a rock near his hermitage, praying with his arms raised to heaven. After fifteen years of living in solitude in the wilderness, in 1810, St. Seraphim returned to the monastery where he was allowed to maintain his seclusion and silence, receiving Communion and having meals in his cell.

Then on November 25, 1825, another vision of the Mother of God led St. Seraphim to end his silence and take on the task of being an elder. For the remainder of his life, he began to admit all who came to him for spiritual counsel. Many people were healed by the saint's prayers, many observed his clairvoyance and the bright shining of his face, and a young nun was present when he had another vision of the Mother of God with other saints as St. Mary said to him, "Soon, my dear one, you shall be with us."

It is from this period of his life that many of the saint's words of wisdom are remembered, the most famous being: "Acquire a peaceful spirit, and around you thousands will be saved." This theme of inner peace was prominent in his spiritual advice to those who came to him:

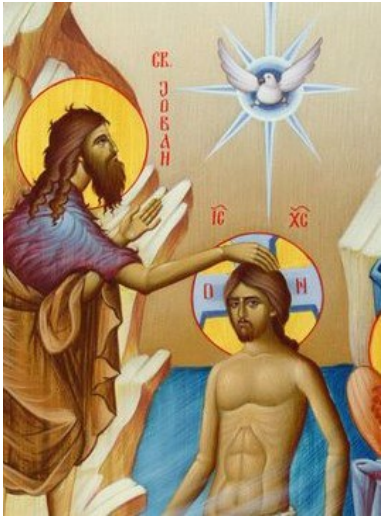
"True hope seeks the one Kingdom of God and is sure that everything necessary for this mortal life will surely be given. The heart cannot have peace until it acquires this hope."

"A sign of spiritual life is the immersion of a person within himself and the hidden workings within his heart."

"Where there is God, there is no evil. Everything coming from God is peaceful, healthy and leads a person to the judgment of his own imperfections and humility."

On January 2, 1833, St. Seraphim of Sarov was found kneeling in prayer in his cell, having passed from this earthly life to life eternal. Seventy years later he was glorified by the Russian Orthodox Church as a great ascetic and wonder-worker. St. Seraphim's path to sainthood was not one of active participation in the world or martyrdom during persecution, but one of quiet, intense prayer and meditation. May we listen to his words of wisdom and seek inner peace through prayer. *Holy Seraphim, pray for us.*

Parish News



Thanks to all who helped make our church so beautiful for the Christmas celebrations. It was truly a group effort this year.

The Feast of the Circumcision of Our Lord, celebrated on January 1, begins the month of January and the new secular year. Matins will be at 9:30am, Mass at 10, followed by a pot-luck New Year's brunch and games. On Sunday, January 5, the feast of Epiphany will be transferred (at the direction of the Archdiocese).

The great Blessing of Water will be observed at 9am in place of Matins, with Mass following at 9:30.

The Food for Hungry People collection will end on January 5, after which all our contributions will be taken to the Manna Food Bank.

It is customary for Orthodox homes to be blessed during the season of Epiphany, so please speak with Fr. Nicholas to schedule yours sometime between January 6 and February 15, when the pre-Lenten observances begin.

The annual March for Life, which was established in 1974, will take place this year on Friday, January 24. This event is a great celebration of the sanctity of life and it draws tens of thousands of people from around the country and from all religious backgrounds. Most years, our Archdiocese has been represented by one

of our bishops, with Bishop JOHN giving the opening prayer last year. A Liturgy will be held at St. Nicholas (OCA) Cathedral in Washington, DC, before the March. Orthodox Christians gather around the Orthodox Christians for Life banner to march as a body when possible.

On the Feast of the Epiphany

When the King of heaven was born, a king on earth was alarmed. Earthly pride is undoubtedly alarmed when heavenly eminence is made manifest... When Herod knew of the birth of our king... he demanded that it be reported to him where the child was to be found [because] he wished to worship him. The star which had appeared to them guided the Magi on. They found the new-born king and offered him their gifts, gold, incense, and myrrh... The Magi, with their mystical gifts, also preach him whom they worshiped - a king with the gold, God with the incense, a human being with the myrrh.

The Magi indicate something important to us by their returning to their own country by another way. By doing what they were advised to do they suggest to us what we should do. Paradise is our country... We left our country by being proud, by being disobedient, by pursuing visible things, by tasting forbidden food; we must return to it by weeping, by being obedient, by rejecting visible things and by curbing our bodily appetites. And so we return to our country by another way. - *St. Gregory the Great (+604)*

The Son of God came to be baptized by a human being, not because of a necessity to be cleansed of any sin of his own...[but] so that he might sanctify the flowing of water for the washing away of the stains of all of our wicked deeds... When the Lord was baptized, the heavens were opened to him, and the Spirit

descended upon him. It is for us, dearly beloved brothers, that these mysteries were celebrated. For by the most sacred bathing of his body the Lord dedicated for us the bath of baptism, and he also pointed out to us that, after the reception of baptism, the right of entry into heaven is accessible to us, and the Holy Spirit is given to us.



When he was invited to a marriage, our Lord and Savior not only deigned to come, but even to work miracles there to gladden the guests...It was not by chance, but for the sake of a certain mystical meaning, that he came to a marriage celebrated on earth in the customary fleshly way, since he descended from heaven to earth in order to connect the Church to himself in spiritual love. His nuptial chamber was the womb of his incorrupt mother, where God was conjoined with human nature, and from there he came forth like a bridegroom to join the Church to himself...

While the Lord was reclining at the marriage, the wine ran short, so that, when in a marvelous fashion he made better wine, the glory of God lying hidden in a human being might be manifested, and the faith of those who believed in him might increase. If we seek the mystical meaning in this, when the Lord appeared in the flesh the undiluted sweetness of legal meaning had gradually begun to “run short” of its former virtue because of its fleshly interpretation by the Pharisees. Christ soon turned those mandates which seemed fleshly to spiritual teaching, and he changed the whole exterior appearance of the letter of the law to the gospel virtue of heavenly grace - which is the meaning of his having made wine from water. - *St. Bede the Venerable (+735)*

St. Gregory Orthodox Church
c/o 804 E Randolph Rd
Silver Spring, MD 20904

Address Correction Requested

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>January 2025</h1>						<i>Sunday services: Matins at 9am Sung Mass at 9:30</i>
			1 The Circumcision of Our Lord & Octave Day of the Nativity <i>(New Years Day)</i> <i>Mass at 10AM</i> <i>W</i>	2 St. Fulgentius, BC, 533	3 St. Genevieve, V, 512	4 St. Titus, BC, c. 96 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
5 The Second Sunday after Christmas <i>(or the observance of Epiphany if not on Monday morning)</i> <i>W</i>	6 The Epiphany of Our Lord <i>W</i>	7 of the Octave of Epiphany; St. Cedd, BC, 664	8 of the Octave of Epiphany; St. Lucius & comp., Mm, c. 290; St. Severinus, Ab, 482	9 of the Octave of Epiphany	10 of the Octave of Epiphany; St. Paul the First Hermit, 342	11 of the Octave of Epiphany; St. Hyginus, PM, c.142; St. Theodosius, Ab, c. 529 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
12 First Sunday after Epiphany; St. Benedict Biscop, Ab, 690 <i>W</i>	13 Octave Day of Epiphany; St. Kentigern, BC, 603	14 St. Hilary, BCD, 367; St. Nina, V, 335	15 St. Maurus, Ab, 584	16 St. Marcellus, PM, 309; St. Honoratus, BC, 429	17 St. Anthony, Ab, 356	18 Chair of St. Peter in Rome; St. Prisca, VM, c. 270 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
19 Second Sunday after Epiphany; St. Mark of Ephesus, BC, 1444 <i>W</i>	20 Ss. Fabian, BM & Sebastian, M, 3 rd C <i>(MLK Day)</i>	21 St. Agnes, VM, 304	22 St. Vincent, M, 304; St. Anastasius, M, 628	23 St. Emerentiana, VM, c. 304; St. John the Almoner, BC, c. 619	24 St. Timothy, BM, 97	25 Conversion of St. Paul <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
26 Third Sunday after Epiphany; St. Polycarp, BM, 156 <i>G</i>	27 St. John Chrysostom, BCD, 407	28 The Second Feast of St. Agnes, VM	29	30 St. Martina, VM, 228; St. Bathildes, QMa, 680	31	