

✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

March, 2025 - Volume XXX, Issue 3

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. Gregory the Great d. 604

Our Lord and Redeemer entered the world as a new kind of human being and gave the world new teachings. He offered the contrast of his new way of life to our old one, which was nurtured by our vices. What did our old and carnal nature know how to do except to hang on to its own belongings, to seize if it could what belonged to someone else, and to covet what it could not seize?

Our physician brought from heaven remedies for every single moral fault. The medical art cures fevers with cold compresses, and chills by applying heat. Similarly Jesus prescribed qualities contrary to our sins: self-restraint to the undisciplined, generosity to the stingy, gentleness to the

Inside:

<i>Parish News</i>	3
<i>St. Ambrose the Confessor</i>	4
<i>Calendar</i>	6
<i>The Holy Cross</i>	9
<i>The Riches of Kindness</i>	10



irritable, and humility for the proud. When he announced these new teachings to his followers, he told them that *whoever of you do not renounce all that you have cannot be my disciple*. He means that you who are coveting what belongs to someone else out of your old way of life are to be generous even with what belongs to you out of zeal for the new way.

But let us listen to Christ's words: *Those who would come after me must renounce themselves*. He tells us that we must renounce ourselves. Some may not find it difficult to abandon their possessions, but it is extremely difficult for us to abandon ourselves. Renouncing what we have is not so much; renouncing what we are amounts to a great deal...

Abandoning our possessions isn't enough if we do not abandon ourselves as well. What can "abandoning ourselves" mean? If we abandon ourselves, where are we to go outside of ourselves? And who is it who goes, if we forsake ourselves?

We are one thing in the nature with which we were created, and another when we have fallen into sin; what we have done is one thing, what we have become is another. Let us abandon the selves we have become by sinning, and let us continue to be the selves we have become by grace. Think of those who were proud - if they have turned to Christ and become humble they have abandoned themselves; those of unrestrained desires, who have changed to a life of self-restraint, have certainly denied what they were. Misers, those who used to seize what belongs to others, but who have stopped trying to get ahead and learned to be generous with what belongs to themselves, have beyond all doubt abandoned themselves. They are now the persons they were created to be. It is

written, *Change the wicked, and they will be no more.* The wicked who have changed will be no more, not because they will altogether cease to exist in their essential being, but because they will cease to exist in their sinful state.

We abandon ourselves, we renounce ourselves, when we escape from what we were in our old state, and strive toward what we are called to be in our new one. Let us see how Paul, who said *It is no longer I who live*, renounced himself: the cruel persecutor was destroyed and the holy preacher began to live. But how was Paul, who said that he was no longer living, able to proclaim the message of truth? Immediately after saying *It is no longer I who live*, he added, *but Christ lives in me.* He means that he had indeed been destroyed by himself, since he no longer lived unspiritually, but in his essential being he was not dead since he was spiritually alive in Christ...

After saying that *those who would come after me must deny themselves*, the Lord immediately adds that *they must take up their cross daily and follow him.* There are two ways we can take up our cross: we can affect our bodies through abstinence, and we can afflict our hearts through compassion for our neighbor. Paul took up his cross in both ways. He said, *I discipline my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be rejected.* That is the physical cross which affected his body. He also took up the interior cross of compassion for his neighbor: *Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is caused to fall and I am not aflame with indignation?* As an example to us he carried the cross of abstinence in his body; and since he took on himself the harm caused by someone else's weakness, he carried a cross in his heart.

Parish News

There are three holy days in March for which we will have services: on March 5, Ash Wednesday, the blessing and



imposition of ashes will mark the beginning of Lent on the Western calendar. On March 11, we will celebrate the feast day of our patron, St. Gregory. We will celebrate the eve of the Feast of the Annunciation to the Blessed Virgin Mary on March 24. On each of these occasions, Vespers will be at 6:30pm, Mass at 7, with a pot-luck Lenten supper following.

Lent is a time for focusing our attention on the disciplines of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. To help with our Lenten discipline, St. Gregory's parish will offer the following devotional opportunities: The Penitential Psalms will be sung on Tuesday, March 4 ("Shrove Tuesday") at 6pm. On five Fridays during Lent (March 14, 21, and 28, and April 4 and 11), we will have Stations of the Cross and sing the Litany of the Cross at 7pm. Confessions can be made after Saturday Vespers, after Stations of the Cross, or by appointment with Fr. Nicholas. Please remember to be generous in alms-giving during Lent.

At our annual Parish Meeting on February 23, Parish Council members were chosen. For the year 2025, they are: Keivan Shahrokhi, David Caldwell, Karl Tsuji, Monica Burnett, Nathaniel Green, and Kyle Housley.

St. Ambrose the Confessor

Feast Day ~ March 16

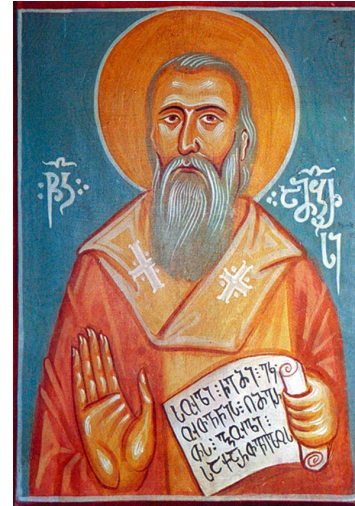
Is it possible for an academic who was a monastic and was also vocal about political matters to become a saint? The Orthodox Church of Georgia believed so when it glorified St. Ambrose, the Confessor, in 1995.

The saint began his life as Besarion Khelaia in 1861 in Georgia when it was part of Imperial Russia. After graduating from the Tbilisi Seminary in 1885, he was ordained to the priesthood, taking the name of Ambrose, and served in a parish for eight years while also teaching the Georgian language. Following the death of his wife in 1896, he enrolled in the Kazan Theological Academy. His study of the history and culture of Georgia led him to write his thesis on the subject of “The Struggle Between Christianity and Islam in Georgia”.

When his studies were completed in 1901, Fr. Ambrose returned to Georgia and was tonsured as a monk. He became involved in the effort to return the Georgian church to autocephaly (which had been abolished by Imperial Russia in 1811) and, because of his outspoken advocacy of autocephaly, Monk Ambrose was exiled to Russia in 1905.

Returning to Georgia, he was made an Archimandrite and was appointed Abbot of the Chelishi Monastery. This monastic establishment had been a center for theological education in former times but had deteriorated greatly both in terms of the numbers of students and the quality of the education. With the support of the Patriarch, Archimandrite Ambrose was able to bring gifted students to the seminary and improve the instruction, particularly in chanting.

There were many old manuscripts in the library of the monastery which St. Ambrose worked diligently to restore. As he was crossing the grounds of the seminary property one day, he heard a quiet sound coming from beneath the earth in one place. Following his natural instinct for miracles, St. Ambrose began to dig and eventually discovered an ancient copy of the Holy Gospels, which were later identified as dating from the 9th or 10th centuries and now called the “*Chelishi Gospels*”.



St. Ambrose was soon made Abbot of the Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Tbilisi, but was caught up in intrigue surrounding a murder and wrongly accused of conspiracy in the crime. Exiled once again, this time to the Holy Trinity Monastery in Ryazan (central Russia) where he was under strict guard. In 1910 he was acquitted and allowed to return to Georgia in 1917. The Russian Revolution provided the Georgian Church the opportunity to proclaim its autocephaly. Archimandrite Ambrose was consecrated as Metropolitan of Chqondidi and in 1921, enthroned as Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia.

This was not a safe time to be a Christian leader, as the Soviet government began to persecute the Church. Church buildings were despoiled and converted to secular use or destroyed. Clergy were arrested, exiled, shot. When the Conference of Genoa was held in 1922 in an effort to help rebuild countries after World War I and establish better relations between the countries that had been involved, Patriarch Ambrose sent an appeal to the participants to remember that a nation and government deprived of Christian virtue would have no future. The Bolshevik response was to arrest the Catholicos-Patriarch, who continued to criticize the actions of the government. He said that “Confession of Faith is a spiritual necessity for every nation and persecution increases its necessity.” His last words to the accusers were “My soul belongs to God, my heart to my motherland, and with my flesh you may do whatever you wish.” He was sentenced to a prison term of more than seven years. In 1924, the imprisoned church leaders were given amnesty, but the harsh conditions which they had endured had taken a toll on their health. Catholicos-Patriarch Ambrose passed from this world to the next in 1927.

Throughout his life as a married parish priest, a scholar, a monk, a critic of repressive political movements, a proponent of

independence for the Georgian Church, a prisoner, and the spiritual shepherd for the Georgian people, St. Ambrose showed his unwavering faith and will now intercede for those in need. *Holy Ambrose, pray for us.*

Resources: *Orthodox Church in America, OrthodoxWiki, and Wikipedia websites*

The Holy Cross by Marilyn N. Brady

The Church sets before us the Cross of Christ. It seems strange that an instrument of torture and death is set there to encourage and strengthen us, but Christ in His great love and compassion has made the instrument of death into a source of life.

There is much in the world today to wear us down. We don't need to travel to disaster sites to find opportunities to relieve suffering. Each of us, by paying attention to those we come in contact with, may find people who need a kind word, a helping hand, support and encouragement.

How do we find the strength to face struggles and losses, our own, and those of people we care for? We can look to the Cross as a symbol of victory over death, despair, and fear. Contemplating Christ's Cross can increase our own hope and faith in the power of God's love for all. Our strength comes through learning to trust in the Lord, and Him crucified, the One who granted paradise to the thief who reached out to Him as they both prepared to die.

Strengthened by this symbol of Christ's ultimate love, we can shoulder our own crosses, continue to learn self-denial through fasting, focus on the needs of others, and do good works of mercy



as we find opportunities. Let us pray that the joy of Christ's victory through the Cross will strengthen and sustain us as we move through this suffering and needy world.

Reprinted from *Reflections For Great Lent*, a pamphlet published by International Orthodox Christian Charities

The Riches of Kindness

Kindness is an unassuming virtue. Next to some of its companions - love, peace, patience, humility and self-control, for instance - it seems mild and easy to attain. But if we try to define just what kindness really is, and if we truly want to practice it, we realize that it is not as simple as it may appear. A glance at the dictionary bears this out: "of a friendly nature," reads the entry, "generous or hospitable; warm-hearted; good, charitable; helpful; showing sympathy or understanding; humane; considerate; forbearing; tolerant." So many words to express the nature of an attitude that seems almost self-explanatory!

When we consider the lives of the Saints, the depth of this seemingly simple virtue becomes clearer. The Fathers of the desert, for example, who ate so little and only at appointed times, exhorted one another in many holy sayings to abandon their strict discipline and prepare a meal to share with guests who happened by. This is thought of, first and foremost, as a beautiful expression of love, that virtue of virtues. But it is easy to overlook the overwhelming, simple kindness that is also involved.

St. Gregory Orthodox Church

c/o 804 E Randolph Rd
Silver Spring, MD 20904

Address Correction Requested

Kindness, in actuality, is a mighty virtue in spite of its humble aspects... We tend to be so aware of the Lord's might and the Mysteries of our salvation that we can easily lose sight of the marvelous fact that God is just plain kind. In fact, the Apostle Paul tells us that the whole outworking of our salvation is a result of the *riches of His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus* [Eph. 2:7]. When He walked upon earth in the flesh, our Lord *went about doing good* [Acts 10:38], showing visibly in this, as in all things, the true nature of the invisible God - Who is *kind unto the unthankful and the evil* [Luke 6:35], as well as to those whose hearts receive Him.

The Gospel calls us to this unconditional, almost unimaginable, divine kindness: *Do good*, it says immediately before the words quoted above, *and you shall be the children of the Highest* [Luke 6:35]. It is simple, as we have seen, and yet it is deep and far-reaching. It means being kind to everyone - people in the store when we are shopping, people on the road when we are driving, our children and spouses when we are finding them difficult - it means being kind in all circumstances, even when we ourselves are not treated kindly. If we can show *the kindness of the Lord* [1 Sam. 20:14] to others, we will actually be working for their salvation. It may sound impossible, but it is not, for the simpler side of kindness comes to our aid. We can begin with small kindnesses and make up our minds to develop this virtue in ourselves with God's help: a smile, a word of encouragement, a helping hand - these are not beyond the capability of any of us. And in practicing what is attainable, we will grow in the "higher" and inter-related virtues. Meekness and humility will be given fertile soil to take root and develop when we make efforts to be kind, as will peace, patience and love. In this way, we will be among those who *show forth the praises of Him Who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light* [1 Peter 2:9].

From the Summer 2018 issue of *Life Transfigured*, the journal of the Orthodox Monastery of the Transfiguration, Ellwood City, Pennsylvania

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>March 2025</h1>						<p>1 St. David of Wales, BC, 544</p> <p><i>Vespers at 6pm</i></p>
<p>2 Quinquagesima; St. Chad, BC, 672</p> <p style="text-align: right;">✓</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4 St. Lucius I, PM, 254</p> <p><i>The Penitential Psalms & Litany at 6pm</i></p>	<p>5 Ash Wednesday</p> <p><i>Mass at 7pm</i> ✓</p>	<p>6 Ss. Perpetua & Felicitas, Mm, 203</p>	<p>7 St. Theophylact of Nicomedia, BC, 9th C</p> <p><i>Stations of the Cross & Litany at 7pm</i></p>	<p>8</p> <p><i>Vespers at 6pm</i></p>
<p>9 First Sunday in Lent (<i>Sunday of Orthodoxy</i>); St. Gregory of Nyssa, BCD, 394</p> <p style="text-align: right;">✓</p>	<p>10 Forty Martyrs of Sebaste, Mm, 320</p>	<p>11 St. Sophronius of Jerusalem, BC, c. 369</p> <p><i>Mass at 7pm</i> W</p>	<p>12 St. Gregory the Great, BCD, 604</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>14</p> <p><i>Stations of the Cross & Litany at 7pm</i></p>	<p>15</p> <p><i>Vespers at 6pm</i></p>
<p>16 Second Sunday in Lent</p> <p style="text-align: right;">✓</p>	<p>17 St. Patrick, BC, 461; St. Joseph of Arimathea, C, 1st C</p>	<p>18 St. Cyril of Jerusalem, BCD, 386; St. Edward, KM 979</p>	<p>19 St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin, 1st C</p>	<p>20 St. Cuthbert, BC, 687</p>	<p>21 Repose of St. Benedict, c. 550</p> <p><i>Stations of the Cross & Litany at 7pm</i></p>	<p>22</p> <p><i>Vespers at 6pm</i></p>
<p>23 Third Sunday in Lent</p> <p style="text-align: right;">✓</p>	<p>24 St. Gabriel the Archangel</p> <p><i>Mass at 7pm</i> W</p>	<p>25 The Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary</p>	<p>26</p>	<p>27 St. John of Damascus, CD, 749</p>	<p>28</p> <p><i>Stations of the Cross & Litany at 7pm</i></p>	<p>29</p> <p><i>Vespers at 6pm</i></p>
<p>30 Fourth Sunday in Lent; St. John of the Ladder, Ab, 649</p> <p style="text-align: right;">✓</p>	<p>31 St. Innocent of Alaska, BC, 1879</p>					<p><i>Sunday services: Matins at 9am Sung Mass at 9:30</i></p>