

✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

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St. Gregory the Great Orthodox Church
A Western Rite Congregation of the Antiochian Archdiocese
stgregoryoc.org

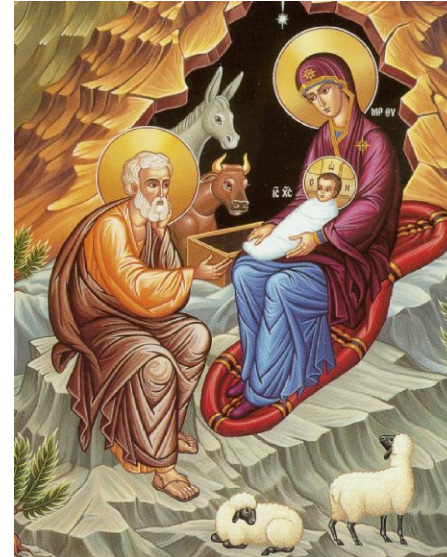
From a Homily by
St. Gregory Palamas
d. 1359

This is the festival of the virgin birth! Our address must be exalted therefore in accordance with the greatness of the feast, and

enter into the mystery, that something of its inner power might be revealed even to us. Please strive, brethren, to lift up your minds as well, that they may better perceive the light of divine knowledge, as though brightly illumined by a holy star. For today I see equality of honor between heaven and earth, and a way up for all those below to things above, matching the condescension of those on high. However great the heaven of heavens may be, or the upper waters which form a roof over the celestial regions, or any heavenly place, state or order, they are no more marvelous or honorable than the cave, the manger, the water sprinkled on the infant and His swaddling clothes. For nothing done by God from the beginning of time was more beneficial to all or more divine than Christ's nativity, which we celebrate today.

Inside:

<i>Our Move.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>St. Melania of Rome.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Parish News.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>The Wonderful Stone in Sion.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>December Calendar.....</i>	<i>11</i>



The pre-eternal and uncircumscribed and almighty Word is now born according to the flesh, without home, without shelter, without dwelling, and placed as a babe in the manger, seen by men's eyes, touched by their hands, and wrapped in layers of swaddling bands...

God, who sits upon the cherubim [Ps. 99:1] is set before us as a babe on earth. He upon whom the six-winged seraphim cannot look, being unable to gaze intently not only at his nature but even at the radiance of his glory, and therefore covering their eyes with their wings [Isa. 6:2], having become flesh, appears to our senses and can be seen by bodily eyes. He who defines all things and is limited by none is contained in a small, makeshift manger. He who holds the universe and grasps it in the hollow of his hand, is wrapped in narrow swaddling bands and fastened into ordinary clothes. He who possesses the riches of inexhaustible treasures submits Himself voluntarily to such great poverty that he does not even have a place at the inn; and so He enters into a cave at the time of his birth, who was brought forth by God timelessly and impassibly and without beginning...

On account of Him who is born today, shepherds stand in the same choir as angels, sing the same hymn, and strike up a melody together. The angels do not take the shepherds' pipes into their hands, but the shepherds, surrounded by the radiance of the angels' light, find themselves in the midst of the heavenly host and are taught a heavenly song of praise by the angels, or rather a hymn both heavenly and earthly, saying, *glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace* [Luke 2:14]...

Brethren, let us preserve this peace in ourselves, as far as we can, for we have received it as an inheritance from our Savior who has now been born, who gives us the Spirit of adoption, through which we have become heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ [Rom. 8:15, 17]. Let us be at peace with God, doing those things which are well-pleasing to Him, living chastely, telling the truth, behaving righteously, *continuing in prayer and supplication* [Acts 1:14], *singing and making melody in our heart* [Eph. 5:19], not just with our lips. Let us be at peace with ourselves, by subjecting our flesh to our spirit, choosing to conduct ourselves according to our conscience, and having the inner world of our thoughts motivated by good order and purity. Thus we shall put an end to the civil conflict in our own midst. Let us be at peace with one another, *forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you* [Col. 3:13], and showing mercy to each other out of mutual love, just as Christ, solely for love of us, had mercy on us and for our sake came down to us.

Our Move

Our last service at 1443 Euclid Street in Washington will be on Sunday, December 6, the Second Sunday of Advent. For the past nine years, this building has provided a wonderful home for St. Gregory's parish. We have celebrated the Sacraments here, we have received the teachings of the Church here, we have shared hospitality here, but it is now time for us to move on and grow in another place. After coffee hour that day, we will pack up the remaining furnishings and move them to our new property at 13407 Roxbury Road in Silver Spring, Maryland, until permitting and remodeling have been completed and we are able to move to that location.

In the interim period, we will have services on Sunday mornings and on Christmas Eve and Epiphany Eve in the chapel of The

Woods Academy, a Roman Catholic private school, at 6801 Greentree Road in Bethesda, MD. Information about location, times and places for Vespers, Advent Lessons and Carols (12/19), and other services will be sent out via our parish e-mail list.

We have prayed for God's guidance throughout this process of purchasing new property and selling our former building. Now we continue to pray for his guidance as we go through this temporary interim period of displacement.

St. Melania of Rome

Feast Day ~ December 31



As the end of the calendar year approaches, many Americans think about their charitable giving. In order to receive credit on the year's tax return, contributions must be made by December 31, so those of us who have left this until the last minute now make decisions about which charities should receive our checks. Our mail is full of requests - from Public Radio and the Red Cross to International Orthodox Christian Charities and our

Orthodox seminaries. We are greeted by the Salvation Army bell ringers at every grocery store; if we are behind in our pledged offerings to our parish, we now try to catch up.

While most of us have a limited dollar amount to spread among the various charities, there is a saint of the Church whose wealth seemed endless and whose desire to be benevolent was boundless: St. Melania of Rome.

Melania was the daughter of a wealthy Roman senator, Valerius Publicola, and his wife, Albina. When their daughter was only fourteen, the couple betrothed her to a cousin, Valerius Pinianus, expecting that she would live the life of a normal Roman matron and provide them with grandchildren. The family were Christians (Albina's mother, called Melania the Elder, is also venerated as a saint) and Melania was a devout young woman who would have preferred the monastic life, but she dutifully accepted her parents' decisions.

Melania's life did not go according to her parents' plans. Early in her marriage, she had two children, one of whom died shortly after birth and one who was stillborn. After this disappointment, rather than becoming despondent at the loss of her children, Melania's desire for the monastic life was strengthened. She and her husband agreed to lead celibate lives thereafter, devoting themselves to prayer and fasting.

When her father died, Melania inherited his great wealth and discovered that she now owned land all over the Roman Empire - in Italy, Spain, the islands of the Mediterranean, and as far away as Britain. She sold much of this land, giving the money to the poor wherever she could and endowing churches and monasteries.

To escape the invasion of Rome by the Visigoths in 410, Melania and her husband and mother fled to Numidia, where they became friends with Bishop (St.) Augustine of Hippo. Here they founded a monastery for women with Melania as the Abbess and a cloister for men with Pinianus as Abbot. More of Melania's wealth was distributed to monasteries in Africa. St. Nikolai of

Ochrid tells an amusing story of the difficulties that this sometimes presented:

When St. Melania visited the hermits in Egypt with the intention of giving them some financial help, she was astounded at their utter scorning of goods and wealth. Thus, she visited one hermit, Ephestion, and saw nothing in his cell but mats, a bowl for water, a little dry bread and a salt pot. Discovering in advance that the elder would not take money from her, she seized the opportunity to hide several gold pieces in the salt pot. But, as she was on the way back, she heard the elder running after her and calling her to stop. She stopped. The elder held the gold out to her on his palm, saying "I don't need this; take what's yours." Melania said to him: "If you don't need it, give it to someone else." He replied: "No-one around here would have any use for it."

In 417, the couple and her mother went on pilgrimage to the Holy Land and stayed in Jerusalem, where they became friends with another of the great saints of the Church, St. Jerome, who lived in a cave in Bethlehem. When both Pinianus and Albina died within a short time of each other, Melania carried on the work of prayer, fasting, and alms-giving alone. Her monastic discipline included strict fasting and reading through all of holy Scripture every three years. She founded another monastery at the Mount of Olives and gave more money for the upkeep of churches in the land of our Lord's earthly life and to establish orphanages.

At the suggestion of her spiritual father, Abbot Gerontius, Melania traveled to Constantinople to visit an elderly uncle who might help her in distributing the remainder of her fortune. The nun discovered that her uncle Valusian, while wise in financial matters, was in spiritual peril as a staunch pagan. He had also known Bishop Augustine who had been unable to bring Valusian to the Church. But the example of his very determined, very devout niece brought the old man to knowledge of the love of Christ and

he, too, became a Christian. The two shared each other's company until the uncle passed away, and Melania returned to the Holy Land for her last days.

On December 31, 438, after a lifetime of prayer, fasting, and giving of her wealth to help others, St. Melania fell asleep in the Lord with her only remaining worldly possessions a few articles of clothing. As we determine the extent of our charity, may we remember the example of St. Melania and may she intercede for us in Heaven.

Sources: Orthodox Saints, Vol. 4 by George Poulos; Prologue From Ochrid by St. Nikolai Velimirovic, articles on Wikipedia and Orthodox Wiki.

Parish News

Thanks to all who have helped and who will continue to help with moving things to our new property. This is a daunting task and we have certainly appreciated the use of Doug and Linda's truck! Sunday, December 6, will be the biggest moving day, with the need for every remaining thing to be removed by the end of the day. We will have a brief coffee hour after Liturgy and then begin to pack up liturgical books, the altar, chairs, tables, filing cabinets, etc.



While we are in the midst of moving and worshiping in

rented space, we cannot forget that Advent is a time to prepare our hearts not only for the annual celebration of our Lord's Nativity, but also for his Second Coming at the end of time. A booklet of Advent devotions is available for families and individuals who wish to read the prophecies concerning the Messiah, to pray to be prepared for His coming again, and to observe the specific saints' days in this season.

Our usual collection of canned goods for the Food for the Hungry program will be curtailed this year, but we should not neglect the effort. Please collect food and keep it in your home to be brought to church in January for donation to a local food bank. You can also make a monetary donation in place of food items (make checks to St. Gregory's with "Food for the Hungry" in the memo line).

The Wonderful Stone in Sion

By St. Nikolai of Ochrid

Behold, I lay in Sion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; he that believeth in it shall not be ashamed. [Is. 28:16]

This wonderful stone, my brethren, is the Lord Jesus Christ himself. If the prophet had thought it an ordinary stone, he would not have spoken of belief in it, for that would have been an idolatrous prophecy. The Prophet Daniel also speaks of the stone that broke off the hill and smashed a great idol, and became a great mountain and filled the whole earth [Dan. 2:34-35]. Daniel's prophecy concerning this stone is for pagans, but Isaiah's is for Jews. The Lord Jesus Christ is this stone, which is set, firstly, as the foundation of the whole of God's creation, for He is the Word of God and the Wisdom of God; secondly, as the foundation of the



Old Testament as the preparation; thirdly, as the foundation of the New Testament, as the fulfillment. The “tried stone” is the strongest and firmest stone, which binds the other stones and joins them together, and holds the walls at different angles in unity and wholeness. The Lord Christ within human history is the tried stone that binds and joins together Judaism and paganism in one house of God, in the Church of God. *For other foundation can no man lay*

than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ [1 Cor. 3:11], says the apostle of the New Testament in accordance with the prophet of the Old. Whoever has, till now, believed in this stone of salvation has not been ashamed. For this stone is the sure foundation, and is truly a chosen stone, a precious and honored stone.

O Lord Jesus, our Stone of salvation, strengthen the faith that is in us, the holy and saving faith in Thee, our only Savior. To thee be glory and praise for ever. Amen.



St. Gregory Orthodox Church
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Address Correction Requested

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>December 2015</h1>						
<i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i>		1 St. Eligius of Tournai, BC, 660	2 St. Peter Chryso- logus, BCD, c. 450	3 St. Bibiana of Rome, VM, 363	4 St. Barbara, VM, c. 306; St. Cle- ment of Alexandria, CD, c. 210	5 St. Sabbas of Palestine, Ab, 532 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
6 Second Sunday of Advent; St. Nicholas of Myra, BC, c. 342 <i>V</i>	7 St. Ambrose of Milan, BCD, 397	8 Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary	9	10 St. Melchia- des, PM, 314	11 St. Damasus, PC, 384	12 St. Spiridon, BC, 348 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
13 Third Sunday of Advent; St. Lucy, VM, 304; St. Herman of Alaska, C, 1837 <i>V</i>	14	15 St. Maurus, Ab, 6th c.	16 Ember Wed- nesday; St. Eusebius of Vercelli, BM, 371 <i>O Sapientia</i>	17 St. Lazarus of Bethany, BC, 1st c. <i>O Adonnay</i>	18 Ember Friday <i>O Radix Jesse</i>	19 Ember Saturday <i>Lessons & Carols at 6pm O Clavis David</i>
20 Fourth Sunday of Advent; St. John of Kronstadt, C, 1908 <i>O Oriens</i> <i>V</i>	21 St. Thomas, Apostle, 1 st c. <i>O Rex gentium</i>	22 <i>O Emmanuel</i>	23 <i>O Virgo virginum</i>	24 Vigil of the Nativity <i>Mass at 10pm</i> <i>W</i>	25 The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ; St. Anastasia, VM., c. 304	26 St. Stephen, Proto-martyr, 1st c.; of the Octave of the Nativity <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
27 St. John, Evangelist & Apostle, 1st c.; comm. Sun. within the Octave of the Nativity <i>W</i>	28 Holy Inno- cents, Mm, 1st c.; of the Octave of the Nativity	29 of the Octave of the Nativity	30 of the Octave of the Nativity	31 St. Sylvester, PC, 335; St. Melania, Ma, 438; of the Octave of the Nativity	1 The Circum- cision of Our Lord and Octave of the Nativity	2 Octave Day of St. Stephen; St. Fulgentius, BC, 533 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>

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

*Coffee Hour follows Mass.
Sunday School is during Coffee Hour.*