

✠ St. Gregory's Journal ✠

September, 2016 - Volume XXI, Issue 8

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

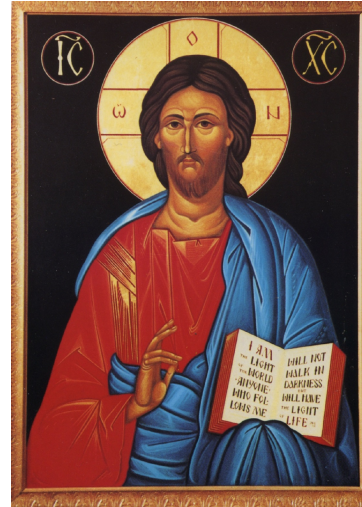
An Excerpt from a Work by Saint Irenaeus of Lyons *d. 202*

The sin which came by the tree [Genesis 3:6] was undone by the tree of obedience to God when the Son of man was nailed to the tree. There He overcame the knowledge of evil and brought in the knowledge of good. Evil is disobedience to God, and good is obedience to God.

Thus, the Word spoke through Isaiah the Prophet, announcing what was to come in the future - prophets are so-called because they foretell the future. Through Isaiah the Word said: *I refuse not nor gainsay; I gave my back to scourging and my cheeks to smiting; and my face I turned not away from the shame of spitting.* [Is. 51:5f] By obedience even unto death [Philippians 2:8] - hanging on the tree - He undid the old disobedience which was affected through the tree.

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He is the Word of God Almighty, in our midst in His unseen form, permeating the whole universe and encompassing its length and breadth and height and depth [cf. Ephesians 3:18] - for the whole world is ordered and arranged by the Word of God. Therefore the Son of God was crucified in all these, inscribed upon all in the form of a cross.

In taking on visible form He necessarily had to display the universality of His cross openly, in order to demonstrate in a visible form His action upon visible things. For it is He who illuminates the height, the heavens; He who holds the deep, which is in the bowels of the earth; He who stretches out and extends the length from East to West; He who guides the breath of North and South; and He who summons all who are scattered everywhere to the knowledge of the Father [cf. Ecclesiasticus 24:6-9; John 12:32; John 11:51f]

St. Cornelius of Rome *Feast Day ~ September 16*

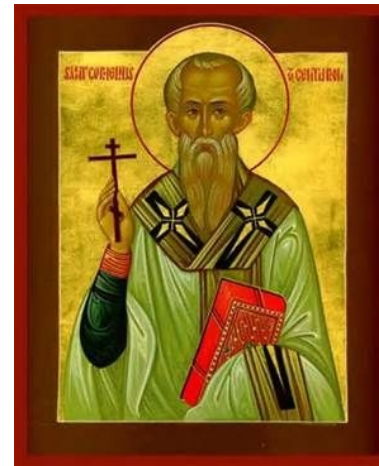
January in the year 250 was not a safe time for Christians. The Emperor Decius, whose harassment of those who followed Christ had been sporadic at first, suddenly began zealously carrying out persecution. He ordered all Christians, beginning with the hierarchs, to offer incense to the Roman gods or be put to death immediately. Pope Fabian was one of the first to suffer that consequence, receiving the crown of martyrdom when he refused to deny Christ by recognizing the divinity of pagan gods.

The fear and chaos which now surrounded the lives of the Christians, particularly in the capital city, meant that a gathering for the purpose of electing a successor to Pope Fabian was not possible. In the 16-month period when there was no Western Patriarch, some Christians followed their bishop to martyrdom; some apostatized and made the sacrifice in order to save their own lives; and others bought certificates which falsely verified their sacrifice.

When Decius had to abandon his rage toward the Christians in order to take to the battlefield against the Goths, the Christians of Rome could finally elect a new Pope and the priest Cornelius was the obvious choice. He had been serving the Church in Rome through all the ranks of the ordained - from subdeacon, to deacon, and then priest - and had carried on with much of the work of the diocese since the death of the pope.

Now there was much concern over what to do about those who had apostatized during the persecutions. The new Pope held that those who in weakness had denied Christ should, like Peter, be forgiven and returned to communion if they were truly repentant and had served a period of penance. Pope Cornelius had an articulate ally in this in the person of Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage. The two bishops corresponded with each other, sharing their concerns for mercy at a difficult time for Christians.

But another person emerged with very different views. Novatian had been a Stoic philosopher who had delayed baptism until he nearly died from an illness. He survived the illness and, despite some irregularities in his “emergency” baptism, he had been ordained priest sometime later. During the persecution, he had stayed in his house and refused to be of assistance to other Christians. Now, however, Novatian suddenly reappeared in public expressing an extremely rigid attitude regarding those who had lapsed. He insisted that only by re-baptism could they be admitted back into the Church and later went so far as to say that the Church



did not even have the power to pronounce forgiveness of sins, refuting the words of Christ as expressed in holy Scripture [John 20:22].

Seeking power for himself and company in his schismatic and heretical ideas, Novatian managed to convince three bishops to consecrate him as Pope instead of Cornelius. The devil had found an able helper in his desire to harm the Church!

St. Cornelius had to convene a synod to confirm the already established canons regarding penance and readmission of the lapsed. This synod excommunicated Novatian and his followers, who went on to form their own sect. Meanwhile, the Emperor Decius was defeated by the Goths and was betrayed by his general, Gallus, who succeeded him as emperor.

Christians may well have hoped that things would be different now, but it was not to be. At first, Gallus did not continue the persecution, but when a plague broke out shortly after his accession, superstition caused him to return to the policies of his predecessor. Pope Cornelius was sent into exile, where he died on September 14, 252, receiving the title “martyr” because of his sufferings, although there are some reports that he was beheaded. Cornelius’ relics were buried in Rome in the crypt of Lucina and a wall painting of him was added there in the eighth century. His correspondent and supporter, St. Cyprian, was also exiled and died a martyr’s death on September 14 six years later in the persecutions of the Emperor Valerian. Because of the celebration of the Elevation of the Holy Cross on September 14, the Church has moved their place on the liturgical calendar to September 16. Both saints are named in the canon of the Mass.

The Church historian, Eusebius (Bishop of Caesarea 314-339), has provided much of the factual information we have about Pope Cornelius and his time. Writing about the decision of Emperor Gallus to resume the persecutions, he says,

Nor did Gallus realize Decius' mistake or guard against what caused his fall, but tripped over the same stone with his eyes open. When his reign was proceeding smoothly and things were going to his liking, he drove away the holy men who were praying God to grant him peace and health. In banishing them, he banished their supplications on his behalf.

We have also learned much about the church in Rome from Eusebius. He tells us that there were, at the time of Pope Cornelius, forty-six presbyters, seven deacons, seven sub-deacons, forty-two acolytes, fifty-two exorcists, readers, and doorkeepers, and more than fifteen hundred widows and distressed persons. This information, along with the mention of correspondence among bishops in Rome, Africa, Antioch, and other parts of the world gives evidence of an amazingly vibrant Church - actively carrying out all of our Lord's commandments: teaching, preaching, baptizing, helping the poor - all in the midst of fierce persecution.

Christians are once again experiencing persecution in many forms - from the inconvenience of ridicule to violent death. May we be moved to imitate the example of the Christians of Rome in devotion to our Christian duty and perseverance in the face of persecution. May we, like St. Cornelius, offer to others the same mercy and forgiveness that God offers us. May we take heart in hearing of the courage and strong faith of St. Cornelius and may we ask that he intercede for us in Heaven.

References: Rev. Alban Butler, *The Lives of the Fathers, Martyres and Other Principal Saints*; Eusebius, *The History of the Church*; David H. Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*.



Parish News

We will celebrate the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross on the eve, Tuesday, September 13. Vespers will be sung at 7PM with Sung Mass at 7:30 and a pot-luck supper following.

We welcome Jonathan Mallory to the holy Orthodox Church and to our family at St. Gregory's. Jonathan was chrismated on Sunday, August 28.

Congratulations to Bernt Johnson, who recently received a Master's degree in Strategic Intelligence from National Intelligence University.

We will continue to collect articles for cleanup buckets for International Orthodox Christian Charities. These supplies are being sent to areas of our country which have been devastated by floods, particularly West Virginia and Louisiana.

Progress On Our New Home

We have finally been granted a building permit by Montgomery County for remodeling the existing building on our new property on Roxbury Road in Silver Spring. This work will begin soon, and we expect that the remaining permits for outside work (paving, storm water management, etc.) will also be received soon. A loan of \$250,000 to cover the construction and other costs has been secured with Revere Bank. God willing, we will have an occupancy permit in a few months and will finally be able to make this beautiful property our church home.

As God Wills

Excerpts from *Becoming Icons of Christ* by Mother Raphaela (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011)



It has been the teaching of our Church down the millennia that how we use this small portion of created time and space we call our life matters incredibly. Perhaps if we are angels, principalities, or powers, it is different, for they already traverse the created universe in ways that we cannot imagine. We are human beings, and precisely because we are human beings, we are made in the image and likeness of God in a way no other creatures have been.

For this reason - that you and I have been created as human beings - we are persons. And if in some way each of us identifies with the definition of an Orthodox Christian person, we cannot see our God simply as the New Age “Force” behind creation, but as the three Persons in Whose Image we are formed. Moreover, since Jesus walked this earth we see the second Person of the Trinity as a very human Person, both God and Man...

As Orthodox Christians, we are to learn to find our heart, the center of our being, if you will, our *nous*. We are to explore our relationship with our God more seriously than we could or might explore any other relationship in our lives, whether that be as lover, friend, or co-worker...

What does this mean? It does not mean neglecting our spouse, our sisters and brothers, our children, our friends and co-

workers, or the rest of our lives so that we may think about God or say prayers all the time. It certainly does not mean having a warm fuzzy feeling or even theological understanding that God is here, all the time. None of these is at the basis of prayers without ceasing, a healthy monastic vocation, or the vocation of any Christian, either lay or clergy, all called to be the holy priesthood of our God in this world...

Those of you who are happily married know that your relationship gives you the support you need to go out into the world each day and do your very best at whatever it is you are doing. You cannot be thinking about your spouse every moment: you must be putting your thoughts and efforts into your studies, your job, your children, your clients, whatever else you do. Your relationship stabilizes you. It does not define you, rather you and your spouse support one another in growing into whomever and whatever God in His infinite wisdom allows, calls you to be.

Our relationship with God alone defines us. If we are Orthodox Christians, we acknowledge our God as the most important Person in our lives... We are called to be changed by God's reality. We are called to use liturgy and personal prayer in all their forms as lovers use quality time with their beloved, to deepen and form a relationship that allows us to be our true selves... This is as God wills.

The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

In 451, the Council of Ephesus officially declared Mary the “Mother of God” and devotion to her increased. In addition to the feast days with a scriptural basis - the Annunciation (March 25), the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple (February 2), and the Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth (July 2) - other Marian celebrations entered the liturgical calendar: the Presentation of Mary in the Temple (November 21) the Dormition, or Assumption,



of the Theotokos (August 15), the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (September 8) and the Conception of Mary (December 8).

The apocryphal *Protevangelium of James* gives us the story of the events leading up to the birth of Mary and of her childhood - how the devout childless couple, Joachim and Anna, were granted their wish for a child after many years

of fervent prayer. Their daughter was chosen by God for a unique role in our salvation history. It was her pure humanity that made Christ “true man” as well as “true God”.

Liturgical celebrations of Mary’s Nativity may have begun in Jerusalem where a church was dedicated in honor of her nativity in the 6th century. The feast may have been introduced in the West by Pope Sergius I (650-701) or by Syrian monks fleeing the Muslim invasions in the 7th century.

Blessed and venerable art thou, O Virgin Mary; who a maiden undefiled hast our Savior for thy child. Virgin, Mother of God, the whole world cannot contain him, yet, made man for our sake, hidden he lay in thy womb.

Alleluia, alleluia. Blessed art thou, O holy Virgin Mary, and most worthy of all praise; for out of thee hath arisen the sun of righteousness, Christ our God. Alleluia.

(Gradual and Alleluia for the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary)

St. Gregory Orthodox Church
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Address Correction Requested

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>September 2016</h1>						<i>Sunday Services: Matins at 9AM, Sung Mass at 9:30AM</i>
				1 St. Giles, Ab, 708; Twelve Holy Brothers, Mm, c. 303	2 St. Stephen of Hungary, KC, 1038	3 Consecration of St. Gregory the Great, 590 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
4 Eleventh Sun. after Pentecost; St. Gorazde of Prague, BM, 1942 <i>G</i>	5 <i>(Labor Day)</i>	6	7 St. Cloud, C, 560; St. Sergius I, PC, 701	8 Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary	9 St. Gorgonius, M, 304	10 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
11 Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost; Ss. Protus & Hyacinth, Mm, c. 257; St. Paphnutius, BC, 4th c. <i>G</i>	12	13 <i>Mass at 7:30pm R</i>	14 Exaltation of the Holy Cross	15 St. Nicomedes, M, 4th c.	16 Ss. Cornelius, PM, 254 & Cyprian, BM 258; St. Ninian, BC, 5 th c.	17 St. Lambert, BM, 705 <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
18 Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost <i>G</i>	19 St. Theodore of Canterbury, BC, 690; Ss. Januarius & comp., Mm	20 Ss. Eustace & comp., Mm, c. 118; Vigil of St. Matthew	21 St. Matthew, Evangelist & Apostle, 1st c.; Ember Wednesday	22 St. Maurice & Comp., Mm, 3rd c.; St. Lioba of Mainz, V, 781	23 Ember Friday; St. Thecla of Iconium, VM, 1st c.; St. Linus, PM, c. 80	24 Conception St. John Baptist; Ember Sat.; SS. Juve- naly, 1796 & Peter the Aleut, 1815, Mm <i>Vespers at 6pm</i>
25 Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost <i>G</i>	26 Ss. Cyprian, BM & Justina, VM, c. 303	27 Ss. Cosmas & Damian, Mm, c. 303	28 St. Wenceslas, M, 938 <i>Mass at 7:30pm W</i>	29 Dedication of St. Michael the Archangel	30 St. Jerome PrCD, 420; St. Gregory the Illumin- ator, BC, c. 323	

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

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