

"I AM THE VINE,...

...YE ARE THE BRANCHES"

THE GRAPEVINE

Vignettes of Seminary Life



Spring blossoms in the Monastery orchard

Inaugural Commencement. The Saint Photios Orthodox Theological Seminary held its first-ever commencement exercise on the evening of Friday, May 17, 2019, in the Seminary auditorium. The ceremony opened with the recitation of prayers and the chanting of several hymns by the choir of the Convent of Saint Elizabeth the Grand Duchess of Russia, followed by readings from the Apostolos and the Gospel. Addresses were then delivered by His Eminence, the Most Reverend Bishop Dr. Auxentios, Rector of the Seminary; the Very Reverend Archimandrite Dr. Patapios, Dean of the Seminary; the Very Rev-

erend Archimandrite Gregory, one of the Master's graduates; and Schema-nun Eupraxia, one of the Bachelor's graduates. His Eminence then conferred the Master of Theological Studies degree on three of the graduates and the Bachelor of Theology degree on another three graduates. The Very Reverend Hegumen Dr. Akakios, a Professor at the Seminary, offered closing remarks, and His Eminence concluded with a prayer and the dismissal. The exercise itself was immediately followed by a banquet, served by the nuns of the Convent and the students of the Seminary, in the Seminary dining hall. The six



From left to right: Father Photii, Father Gregory, Father Chrysostomos, Father Patapios, Bishop Auxentios, Mother Seraphima, Mother Synkletike, and Mother Eupraxia.

graduates of the Class of 2019 included three members of the Brotherhood of the Saint Gregory Palamas Monastery and three members of the Sisterhood of the Convent of Saint Elizabeth the Grand Duchess of Russia. The Very Reverend Archimandrite Gregory, Schemamonk Chrysostomos, and Schemanun Seraphima received the Master of Theological Studies degree, while the Reverend Hierodeacon Photii, Schemanun Synkletike, and Schemanun Eupraxia received the Bachelor of Theology degree. Father Gregory and Father Chrysostomos are now enrolled in the Doctor of Ministry Program at the San Francisco Theological Seminary, the alma mater of the Very Reverend Hegumen Dr. Akakios and the Reverend Abbess Dr. Elizabeth, the Superiors of the Monastery and of the Convent, respectively. Congratulations to the Class of 2019!

Father Patapios, Dean

An Unexpected Find. Last semester, for our Old Testament class, we took turns presenting chapters from the Books of Isaiah and the Song of Songs using Patristic commentaries. While preparing the material for chapter 11 of the Prophet Isaiah, I made an unexpected discovery.

In St. Cyril of Alexandria's commentary on verse 15—"And the Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dryshod"—he explains that the seven streams refer to the Nile (which used to have seven tributaries) and that men going across dryshod refer to something which happened when the Romans were trying to annex Egypt in the first century B.C. The Saint asserts that God had caused a wind to blow and dry up part of the Nile to make the crossing easier for the Romans, because it was His Providence

that the Roman Empire should help facilitate the spread of the Gospel.

My interest piqued, I began to search for any historical reference to such an occurrence and stumbled across something fascinating. Several recent scientific articles indicate that times of upheaval in Ptolemaic Egypt (including the time in question) may have been due in part to major volcanic eruptions in other parts of the world. It has been determined from ice core samples that many eruptions conspicuously coincided with times of political unrest in Egypt. Apparently, the great quantity of ash released into the atmosphere affected the climate all over the world, and in Egypt it interfered with the yearly monsoons which usually fed the Nile. Consequently, the Nile ran dry in those years, causing famine and increasing social tension. Moreover, two of the worst eruptions happened only two years apart (46 and 44 B.C.), weakening the Egyptians and making them more vulnerable to annexation.

It is also interesting to note that there would have been no ascertainable reason for such a failure of the Nile from the Egyptians' perspective. As one writer suggested, since the Egyptians looked to their gods to send the water on which their survival depended, perhaps these occurrences even weakened their faith in their deities. If so, these circumstances may have not only aided in the expansion of the Roman Empire, which was to serve as a conduit for the spread of the Gospel, but they may have also helped prepare the minds of the people for belief in a new God.

Thus, while preparing a simple presentation, I inadvertently discovered a set of fascinating historical and providential connections spanning nearly three millennia. A prophet in the eighth century B.C. prophesies an event in the first century B.C., as well as the fulfill-

ment of God's purpose for this event in the first century A.D. Then, a Saint in the fifth century A.D. elucidates the meaning of the prophecy and its fulfillment. Finally, a twenty-first century scientific experiment explains the natural phenomena which served as God's instruments to bring about all of this. Who ever said research was boring?

Mother Eupraxia, B.Th. Graduate

Visit of a Missionary Bishop. During the course of a stay in Etna, California, the Right Reverend Bishop Ambrose of Methone, a member of the Holy Synod of the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece (GOC), delivered a public lecture at the Saint Photios Orthodox Theological Seminary. His Grace was visiting Etna to celebrate the Feast Day of the Saint Gregory Palamas Monastery on March 11 (Old Style) and to attend the Fortieth-Day Memorial of Metropolitan Chrysostomos on March 14 (Old Style). At the invitation of the Most Reverend Bishop Auxentios, Ruling Hierarch of the Diocese of Etna and Portland and Rector of the Seminary, Bishop Ambrose graciously delivered an extemporaneous talk to the local community on the evening of March 14 about his extensive missionary activities.

His Grace's pastoral responsibilities, which began with his Consecration to the Episcopacy in 1993, are of an astonishing breadth. As a member of the Synodal Missionary Commission of the GOC, His Grace acts as the Locum Tenens of five Dioceses: the Metropolis of Sydney (Australia), the Metropolis of Kananga (Democratic Republic of Congo), the Diocese of Alania (South Ossetia), the Diocese of Richmond (Great Britain), and the Diocese of Embu (Kenya). In addition, he oversees communities, both monastic and lay, in the Republic of the Congo,





← Previous page: A spring morning casts its first light over the Seminary

France, Belgium, New Zealand, Singapore, Indonesia, and Malaysia, as well as working with the Diocese of Luni (Italy) and facilitating relations between the GOC and its Sister Church, the Old Calendar Orthodox Church of Romania. Until recently, His Grace also managed a mission in Uganda, which is now under the care of the Most Reverend Metropolitan Demetrius of America.

A polyglot and a globetrotter, Bishop Ambrose has, by the very nature of his ministry, become “a citizen of the

world,” to use the expression of the philosopher Diogenes. “As you see, I have to become all things to all people,” His Grace explained. “I often get told, you know, you’re half Georgian, or you’re half Ossetian, or you’re half Kenyan, or whatever—so many halves. The most difficult thing about this is the change in mentality between each particular place. You have to get into the place, into their heads, in order to understand what they’re thinking, how they’re reacting.” As was clear from His Grace’s engrossing lecture, bearing the Apostolic cross of missionary work requires “a lot of patience, a lot of goodwill; you’re going to be accused, you’re going to be abused, you’re going to be misinterpreted many times. That’s the case everywhere, so nothing special about the missionary field. But also a lot of zeal and love for the Orthodox Faith; without that, you’re not going to get anywhere. And to understand and to be able to adapt yourself to the local circumstances. To be a visitor is easy enough, but it’s not enough; you have to be one of them.”

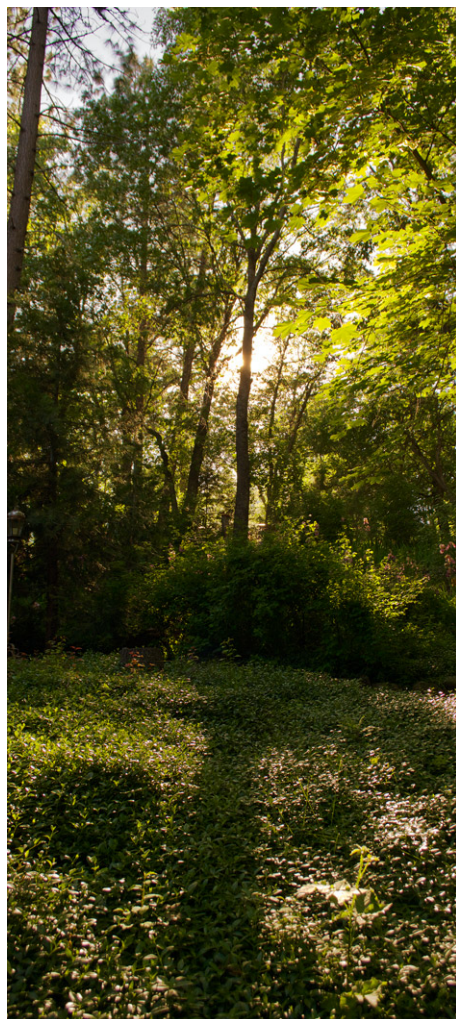
Father Vlasie, B.Th. Student

The Fourth Cappadocian, Part 3. *This is a continuation of a series on St. Caesarius of Nazianzos, a serialization of a presentation that I made during the Patristics course of the M.T.S. program.*

As I mentioned in the previous installment, St. Gregory the Theologian, the brother of St. Caesarius and our main source of information on the Saint, composed several epitaphs (funerary poems) in his memory. This time, I would like to present a few of these. To my knowledge, they have never before been translated into English.

EPITAPH VI

Σχέτλιός ἐστιν ὁ τύμβος· ἔγωγε μὲν οὔποτ’ ἐώλην



Ὡς ῥα κατακρύψει τοὺς πυμάτους προ-
τέρους.

Αὐτὰρ ὁ Καισάριον ἐρικυδέα υἷα, το-
κῶν

Τῶν προτέρων πρότερον δέξατο. Ποία
δίκη;

Οὐκ ἔσθ' ὁ τύμβος αἴτιος· μὴ λοιδορεῖ-
Φθόνου τόδ' ἔστιν ἔργον. Πῶς δ' ἤνεγ-
κεν ἂν

Νέον γερόντων εἰσορᾶν σοφώτερον;

The tomb proves implacable; I should
never have expected

That the younger would overshadow
the elder.

Besides, the father of Cæsarius the il-
lustrious son

Has received the foremost among the
foremost. Where is the justice?

The tomb is not the cause; do not re-
view it,

For such is a deed of malice. Never-
theless, how could one bear

To see a young man wiser than his
elders?

EPITAPH XII

Πᾶσαν, ὅση σοφίη λεπτῆς φρενὸς ἐν
μερόπεσσι

Ἀμφὶ γεωμετρίην, καὶ θέσιν οὐρανίων,
Καὶ λογικῆς τέχνης τὰ παλαίσματα,
γραμματικὴν τε,

Ἡδ' ἱστορίην, ῥητορικῆς τε μένος,

Καισάριος πτερόεντι νόφ' μούνης κα-
ταμάρψας,

Αἶ, αἶ, πᾶσιν ὁμῶς νῦν κόνις ἔστ' ὀλίγη.

All wisdom of the subtle mind of mor-
tals,

Both geometry and the course of the
heavens,

The debates of the orator's art,
Medicine, and rhetorical prowess with-
al,

Cæsarius alone mastered with mind up-
borne.

Alas, alas! Like all, he is become but dust.

EPITAPH XVII

Καισαρίου φθιμένοιο, κατήγησαν βα-
σιλῆος

Αὐλαί· Καππαδόκαι δ' ἤμυσαν ἐξαπίνης·

Καὶ καλὸν εἶ τι λέλειπτο μετ' ἀνθρώ-
ποισιν, ὄλωλεν·

Οἱ δὲ λόγοι σιγῆς ἀμφεβάλοντο νέφος.

When Cæsarius reached his end, the
imperial courts were whelmed with sor-
row;

The Cappadocians were forthwith dis-
heartened;

And if but one good thing remained
among men, it was lost,

His words being encompassed by a
cloud of silence.

(Source: *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XXXVIII,
cols. 14ff.)

*Next time, I will talk about a work
traditionally ascribed to St. Cæsarius him-
self.*

Father Chrysostomos, M.T.S. Graduate

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namesake, please help us impart
light, for “without schools, we
walk in darkness.”

(Saint Kosmas of Aetolia)



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