

STS. PETER & PAUL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHURCH



GLORY BE TO
JESUS CHRIST!
GLORY BE
FOREVER!

SLAVA ISUSU
CHRISTU!
SLAVA NA VIKI!



**SUNDAY OF ST. GREGORY
PALAMAS**

NEW CALENDAR: **MARCH 12, 2017**
OLD CALENDAR: **FEBRUARY 27, 2017**

- ❖ We welcome all of our guests who are with us today! Please come and worship with us often. It is a great joy to dwell together in common faith worshipping our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!
- ❖ This is the last chance for the early bird special for the ACRY retreat. Anyone is invited for April 1st.
- ❖ Nut Roll pre-orders are being taken by Elizabeth Lion #973.541.0008. Walnut, Poppy Seed, and Prune are \$13 per roll. Pickup date is Saturday April 8 10am-1pm.
- ❖ There are sign-ups for the Lenten Soup sale. You only need to make 6 quarts for this one! There is also a signup for our Lenten Mission. Sign-up today! The next soup sale is March 24 between 4-6pm.
- ❖ We are looking for an architect/engineer that can sign off on the plans for our hall changes. The Boro is requiring that our plans have a 'P.E.' number on them. We also need a contractor as well.
- ❖ Camp Nazareth Registration is now open. Register your kids to go today!

Epistle Reading Schedule

3/19 Joe George
3/26 Lance Michealsen
4/2 Zach Fitzgerald

Sunday Social Hour

3/19 Judy Rugg
3/26 Ann Smith
4/2 Benyam & Roman

“Only God can satisfy the soul’s thirst.”

— St. John of Krondstat

Sunday School Schedule:

3/26 : Toddler w/ Christyn,
K-2 w/ Linda,
3-5 w/ Mary Beth
Teens w/ Pani Amy
3/19 : Toddler w/ Leigh,
K-2 & 3-5 w/ Pani Amy
Teens w/ Lance

- ❖ The 2017 Diocesan Altarboy Retreat will take place from June 25-28, 2017. The Young Women's Encounter will take place the same days.
- ❖ The next nut roll baking session will be Tuesday, March 21, and then Tuesday March 28 at 9:30am. Please come and help out our fundraising efforts!
- ❖ ACRY Dues are \$15. Please see Barbara Fitzgerald.
- ❖ The ACRY Youth are collecting change over the Lenten Fast to donate towards St. John the Compassionate Mission. This is a great way to give alms, which we are called to do during the fast.
- ❖ There is a panichida today offered by Helen Angle for Mark, Linda Susan, Helen, and George.

February:	
Income	\$
Disbursements	\$

American Carpatho-
Russian Diocese of USA
Ecumenical Patriarchate of
Constantinople

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WEEKLY SERVICE SCHEDULE

- ❖ Sunday, March 12, St. Gregory Palamas: Matins 8:15am; Divine Liturgy @ 9:30am
- ❖ Monday, March 13, Moleben to the Virgin Mary & 3rd Hour @ 9 am
- ❖ Tuesday, March 14, Lenten Matins @ 9am
- ❖ Wednesday, March 15, Mission Presanctified Liturgy @ 6:30pm at our church!
- ❖ Thursday, March 16, Akathist to the Reigning Kolomna Icon of the Theotokos @ 9am
- ❖ Friday, March 17, Akathist to the Virgin Mary @ 7pm
- ❖ Saturday, March 18, Soul Saturday Divine Liturgy @ 9am;
- ❖ Saturday, March 18, Great Vespers @ 5pm
- ❖ Sunday, March 19, St. Gregory Palamas: Matins @ 8:15am; Divine Liturgy @ 9:30am

Please Note: If you need to speak with a priest during the week please call Fr. William at 862.432.9174. Rectory # 973.627.1462. If Fr. William is unavailable and it is an emergency please call Fr. John Theodosion his number is 973.584.0388.

Prayer List:

“Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” — James 5:16 NKJV

For those who need prayers:

Desiree Stanchina, Peter Lyasko, Esther Horchor, Ann Willis, Marilyn/Tony George, Margot, Adam, Debbie, Rosalie Nemerovich, Michael Carmona, Klava Trofimova, Inna Kudryavtseva, Joan King, Eleni Matangos, Evangelia Portelos, Jeannette Webb, Elizabeth T., Mary Elizabeth, George Matangos, Gregory Griff, Lillian, Sandi Mahtook, Sandi Reisbeck, Anna Hollis, Catherine Bowan, William O’Keefe, Ann Smith, Sonia Geiger, Tatyana and Zoe Ellis, Dolores Falk, Joann Talmadge, Estella Vreeland, Barbara Kmech, Roy Michealsen, Florine Nandrajog

Stewardship around the Parish

- Paint trim on Shed
- Add a water spigot to the far side of hall
- Repaint Narthex
- Paint trim in-between altar wall and ceiling red in altar boy and priest sacristy
- Build bookshelves in priest sacristy
- repair/touch-up tomb

READINGS AND SAINTS FOR THE COMING WEEK:

Sun: St. Gregory Palamas; Hebrews 1:10-2:3; Mark 2:1-12

Mon: Confessor Basil; Isaiah 8:13-9:7; Genesis 6:9-22; Proverbs 8:1-21

Tues: Venerable Martyr Eudoxia; Isaiah 9:9-10:4; Genesis 7:1-5; Proverbs 8:32-9:11

Wed: Hieromartyr Theodotus; Isaiah 10:12-20; Genesis 7:6-9; Proverbs 9:12-18

Thurs: Martyr Eutropius; Isaiah 11:10-12:2; Genesis 7:11-8:3; Proverbs 10:1-22

Fri: Venerable Gerasimus of the Jordan; Isaiah 13:2-13; Genesis 8:4-21; Proverbs 10:31-11:12

Sat: Martyr Conon; Hebrews 10:32-38; Mark 2:14-17

SALVATION HISTORY: PASSOVER; BY FR THOMAS HOPKO

In the Old Testament, God was to be the King of His People. But wishing to be like the other nations, the Israelites asked the Lord for a human king.

Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, and said to him, "Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint for us a king to govern us like all the nations." But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to govern us." And Samuel prayed to the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, "Hearken to the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. According to all the deeds which they have done to me, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you. Now then, hearken to their voice; only you shall solemnly warn them, and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them" (1 Sam 8.4–9).

So Samuel recounted to the people all that would happen to them if they lived like the other nations having a man as their king. The king would send their sons to war. He would put all the people to work for him. He would take their best animals and crops. He would make the people his slaves.

"And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves; but the Lord will not answer you in that day." But the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel; and they said, "No! but we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may govern us and go out before us and fight our battles." And when Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the ears of the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, "Hearken to their voice, and make them a king" (1 Sam 8.18–22).

Israel received its king. The first was Saul who became demented. The second was David the Shepherd who ruled well. The third was Solomon who was known for his wisdom and who built the temple to God in Jerusalem. But then there was a division of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, and strife among them because of their sins, which resulted in a succession of captivities to various foreign powers from which the people never finally escaped.

The psalms and prophets of the Old Testament constantly recalled God's people to the reality that only the Lord is king. He alone is the True Shepherd of His People. He alone is the One Who rules and Who is to be served and obeyed.

*I will extol Thee, my God and King,
and bless Thy name for ever and ever.
Every day I will bless Thee,
and praise Thy name for ever and ever.
Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised,
and His greatness is unsearchable,*

*All Thy works shall give thanks to Thee, O Lord,
and all Thy saints shall bless Thee!
They shall speak of the glory of Thy kingdom and tell of Thy power,
to make known to the sons of men Thy mighty deeds,
and the glorious splendor of Thy kingdom.*

*Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and Thy dominion endures throughout all generations.*

(Ps 145.1–3, 10–13)

The prophets called all of the earthly kings, the “shepherds of Israel,” to repentance before the divine King of heaven, but their words were mostly to no avail.

The word of the Lord came to me: “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord God: Ho, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fatlings; but you do not feed the sheep. The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the crippled you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them. So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd; and they became food for all the wild beasts. My sheep were scattered over all the mountains and on every high hill; my sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them” (Ezek 34.1–6).

The psalms and the prophets of the Old Testament also foretold the time when God would rule His People directly. He would be the shepherd of all nations, ruling through the Messiah-King Who would come from the house of David, the King of Whose kingdom there would be no end.

*For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government will be upon His shoulder,
and His name will be called
“Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”
Of the increase of His government and of peace there will be no end,
upon the throne of David, and over His kingdom,
to establish it, and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and for evermore.*

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this (Is 4.6–7).

“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and He shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which He will be called: ‘The Lord is our righteousness’” (Jer 23.5–6).

*But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,
who are little to be among the clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one is to be ruler in Israel,
whose origin is from of old,
from ancient days.
Therefore he shall give them up until the time
when she who is in travail has brought forth;
then the rest of his brethren shall return
to the people of Israel.
And He shall stand and feed His flock
in the strength of the Lord,
in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.
And they shall dwell secure, for now
He shall be great
to the ends of the earth (Mic 5.2–4)*

For thus says the Lord God: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock when some of his sheep have been scattered abroad, so will I seek

out my sheep; and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness.

I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the crippled, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will watch over; I will feed them in justice (Ezek 34.11–12, 15–16).

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!

Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!

*Lo, your king comes to you;
triumphant and victorious is he,
humble and riding on an ass,
on a colt the foal of an ass.*

*I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim
and the war horse from Jerusalem;
and the battle bow shall be cut off,
and He shall command peace to the nations;
His dominion shall be from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth (Zech 9.9–10).*

The king of the final kingdom of God is Jesus Christ. He is the One Shepherd and Lord. He is the One “of whose kingdom there will be no end.” Thus, the angel Gabriel speaks to Mary at the announcement of His birth:

He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there will be no end” (Lk 1.32–33).

All of His life, Jesus was preparing the everlasting Kingdom of God. He came to bring this Kingdom to men. He is the Son of David, Who will reign forever. He is the One Who announces the gospel of the Kingdom of God (Mt 4.23, 9.35).

Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them, “The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, ‘Lo, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you” (Lk 17.20–21).

The Kingdom of God is in the midst of men when Christ is present. He Himself is the King Who gives the Kingdom of God to those who are this.

“Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Lk 12.32).

You are those who have continued with Me in My trials; as My Father appointed a kingdom for Me, so do I appoint for you that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom . . . Lk 22.28–30).

All of the preaching and parables of Christ concerning the Kingdom of God speak of Himself as the King. Those who believe in Jesus and obey Him will reign with Him in His Kingdom which has been prepared “from the foundation of the world” for those who love Him (Mt 25.34). His Kingdom is the everlasting kingdom which is “not of this world,” but of God the Father (Jn 18.36).

The gospel narratives of the crucifixion of Christ place Him in His role as King. All of the mockery and torment of Jesus is given to Him as the “King of the Jews.” This was the accusation against Him and the title nailed to the cross. Thus, the irony is complete as the scriptures are fulfilled in the words of Pilate when, after Jesus had sat down on the judgment seat, Pilate proclaimed to the people, “Behold, your king!” (Jn 19.14).

Jesus is the King. He is one with God, the “King of kings and Lord of lords” (1 Tim 6.5). He is the One “highly exalted” over all principalities and powers, the One before Whom every knee shall bow “In heaven, and on earth and under the earth” (Phil 2.9–11, also Eph 1.20–23). He is the One Who, at the end of the ages when He “comes in His kingdom” with all the heavenly powers, will destroy every evil, and rule over all creation forever as the prophets predicted.

. . . and the Lamb (Christ) will conquer them [the wicked], for He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with Him are called and chosen and faithful (Rev 17.14).

Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name inscribed which no one knows but Himself. He is clad in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which He is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, followed Him on white horses. From His mouth issues a sharp sword with which to smite the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron He will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On His robe and on His thigh He has a name inscribed, King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev 19.11–16).

Then He showed me the river of the water of Life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. There shall no more be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall worship Him; they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever (Rev 22.1–5).

ON STEWARDSHIP AND THE ORTHODOX LIFE: PART 84: THE LURE OF THE LOTTERY:

“Do not toil to acquire wealth; be wise enough to desist. When your eyes light upon (wealth), it is gone; for suddenly it takes to itself wings, flying like an eagle toward heaven.” (Proverbs 23:4,5 RSV)

I write this in the midst of the world-wide craziness that was a billion-dollar lottery prize last January. Thousands of people are lining up to buy one or many lottery tickets that, should the ticket be proven to be a winner, will make the holder an instant billionaire, or at worst, a millionaire.

This is craziness. The chances of winning are one in several hundred million. Yes, I admit, for some people this may seem innocent fun. But for others, it seems to be a revelation of what is going on the minds of modern human beings. The prospect of riches beyond belief is seemingly irresistible. The idea of gaining enormous wealth without having to work for it is tantalizing.

Our Scriptures have no examples of a lottery, but they do contain instances of gambling: Samson’s wager in Judges 14:12 and the soldiers’ gambling over Jesus’ garments in Mark 15:24. In neither case is gambling presented in a good light. The Bible also mentions the casting of lots for the purpose of decision making (Joshua 18:10; Nehemiah 10:34). Yet to be remembered is the absolute control of God in all things of this world: *“The lot is cast into the lap, but the decision is wholly from the Lord”* (Proverbs 16:33 RSV).

Playing the lottery as a get-rich-quick scheme is statistically futile, and it focuses the lottery player on the temporary riches of this world. The fact is, God wants people to earn their money honestly by working hard: *“If anyone will not work, let him not eat”* (2 Thessalonians 3:10 RSV). We ought to gain wealth through the work of our hands, as a gift from the Lord: *“A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich”* (Proverbs 10:4 RSV).

One of the world’s lies is that money is the answer to life’s problems. People are lured into playing the lottery with promises that their lives will improve if they can only hit the jackpot. If they can just get lucky with the numbers, their problems will disappear. Such hopes are empty: *“He who loves money will not be satisfied with money; nor he who loves wealth, with gain: this also is vanity...”* (Ecclesiastes 5:10 RSV). *“O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is plenteous redemption (Psalm 130[129]:5 RSV).”*

OUR EXAMPLES OF HOLINESS

The "Reigning" Icon of the Mother of God

In the village of Kolomna, near Moscow, on March 2nd, 1917, the day on which Emperor Nicholas II abdicated the throne, a new icon of the Mother of God appeared, known as the "Reigning" icon. This icon was found amid the odds and ends and dust in a basement, following the directions given by a

certain deeply pious, God-fearing woman, who had thrice received a vision while asleep. There had appeared to her a large, very dark icon of the Mother of God wearing a robe of royal purple, a crown on her head, holding the scepter and orb of the Russian sovereigns, and seated on a throne. Over the course of several months, the icon miraculously renewed itself and became bright and clear. The significance of this icon, which wondrously appeared to the Russian nation on the day of its greatest spiritual tragedy (the day of the Tsar's abdication) is that the Mother of God, in an extraordinarily significant way, came herself to the "Home of the Theotokos," which had been prepared for her by all of Russia's history, at the most grievous moment in the life of the people chosen by God, and took upon herself the burden of the Supreme Authority in the Russian realm. Knowing the exceptional power of the faith and prayer of the Sovereign, Emperor Nicholas II, and his especially reverent veneration for the Mother of God, we cannot doubt that he had besought the Queen of heaven to assume the royal authority over the people who had rejected their anointed Tsar. Unusual for a image of the Mother of God, she is depicted as stern of countenance and severe, and the gaze of her sorrowful eyes is commanding, full of tears of both anger and love. The people of Russia understood this miraculous, prophetic sign: penitential prayers to the "Reigning" Mother of God began to be offered up all throughout Russia, and the icon itself, in countless copies, began to adorn all the churches of Russia. A marvellous akathist to this icon began to circulate, and the whole Church fell on its knees when listening to it. The atheistic government, of course, could not remain indifferent to such "religious propaganda," and began cruelly to persecute all who venerated this icon. The akathist was proscribed, and the icons themselves were removed from the churches. The composers of the service and the akathist were executed by firing squad.

THE FIRST SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT: SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY, FROM GOARCH.ORG

Introduction

On the Second Sunday of Lent the Orthodox Church commemorates our Holy Father Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica, the Wonderworker. The feast day of Saint Gregory Palamas is November 14, however, he is commemorated on this Sunday as the condemnation of his enemies and the vindication of his teachings by the Church in the 14th century was acclaimed as a second triumph of Orthodoxy.

Life of the Saint

Our holy Father Gregory was born in Constantinople in 1296 of aristocratic parents who had emigrated from Asia Minor in the face of the Turkish invasion, and were attached to the court of the pious Emperor Andronicus II Palaeologus (1282-1328). Despite his official duties, Gregory's father led a life of fervent prayer. Sometimes as he sat in the Senate, he would be so deep in prayer as to be unaware of the Emperor addressing him. While Gregory was still young, his father died after being clothed in the monastic habit; and his mother for her part wanted to take the veil, but delayed doing so in order to take care of the education of her seven children. Gregory, the eldest, was instructed by the most highly reputed masters of secular learning and, after some years, was so proficient in philosophical reasoning that, on listening to him, his master could believe he was hearing Aristotle himself. Notwithstanding these intellectual successes, the young man's real interest lay only with the things of God. He associated with monks of renown in the city and found a spiritual father in Theoleptus of Philadelphia, who instructed him in the way of holy sobriety and of prayer of the heart.

About the year 1316, Gregory decided to abandon the vanities of the world. His mother, two sisters, two brothers and a great many of his servants entered upon the monastic life with him. He and his two brothers went on foot to the holy Mountain of Athos, where they settled near the Monastery of Vatopedi under the direction of the Elder Nicodemus, who came from Mount Auxentius. Gregory made rapid progress in the holy activity of prayer, for he had put into practice since childhood the fundamental



virtues of obedience, humility, meekness, fasting, vigil and the different kinds of renunciation that make the body subject to the spirit. Night and day he besought God ceaselessly with tears saying, "Lighten my darkness!" After some time, the Mother of God, in whom he had put his trust since his youth, sent Saint John the Theologian to him with the promise of her protection in this life and in the next.

After only three years, the early death of his brother Theodosius, followed by that of the Elder Nicodemus, led Gregory and his second brother, Macarius, to attach themselves to the Monastery of the Great Lavra. Gregory was appointed chanter. His conduct in the cenobitic life was beyond reproach, and the brethren admired his zeal for putting into practice all the holy evangelic virtues. He lived with such abstinence as to appear unburdened by the flesh to the extent of being able to go three months without sleep. At the end of three years of common life, his soul thirsting for the sweet waters of the wilderness, he retired to the hermitage of Glossia, under the direction of an eminent monk called Gregory of Byzantium. With the passions purified, he was now able to rise up in prayer to the contemplation of the mysteries of the Creation. Solitude and inner stillness enabled him to keep his intellect fixed at all times in the depths of his heart, where he called on the Lord Jesus with compunction, so that he became all prayer, and sweet tears flowed continually from his eyes as from two fountains.

The incessant raids of Turkish pirates soon obliged Gregory and his companions to leave their hermitage. Together with twelve monks, he wanted to make the pilgrimage to the Holy Places and to seek refuge at Mount Sinai; but this did not prove feasible. Instead, he spent some time in Thessalonica, where he joined the group around the future Patriarch Isidore, who was endeavoring to spread the practice of the Jesus prayer among the faithful so that they might profit from the experience of the monks. In 1326, Gregory was ordained a priest, having understood in a vision that this was indeed the will of God. He then departed to found a hermitage in the area of Beroea, where he practiced an even stricter asceticism than before. For five days of the week he remained alone, fasting, keeping vigil and praying with abundant tears. He only appeared on Saturdays and Sundays to serve the Divine Liturgy, share a fraternal meal, and converse on some spiritual subject with his companions in the ascetic life. He continued thus to rise up in contemplation and to enter into closer union with God in his heart.

When his mother died, he went to Constantinople to fetch his sisters, whom he settled in a hermitage near his own. But as Serbian raids in the region became more and more frequent, he decided to go back to Mount Athos. He settled a little above the Lavra in the hermitage of Saint Savas, where he lived in greater seclusion than before, and could converse alone with God. He went to the monastery only infrequently and would receive his rare visitors on Sundays and feast days. Going on from that contemplation which is still outward, Gregory then attained to the vision of God in the light of the Holy Spirit and to the deification promised by Christ to His perfect disciples.

One day in a dream, he saw that he was full of a milk from heaven which, as it overflowed, changed into wine and filled the surrounding air with a wonderful scent. This was a sign to him that the moment had come to teach his brethren the mysteries that God revealed to him. He wrote several ascetic treatises at this time, and, in 1335, was appointed Abbot of the Monastery of Esphigmenou. But the two hundred monks who lived there understood neither his zeal nor his spiritual expectations so, after a year, he returned to his hermitage.

At that time, Barlaam, a monk from Calabria, won a great name for himself as a speculative thinker in Constantinople. He was particularly fond of expounding the mystical writings of Saint Dionysius the Areopagite, which he interpreted in an entirely philosophical way, making knowledge of God the object of cold reason and not of experience. When this refined humanist learned of the methods of prayer of some simple monks of his acquaintance, who allowed a place to the sensory element in spiritual life, he was scandalized. He took occasion to calumniate them and to accuse them of heresy. The hesychast monks appealed to Gregory who then wrote several polemical treatises in which he answered the accusations of Barlaam by locating monastic spirituality in a dogmatic synthesis.

He showed that asceticism and prayer are the outcome of the whole mystery of Redemption, and are the way for each person to make the grace given at Baptism blossom within himself. He also defended the authenticity of the methods which the Hesychasts used to fix the intellect in the heart; for since the Incarnation we have to seek the grace of the Holy Spirit in our bodies, which are sanctified by

the Sacraments and grafted by the Eucharist into the Body of Christ. This uncreated grace is the very glory of God which, as it sprang forth from the body of Christ on the day of the Transfiguration, overwhelmed the disciples (Matthew 17). Shining now in the heart purified from the passions, it truly unites us to God, illumines us, deifies us and gives us a pledge of that same glory which will shine on the bodies of the Saints after the general Resurrection. In thus affirming the full reality of deification, Gregory was far from denying the absolute transcendence and unknowableness of God in His essence. Following the ancient Fathers, but in a more precise manner, he made a distinction between God's imparticipable essence and the eternal, creative and providential energies by which the Lord enables created beings to participate in His being, His life and His light without, however, introducing any division into the unity of the divine Nature. God is not a philosophical concept for Saint Gregory: He is Love, He is Living Person and consuming fire, as Scripture teaches (Deuteronomy 4:24), Who does everything to make us godlike.

Saint Gregory's brilliant answer to Barlaam was first accepted by the authorities of Mount Athos in the Hagiorite Tome and then adopted by the Church, which condemned Barlaam (and with him the philosophical humanism that would soon inspire the European Renaissance), during the course of two Councils at the Church of Saint Sophia in 1341.

Barlaam's condemnation and his departure for Italy did not bring the controversy to an end. No sooner had Gregory returned to his Athonite hermitage from Thessalonica where he had been writing his treatises in seclusion than Akindynos, an old friend of his, restated the substance of Barlaam's arguments and condemned Gregory's distinction between essence and energies as an innovation. Akindynos, who at first aspired to be an umpire between Barlaam and Gregory, was the kind of rigid conservative who does no more than repeat set phrases without seeking to enter into the spirit of the tradition. At the same time, a dreadful civil war broke out as a result of the rivalry between the Duke Alexis Apokaukos and Saint Gregory's friend, John Cantacuzenus (1341-47). The Patriarch, John Calecas, sided with Apokaukos and encouraged Akindynos to bring a charge of heresy against Gregory, which led to the excommunication and imprisonment of the Saint.

During the four years of Gregory's confinement, there was no slackening of his activity. He carried on a huge correspondence, and wrote an important work against Akindynos. When John Cantacuzenus gained the upper hand in 1346, the Regent, Ann of Savoy, came to the defense of the Saint and deposed the Patriarch on the eve of Cantacuzenus' triumphal entry into the City. He nominated Isidore as Patriarch (1347-50), and summoned a new Council to vindicate the Hesychasts. The controversy was not finally resolved until 1351, at a third Council which condemned the humanist Nicephorus Gregoras. In the Synodal Tome the doctrine of Saint Gregory on the uncreated energies and on the nature of grace was recognized as the rule of faith of the Orthodox Church.

Among Isidore's new episcopal appointments, Gregory was named Archbishop of Thessalonica in 1347; but he was unable to take possession of his see as the city was in the hands of the Zealots, the party opposed to Cantacuzenus. After finding shelter for a while in Lemnos, where he showed heroic devotion during an epidemic, Gregory was eventually able to enter the city acclaimed as if Christ Himself were coming in triumph, with the chanting of Paschal hymns.

During a voyage to Constantinople, he fell into the hands of some Turks, who held him for a year in Asia Minor (1354-55), but allowed him a measure of freedom. This, and his openness of spirit, enabled him to engage in amicable theological discussions with the Muslim doctors of religion and with the son of the Emir Orkhan. When he was set free, thanks to a ransom from Serbia, he returned to Thessalonica to take up his activity again as pastor and wonderworker. He suffered a long illness and, some time before his death, Saint John Chrysostom appeared to him with the invitation to join the choir of holy hierarchs immediately after his own feast. And, indeed, on November 14, 1359 the Saint gave up his soul to God. When he died, his countenance was radiant with a light like to that which shone on Saint Stephen (Acts 6:15). In this way God showed, through the person of his servant, the truth of his doctrine on the reality of deification by the uncreated light of the Holy Spirit. The veneration of Saint Gregory was approved by the Church in 1368. The Saint works many miracles even to the present day and, after Saint Demetrios, is regarded as the Protector of Thessalonica.

Thank You and Safe Travels!

The Parishioners and Officers like to wish Gene & Sandi Riesbeck and Diane Staples safe travels and many years in their new home! You have served God's church giving much of your time, resources, and talents to the upbuilding of His Holy Church. We hear in the Gospel of John 12:26, "Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me." Sandi you have served as president for 6 1/2 years, for 2 years as vice-president, for 2 years president of St. Ann's Altar Society, in choir for 60 years, you served as a trustee for many years, and a Sunday school teacher for 2 years. You also made nut roll and pirohi for many years. In Acts of the Apostles, when Paul and Silas were thrown in prison. Their ministry began by singing. Chapter 16, "Around midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them." Diane you have followed in their footsteps offering a wonderful ministry to the church. Your work as cantor and choir director has served as at making this community be able to worship and pray to God with beauty. Diane you have served faithfully, with precision, and with humility as cantor over 20 years, as choir director over 25 years. You made nut roll and pirohi, including making the dough early in the morning for the nut roll for many years. You were a Sunday school teacher for many years, the treasurer of Saint Anne's altar society for years, a church treasurer & secretary, and a member of the ACRY and served on various positions. Gene has helped for many years with catering, helping with church events and most recently helping us get a new convection oven and all the installation and changing that was needed for that.

May God grant them Many Blessed Years!

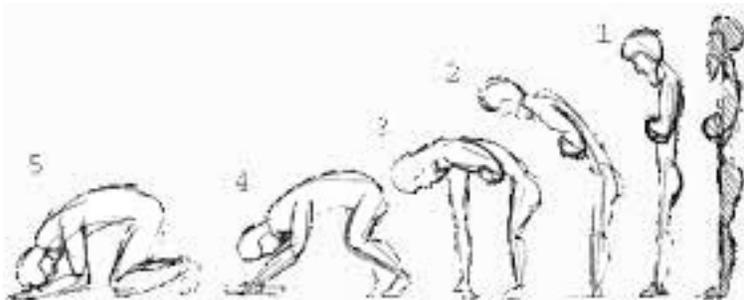
The Orthodox Prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian is read each week day during Great Lent:

O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of sloth,
despair, lust of power, and idle talk.

But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and
love to Thy servant.

Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own transgressions,
and not to judge my brother, for blessed art Thou, unto ages
of ages. Amen

After each verse we should be doing a prostration. If we cannot do a prostration because of physical limitations we should do a bow while making the sign of the cross or it is called a poklon. Lets form our body and souls into practicing, active Orthodox Christians this Lent!



← Prostration

Poklon →

