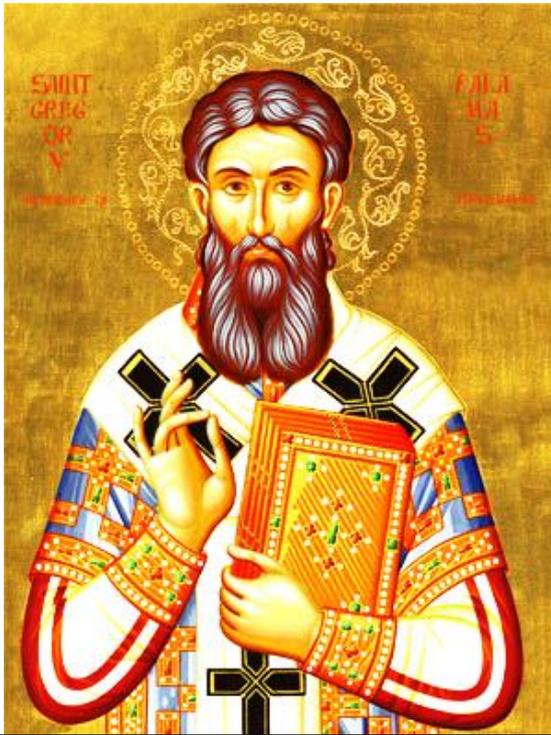




# PARISH BULLETIN

HOLY ARCHANGHEL MICHAEL'S ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

No. **53** / 12 March 2017



**Sunday of St. Gregory Palama**

## Apolytikion (4 Tone)

*O Gregory the Miracle Worker, light of Orthodoxy, support and teacher of the Church, comeliness of Monastics, invincible defender of theologians, the pride of Thessalonica, and preacher of grace, intercede forever that our souls may be saved.*

## Kontakion (Plagal of Fourth Tone)

*With one accord, we praise you as the sacred and divine vessel of wisdom and*

*clear trumpet of theology, O our righteous Father Gregory of divine speech. As a mind that stands now before the Primal Mind, do you ever guide aright and lead our mind to Him, that we all may cry: Hail, O herald of grace divine.*

On the **Second Sunday of Lent** the Orthodox Church commemorates our **Holy 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.

Our holy Father Gregory was born in Constantinople in 1296 of aristocratic parents .... 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.

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... 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....Gregory and his second brother, Macarius, went to the Monastery of the Great Lavra. ... 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.

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.... 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.

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 then adopted by the Church...

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.

Gregory was named Archbishop of Thessalonica in 1347...

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). The Saint works many miracles even to the present day and, after Saint Demetrios, is regarded as the Protector of Thessalonica.

Source:

[http://lent.goarch.org/saint\\_gregory\\_palamas](http://lent.goarch.org/saint_gregory_palamas)



### **Thirty steps to Heaven**

#### **Remembrance of Wrongs/Malice and Slander.**

Remembrance of wrongs comes as the final point of anger. It is a keeper of sins. ... It is the ruin of virtues, the poison of the soul, a worm in the mind. It is the shame of prayer, a cutting off of supplication, a turning away from love, a nail piercing the soul. It is a pleasureless feeling cherished in the sweetness of bitterness. It is a never-ending sin, an unsleeping wrong...

...even if we have not forgiven with our heart, we should at least humble ourselves and be the first to say sorry. Then, realizing our own hypocrisy, we may be moved to strive all the more to make the forgiveness sincere.

...Self-justification puts an end to repentance and makes all the passions incurable.

Forgiveness is both the response to God's love and, at the same time, the ultimate precondition for receiving God's forgiveness for our own sins...Thus forgiveness is both the beginning of repentance and its end.

Malice and the remembrance of wrong naturally lead to gossip and **slander**.

To pass judgment on another is to usurp shamelessly a prerogative of God, and to condemn is to ruin one's soul..because only someone without sin has any right to pass judgment.

Slander is a sure sign that we are not truly repentant. „If we are on the watch to see our own faults, we shall not see those of our neighbor.”

**Source: *Thirty steps to Heaven, The Ladder of Divine Ascent for All Walks of Life* by Archimandrite Vassilios Papavassilious**



## Liturgical Schedule

<b>Wednesday</b> <i>March, 15</i>	<b>6:00pm</b>	<b>Presanctified Liturgy - St. Nicholas, Albanian church</b>
<b>Thursday</b> <i>March, 16</i>	<b>6:30pm</b>	<b>Bible Study</b>
<b>Saturday</b> <i>March, 18</i>	<b>8.30am</b> <b>5:00pm</b>	<b>Divine Liturgy and Memorial Service</b> <b>Vespers</b>
<b>Sunday</b> <i>March, 19</i>	<b>9:00am</b> <b>10:00am</b>	<b>Matins</b> <b>Divine Liturgy</b>

### Announcements:

- House blessing and **confession** upon request
- Friday, March 17, movie night – 6.30pm



16 Romanian Avenue, Southbridge, Massachusetts, 01550, P.O. Box 823 (508) 765-5276

[www.stmichaelorthodox.com](http://www.stmichaelorthodox.com)