

SAINT LUKE THE EVANGELIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

MARCH 16, 2014



ST. GREGORY PALAMAS

This Sunday was originally dedicated to St Polycarp of Smyrna (February 23). After his glorification in 1368, a second commemoration of St Gregory Palamas (November 14) was appointed for the Second Sunday of Great Lent as a second "Triumph of Orthodoxy."

Saint Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica, was born in the year 1296 in Constantinople. St Gregory's father became a prominent dignitary at the court of Andronicus II Paleologos (1282-1328), but he soon died, and Andronicus himself took part in the raising and education of the fatherless boy. Endowed with fine abilities and great diligence, Gregory mastered all the subjects which then comprised the full course of medieval higher education. The emperor hoped that the youth would devote himself to government work. But Gregory, barely twenty years old, withdrew to Mount Athos in the year 1316 (other sources say 1318) and became a novice in the Vatopedi monastery under the guidance of the monastic Elder St Nicodemus of Vatopedi (July 11). There he was tonsured and began on the path of asceticism. A year later, the holy Evangelist John the Theologian appeared to him in a vision and promised him his spiritual protection. Gregory's mother and sisters also became monastics.

After the demise of the Elder Nicodemus, St Gregory spent eight years of spiritual struggle under the guidance of the Elder Nicephorus, and after the latter's death, Gregory transferred to the Lavra of St Athanasius (July 5). Here he served in the trapeza, and then became a church singer. But after three years, he resettled in the small skete of Glossia, striving for a greater degree of spiritual perfection. The head of this monastery began to teach the young man the method of unceasing prayer and mental activity, which had been cultivated by monastics, beginning with the great desert ascetics of the fourth century: Evagrius Pontikos and St Macarius of Egypt (January 19).

Later on, in the eleventh century St Simeon the New Theologian (March 12) provided detailed instruction in mental activity for those praying in an outward manner, and the ascet-

AT THE SMALL ENTRANCE WE SING



ΑΝΑΣΤ. ΑΠΟΛΥΤΙΚΙΟΝ. ΗΧΟΣ ΠΛ. Α.

Τὸν συνάναρχον Λόγον Πατρὶ καὶ Πνεύματι, τὸν ἐκ Παρθένου τεχθέντα εἰς σωτηρίαν ἡμῶν, ἀνυμνήσωμεν πιστοὶ καὶ προσκυνήσωμεν, ὅτι ἠῤῥόκησε σαρκί, ἀνελθεῖν ἐν τῷ Σταυρῷ, καὶ θάνατον ὑπομεῖναι, καὶ ἐγείραι τοὺς τεθνεῶτας, ἐν τῇ ἐνδόξῳ Ἀναστάσει αὐτοῦ.

ΑΝΑΣΤ. ΑΠΟΛΥΤΙΚΙΟΝ. ΗΧΟΣ ΠΛ. Δ.

Ορθοδοξίας ὁ φωστὴρ Ἐκκλησίας τὸ στήριγμα καὶ διδάσκαλε τῶν μοναστῶν ἢ καλλονὴ τῶν θεολόγων ὑπέρμαχος ἀπροσμάχητος Γρηγόριε θαυματουργὲ Θεσσαλονίκης τὸ καύχημα κήρυξ τῆς χάριτος ἰκέτευε διὰ παντός, σωθῆναι τὰς ψυχὰς ἡμῶν.

ΑΠΟΛΥΤΙΚΙΟΝ ΤΟΥ ΝΑΟΥ. ΠΛ. Α΄.

Λουκάν τον πανύμνητον καὶ ἅγιον ἀπόστολον, τὸν τῆς Ἐκκλησίας γνωστὸν συνθέτην τῶν Πράξεων τῶν Ἀποστόλων, τὸν τε σεμνὸν τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου Χριστοῦ ὑπομνηματιστήν, ἀξίως τιμήσωμεν ὕμνοις ὁσίοις, ὡς νοσημάτων ἀνθρωπίνων καὶ φυσικῶν ἀσθενειῶν θεραπευτήν, τὸν καθαίροντα πληγὰς τοῦ πνεύματος, καὶ ἀδιαλείπτως πρεσβεύοντα ὑπὲρ τῶν ψυχῶν ἡμῶν.

ΚΟΝΤΑΚΙΟΝ. ΗΧΟΣ ΠΛ. Δ΄.

Τῇ υπερμάχῳ στρατηγῷ τὰ νικητήρια, ὡς λυτρωθεῖσα τῶν δεινῶν, εὐχαριστήρια, ἀναγράφω σοι ἡ Πόλις σου, Θεοτόκε, ἀλλ' ὡς ἔχουσα τὸ κράτος ἀπροσμάχητον, ἐκ παντοίων με κινδύνων ἐλευθέρωσον ἵνα κράζω σοι, Χαίρε, Νύμφη ἀνύμφευτε.

RESUR. APOLYTIKION. MODE PL. 1.

Let us worship the Word who is unoriginate * with the Father and the Spirit, and from a Virgin was born * for our salvation, O believers, and let us sing His praise. * For in His goodness He was pleased * to ascend the Cross in the flesh, and to undergo death, * and to raise up those who had died, * by His glorious Resurrection.

RESURRECTIONAL APOLYTIKION. MODE 8.

Beacon of Orthodox belief, the strong support of the Church and her teacher inspired by God, you are the ornament of monks, the unsailable champion of theologians, O Gregory the Wonderworker and the boast of Thessalonica, the messenger of grace. Forever earnestly entreat for the salvation of our souls.

APOLYTIKION FOR THE CHURCH. MODE 5.

The holy Apostle, the All-hymned Luke, * who is acknowledged by the Church of Christ * as the recorder of the Acts of the Apostles, * and the splendid author of the Gospel of Christ. * Let us praise with sacred hymns as a physician, * who heals the infirmities of man, * and the ailments of nature, * who cleanses spiritual wounds, and prays unceasingly for our souls.

ΚΟΝΤΑΚΙΟΝ. MODE 8.

O Champion General, I your City now inscribe to you * triumphant anthems as the tokens of my gratitude, * being rescued from the terrors, O Theotokos. * Inasmuch as you have power unsailable, * from all kinds of perils free me so that

THE READINGS OF THE DAY



EPISTLE READING

THE LETTER OF SAINT PAUL
TO THE HEBREWS 1:10-14; 2:1-3

IN THE BEGINNING, you O Lord, didst found the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands; they will perish, but thou remainest; they will all grow old like a garment, like a mantle thou wilt roll them up, and they will be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years will never end. But to what angel has he ever said, “Sit at my right hand, till I make thy enemies a stool for thy feet?” Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation? Therefore we must pay closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For if the message declared by angels was valid and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him.

“*The truly wise and prudent person is one who has fully understood that there is an end to the present life and hastens to put an end to his faults and failings. For what knowledge or wisdom is greater than this: that is, for one to concern himself with departing this present life for eternity without having been corrupted by sin...*”

—EVERGETINOS 4, 18

GOSPEL READING

MARK 2:1-12

At that time, Jesus entered Capernaum and it was reported that he was at home. And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room for them, not even about the door; and he was preaching the word to them. And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and when they had made an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “My son, your sins are forgiven.” Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, “Why does this man speak thus? It is a blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?” And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, “Why do you question thus in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise, take up your pallet and walk? But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins’—he said to the paralytic—“I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home.” And he rose, and immediately took up the pallet and went out before them all; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, “We never saw anything like this!”

ANNOUNCEMENTS

MEMORIAL: 40 days, Lou Kontras

UPCOMING CHURCH SERVICES:

Monday, March 17, Great Compline, 6pm Wed., March 19, Presanctified Liturgy, 5pm; Friday, March 21, Salutations to the Theotokos, 6pm Sat., March 22, Great Vespers, 5pm

PALM SUNDAY DINNER

Following Divine Services on Palm Sunday, Philoptochos invites everyone to a Fish Dinner to raise money for charity. This year we will be blessed to have His Grace Bishop Demetrios join us. The dinner will be held at G&D Pizza in the Crossroads shopping center. The cost of tickets is \$10 for adults and \$5 for children. Tickets are available now. *Please see Georgia Pardalos to buy tickets.*

VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS

We need 1x \$75 for the the Veneration of the Holy Cross on March 23. Please see Fr. Michael

PASCHA CARD

Our local chapter of OCF will be collecting donations for a Community Pascha Card. Proceeds will benefit chapter activities. See John Tsikalas or Matthew Monos if you have any questions.

MISSION COIN BOXES

Please pick up an OCMC coin box as part of your Lenten almsgiving. Bring back boxes on Palm Sunday. Pray, Give, Go - Make disciples of all nations!

IOCC HEALTH KITS

Thank you to everyone who took a health kit card. Please bring items back by March 31.

GIVE A MONTH TOWARDS OUR FUTURE

As we did in 2013, we would again like to offer families and individuals the opportunity to help offset our additional mortgage payment with a donation of \$640. If you would like to sponsor one month for 2014, please contact Fr. Michael. Thus far 2 commitments have been made for 2014.

BOOKS AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE

The following new books are available for purchase: *Pocket Prayer Book* (\$11), *Repentance and Confession* (\$9), *Be Ready: An Approach to the Mystery of Death* (\$9), *Do not Judge: Understanding the Vice of Passing Judgment* (\$9). See Presvytera for any of these items.

“My brother, wisdom is not found in much knowledge and learning, rather as Holy Scripture says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the counsel of Saints is understanding: for to know the law is the character of a sound mind” (Prov. 9:10). This is true because faith in God engenders a sound mind, and a sound mind is a river of living water; moreover, the acquirer thereof will be filled with its beneficial and life-giving waters.

—ST. EPHRAIM THE SYRIAN”

SYNAXARION

ics of Athos put it into practice. The experienced use of mental prayer (or prayer of the heart), requiring solitude and quiet, is called “Hesychasm” (from the Greek “hesychia” meaning calm, silence), and those practicing it were called “hesychasts.”

During his stay at Glossia the future hierarch Gregory became fully imbued with the spirit of hesychasm and adopted it as an essential part of his life. In the year 1326, because of the threat of Turkish invasions, he and the brethren retreated to Thessalonica, where he was then ordained to the holy priesthood.

St Gregory combined his priestly duties with the life of a hermit. Five days of the week he spent in silence and prayer, and only on Saturday and Sunday did he come out to his people. He celebrated divine services and preached sermons. For those present in church, his teaching often evoked both tenderness and tears. Sometimes he visited theological gatherings of the city’s educated youth, headed by the future patriarch, Isidore. After he returned from a visit to Constantinople, he found a place suitable for solitary life near Thessalonica the region of Bereia. Soon he gathered here a small community of solitary monks and guided it for five years.

In 1331 the saint withdrew to Mt. Athos and lived in solitude at the skete of St Sava, near the Lavra of St Athanasius. In 1333 he was appointed Igumen of the Esphigmenou

monastery in the northern part of the Holy Mountain. In 1336 the saint returned to the skete of St Sava, where he devoted himself to theological works, continuing with this until the end of his life.

In the 1330s events took place in the life of the Eastern Church which put St Gregory among the most significant universal apologists of Orthodoxy, and brought him great renown as a teacher of hesychasm.

About the year 1330 the learned monk Barlaam had arrived in Constantinople from Calabria, in Italy. He was the author of treatises on logic and astronomy, a skilled and sharp-witted orator, and he received a university chair in the capital city and began to expound on the works of St Dionysius the Areopagite (October 3), whose “apophatic” (“negative”, in contrast to “kataphatic” or “positive”) theology was acclaimed in equal measure in both the Eastern and the Western Churches. Soon Barlaam journeyed to Mt. Athos, where he became acquainted with the spiritual life of the hesychasts. Saying that it was impossible to know the essence of God, he declared mental prayer a heretical error. Journeying from Mount Athos to Thessalonica, and from there to Constantinople, and later again to Thessalonica, Barlaam entered into disputes with the monks and attempted to demonstrate the created, material nature of the light of Tabor (i.e. at the Transfiguration). He ridiculed the teachings of the monks about the methods of prayer

and about the uncreated light seen by the hesychasts.

St Gregory, at the request of the Athonite monks, replied with verbal admonitions at first. But seeing the futility of such efforts, he put his theological arguments in writing. Thus appeared the "Triads in Defense of the Holy Hesychasts" (1338). Towards the year 1340 the Athonite ascetics, with the assistance of the saint, compiled a general response to the attacks of Barlaam, the so-called "Hagiorite Tome." At the Constantinople Council of 1341 in the church of Hagia Sophia St Gregory Palamas debated with Barlaam, focusing upon the nature of the light of Mount Tabor. On May 27, 1341 the Council accepted the position of St Gregory Palamas, that God, unapproachable in His Essence, reveals Himself through His energies, which are directed towards the world and are able to be perceived, like the light of Tabor, but which are neither material nor created. The teachings of Barlaam were condemned as heresy, and he himself was anathemized and fled to Calabria.

But the dispute between the Palamites and the Barlaamites was far from over. To these latter belonged Barlaam's disciple, the Bulgarian monk Akyndinos, and also Patriarch John XIV Kalekos (1341-1347); the emperor Andronicus III Paleologos (1328-1341) was also inclined toward their opinion. Akyndinos, whose name means "one who inflicts no harm," actually caused great harm by his heretical teaching. Akyndinos wrote a series of tracts in which he declared St Gregory and the Athonite monks guilty of causing

church disorders. The saint, in turn, wrote a detailed refutation of Akyndinos' errors. The patriarch supported Akyndinos and called St Gregory the cause of all disorders and disturbances in the Church (1344) and had him locked up in prison for four years. In 1347, when John the XIV was replaced on the patriarchal throne by Isidore (1347-1349), St Gregory Palamas was set free and was made Archbishop of Thessalonica.

In 1351 the Council of Blachernae solemnly upheld the Orthodoxy of his teachings. But the people of Thessalonica did not immediately accept St Gregory, and he was compelled to live in various places. On one of his travels to Constantinople the Byzantine ship fell into the hands of the Turks. Even in captivity, St Gregory preached to Christian prisoners and even to his Moslem captors. The Hagarenes were astonished by the wisdom of his words. Some of the Moslems were unable to endure this, so they beat him and would have killed him if they had not expected to obtain a large ransom for him. A year later, St Gregory was ransomed and returned to Thessalonica.

St Gregory performed many miracles in the three years before his death, healing those afflicted with illness. On the eve of his repose, St John Chrysostom appeared to him in a vision. With the words "To the heights! To the heights!" St Gregory Palamas fell asleep in the Lord on November 14, 1359. In 1368 he was canonized at a Constantinople Council under Patriarch Philotheus (1354-

1355, 1364-1376), who compiled the Life and Services to the saint.

During the reign of Emperor Domitian (81-96 AD) St. John the Theologian was exiled to the island of Patmos for casting down the temple and idols at Ephesus, and during his sojourn there he succeeded in converting almost the entire island to Christ. When Christianity became the state religion in the fifth century, the elaborate temple to Diana was pulled down, and in its place a magnificent basilica was dedicated to St. John. Many churches were subsequently built throughout the island. For six hundred years after Christ, the island's towns and commercial endeavors prospered until the island was despoiled by Arab pirates and other invaders. The beautiful basilica of St. John was destroyed and Patmos left uninhabited.

It was God's providence, however, not to leave the holy island deserted, and He chose a righteous abbot from Asia Minor named Christodoulos to be the instrument of its revival. Repeated Ottoman-Arab invasions had already forced the abbot into exile more than once, and by the late eleventh century, the abbot had left a trail of monasteries and libraries in his wake.

Born in Bythynia, in Asia Minor, Christodoulos, whose original name was John prior to being a monastic, first lived as a hermit on his native Mount Olympus and later in the Palestinian desert, finally returning to Asia Minor to serve as abbot of the Mount Lamos Monastery near Caria. In 1085, the monks of Mt. Lamos fled from the Turks and the ab-

bot took refuge in the island of Kos, not far from Patmos, where he founded a monastery dedicated to the Mother of God.

Abbot Christodoulos soon made the acquaintance of Fr. Arsenios, an ascetic hermit who was the son of wealthy Kosian landowners and heir to their estate. Arsenios became the abbot's spiritual son, and together they dreamt of reestablishing monastic life on Patmos. Father Christodoulos later wrote of his disciple: "He was a benevolent and pious man, of noble birth and a native of this land, held in high esteem by all islanders, of mild manners, with integrity of character, morally upright, a monk by devotion, called Arsenios, surnamed Skinouris, wholeheartedly given to our service."

In the year 1088, after founding a second monastery on the island of Leros (dedicated to St. John the Theologian), Fr. Christodoulos presented himself at the court of the Emperor Alexios I Komnenos in Byzantium, where he unfolded his plan to reinhabit Patmos with monastics. The emperor granted his request, and he was given sovereignty over the entire island in exchange for lucrative holdings on Kos that were tied to Arsenios' inheritance. In August of that same year, Fr. Christodoulos took possession of the "deserted and uninhabited island of Patmos".

He is described at this time by a contemporary as "a forceful hermit, with profound knowledge of people and the world he lived in, a pious monk, and an able abbot." Although born a peasant, Fr. Christodoulos

had a passionate love of books. He was a self-taught man who had benefited much from his reading, acquiring both rock-like faith and sound judgment. His love of learning and solid common sense are revealed in an extant copy of his plans for the monastery, where he set down detailed procedures for the copying, care and safe-keeping of the library's books. Its first donations were his won. Today, he is not only remembered as a scholar and a monastery builder, but has been given the title of "wonderworker", as a testimony to his effectual prayers.

In 1091, Fr. Christodoulos drafted plans for the building of the Monastery of Saint John the Theologian and the construction of its defensive enclosure, which he called "the fortress". On his return from Constantinople he brought masons and craftsmen with him, and they set to work. The monastery he designed still crowns the hilltop above the island's main port, over the ruins of the original fourth century Basilica of Saint John and the earlier temple dedicated to Diana.

In 1093, only two years after beginning construction, the monks were forced to flee Patmos in the face of pirate raids instigated by Emir Dzaha, and Fr. Christodoulos took refuge on Evia, where he reposed on May 16, 1093.

The monks soon returned, however, and by 1100 the Monastery of the Theologian numbered one hundred souls. Until the seventeenth century, Patmos was governed spiritually and administratively by the monastery, which provided for both the economy

of the island and the defense of its inhabitants. Fr. Christodoulos had originally envisaged Patmos as a monastic enclave exclusive of women, and it was with difficulty that the craftsmen had been able to induce him to set aside a small piece of land at the far end of the peninsula where they could build a village and settle their wives while the monastery was being constructed.

Inside the katholikon of the monastery is a small chapel in the narthex dedicated to St. Christodoulos. There his relics are enshrined, having been brought back to Patmos after his death. Originally placed in a marble sarcophagus, the relics now rest in a gold and silver plated wooden chest that sits atop the sepulchre for veneration.

The Holy Apostle Aristobulus of the Seventy was born on Cyprus. He and his brother, the holy Apostle Barnabas of the Seventy, accompanied the holy Apostle Paul on his journeys. St Aristobulus is mentioned by the Apostle Paul in the Epistle to the Romans (Rom 16:10).

St Paul made Aristobulus a bishop and sent him to preach the Gospel in Britain, where he converted many to Christ. He endured the torments and malice of the pagans, and eventually baptized them.

St Aristobulus died in Britain among the people he had evangelized. His memory is celebrated on October 31 and also on the Synaxis of the Seventy Apostles January 4.