St. Gregory of Palamas

St. Gregory of Palamas was born in the year 1296. He grew up in Constantinople (now Istanbul, Turkey) in a critical time of political and religious unrest. When St. Gregory was 20 years old he left his old life behind to go to Mount Athos to become a monk. He learned a certain type of prayer called “Hesychasm” and he became a master of that type of prayer.

When St. Gregory was 20 years old he left his old life behind to go to Mount Athos to become a monk. He learned and became a master of a certain type of prayer called “Hesychasm”, meaning experienced practice of the Jesus prayer, requiring solitude and silence combined with physical exercises and breathing methods to listen to the divine prayers within.

Another monk named Barlaam called the type of prayer that St. Gregory was doing was heresy, because he said no one could experience God’s energy or know God’s essence.

St. Gregory eventually joined the priesthood. He spent weekdays deep in prayer and on the weekends he would serve holy services. His sermons that he spoke were so impactful that people would be brought to tears.

The two of them debated about the issue and it eventually made its way in front of the Council of Constantinople. The Council eventually ruled that what St. Gregory was doing was truly Orthodox.

The council agreed that while we cannot approach God’s essence he can choose to reveal himself to us. The Council also decided that Barlaam’s teachings were heresy and he fled.

The Presence of God in Prayer

Thanks to St. Gregory it has been maintained that we can experience God through his divine power. We celebrate his defense of the Orthodox Church on the second Sunday of Lent. He is seen to have defended the Church after it was under attack. St. Gregory showed us that the truth of the faith is worth fighting for, and that is something great that we can learn from him.

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(1296–1359)

St. Gregory was a living Gospel. God gave him the gift of healing, especially in the last three years before his death. On the eve of his repose, St. John Chrysostom appeared to him in a vision. St. Gregory Palamas fell asleep in the Lord on November 14, 1359.

St. Gregory of Palamas, please intercede for us and for our salvation!