

# SAINT LUKE THE EVANGELIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

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## FEBRUARY 28, 2010

### THE SECOND SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT

Our Father among the Saints, Gregory, Archbishop of Thessaloniki, Palamas

*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 ascetics 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.

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# AT THE SMALL ENTRANCE WE SING

## RESURRECTIONAL APOLYT. MODE 5.

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.

## APOLYT. OF THE SAINT. MODE 8.

Beacon of Orthodoxy, support and teacher of the Church, ornament of monks; unassailable champion of theologians, O Gregory the Wonderworker, boast of Thessalonica, the preacher of grace. Intercede for all, that our souls may be saved.

## 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.

## KONTAKION. 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 unassailable, from all kinds of perils free me so that unto you I may cry aloud: Rejoice, O unwedded Bride.

## ΑΝΑΣΤ. ΑΠΟΛΥΤΙΚΙΟΝ. ΗΧΟΣ ΠΑ. Α΄.

Τὸν συνάναρχον Λόγον Πατρὶ καὶ Πνεύματι, τὸν ἐκ Παρθένου τεχθέντα εἰς σωτηρίαν ἡμῶν, ἀνυμνήσωμεν πιστοὶ καὶ προσκυνήσωμεν, ὅτι ἠϋδόκησε σαρκί, ἀνελθεῖν ἐν τῷ σταυρῷ, καὶ θάνατον ὑπομεῖναι, καὶ ἐγείρει τοὺς τεθνεώτας, ἐν τῇ ἐνδόξῳ Ἀναστάσει αὐτοῦ.

## ΑΠΟΛΥΤΙΚΙΟΝ ΤΟΥ ΑΓΙΟΥ. ΗΧΟΣ ΠΑ. Δ΄.

Ὁρθοδοξίας ὁ φωστὴρ Ἐκκλησίας τὸ στήριγμα καὶ διδάσκαλε τῶν μοναστῶν ἡ καλλονὴ τῶν θεολόγων ὑπέρμαχος ἀπροσμάχητος Γρηγόριε θαυματουργέ Θεσσαλονίκης τὸ καύχημα κηρυξ τῆς χάριτος ἰκέτευε διὰ παντός, σωθῆναι τὰς ψυχὰς ἡμῶν.

## ΑΠΟΛΥΤΙΚΙΟΝ ΤΟΥ ΝΑΟΥ. ΠΑ. 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.

## KONTAKION. ΗΧΟΣ ΠΑ Δ΄.

Τῇ ὑπερμάχῳ 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, Χαῖρε, Νύμφη ἀνύμφευτε.

# THE READINGS OF THE DAY

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## EPISTLE READING

### SAINT PAUL'S LETTER

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.

“*Who can describe in words your divinely resplendent beauty, O Virgin Theotokos? Thoughts and words are inadequate to define thine attributes, since they surpass mind and speech.*

—ST GREGORY PALAMAS

(1296-1359)

## 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

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## UPCOMING CHURCH SERVICES:

Monday, March 1, Great Compline, 7pm

Wednesday, March 3, Presanctified Div. Liturgy, 5:45pm

Friday, March 5, Third Salutations to the Most Holy Theotokos, 7pm

## UPCOMING CLASSES:

Orthodox Catechism, Tuesday, March 2, 6pm

### GREAT AND HOLY LENT / CONFESSION

Confession is an important part of our preparation for the celebration of our Lord's Pascha. During Great and Holy Lent, Fr. Michael will be available at the Church from 5-6pm on Thursdays. No appointment is necessary.

### FLOWER DONATIONS REQUESTED

We need two donations of \$60 for flowers for the Veneration of the Cross, commemorated on the third Sunday of Great Lent. Your generosity is appreciated.

### NEW LITURGY BOOKS

We have received our new liturgy books. Please do not remove the books from the Church. If you would like to purchase a personal copy, they are available from Presvytera for \$15 each. They are also available on Amazon for \$17.

### IOCC REQUEST

The IOCC (International Orthodox Christian Charities) extends the request for hygiene kits to be shipped to places like Haiti – or wherever disasters strike. There is a critical shortage of these supplies and they need our help to provide this aid. One kit contains the following:

- One-gallon plastic bag with a zipper closure filled with:
- 1 ea. hand towel
- 1 ea. washcloth

- 1 ea. comb
- 1 ea. metal nail file or nail clipper
- 1 ea. bar of soap (bath size, new and wrapped in original packaging)
- 1 ea. toothbrush (NO TOOTHPASTE)
- 6 ea. Band-Aids.

You can assemble a number of kits and bring them to the church or buy supplies for these kits and bring them to the church. Philoptochos will assemble them at the March meeting and send them to IOCC. Thank you for your support.

### YOUTH EVENT

The youth will go ice skating on March 7th from 3-6pm in Jefferson City. After ice skating, the kids will enjoy a lenten meal at a local restaurant. This event is open to all the youth of the parish and is free.

### DONATIONS REQUESTED

Monetary donations are requested for the fish for the Palm Sunday Luncheon and for the lamb for the Mageritsa for Anastasi/Pascha. Please see Georgia Pardalos if you can help defray the costs for these events.

### COMMUNITY PASCHA CARD

The youth of the parish will be requesting donations for a community Pascha Card. The proceeds of the card will go to the funding of youth activities. Please support our youth!

## SYNAXARION

### *Continued*

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 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 Pal-

amas 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.

***Saint Basil the Confessor*** was a monk and suffered during the reign of the iconoclast emperor Leo the Isaurian (717-741). When a persecution started against those who venerated holy icons, St Basil and his companion St Procopius of Decapolis (February 27) were subjected to much torture and locked up in prison. Here both martyrs languished for a long while, until the death of the impious emperor.

When the holy Confessors Basil and Procopius were set free along with other venerators of holy icons, they continued in their monastic struggles, instructing many in the Orthodox Faith and the virtuous life. St Basil died peacefully in the year 750.

***The Hieromartyr Proterius***, Patriarch of Alexandria, and those with him. The priest Proterius lived in Alexandria during the patriarchal tenure of Dioscorus (444-451), an adherent of the Monophysite heresy of

Eutyches. Proterius fearlessly denounced the heretics and confessed the Orthodox Faith.

In 451 at the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon, the heresy of Eutyches was condemned and the teaching of Christ as Perfect God and Perfect Man, existing in these two natures "unconfusedly" and "indivisibly" [and "immutably" and "inseparably"] was set forth. The heretic Dioscorus was deposed and exiled, and Proterius, distinguished for his strict and virtuous life, was placed upon the patriarchal throne of Alexandria.

However, many supporters of Dioscorus remained in Alexandria. Rebelling against the election of Proterius, they rioted and burned the soldiers who were sent out to pacify them. The pious emperor Marcian (450-457) deprived the Alexandrians of all the privileges they were accustomed to, and sent new and reinforced detachments of soldiers. The inhabitants of the city then quieted down and begged Patriarch Proterius to intercede with the emperor to restore their former privileges to them. The kindly saint consented and readily obtained their request.

After the death of Marcian the heretics again raised their heads. Presbyter Menignus ("the Cat"), himself striving for the patriarchal dignity, and taking advantage of the absence of the prefect of the city, was at the head of the rioters. St Proterius decided to leave Alexandria, but that night he saw in a dream the holy Prophet Isaiah, who said to him, "Return to the city, I am waiting to take you." The saint realized that this was a prediction of his martyric end. He returned to Alexandria and concealed himself in a baptistry.

The insolent heretics broke into this refuge and killed the Patriarch and six men who were with him. The fact that it was Holy Saturday and the Canon of Pascha was being sung did not stop them. In their insane hatred they tied a rope to the body of the murdered Patriarch, and dragged it through the streets. They beat and lacerated it, and finally they burned it, scattering the ashes to the wind.

The Orthodox reported this to the holy Emperor Leo (457-474) and St Anatolius, Patriarch of Constantinople (July 3). An army arrived at Alexandria, the rebellion was crushed, and Menignus was brought to trial and exiled.

Regarding the death of the Hieromartyr Proterius, four Thracian bishops of his time wrote: "We consider His Holiness Proterius to be in the ranks and choir of the saints, and we beseech God to be compassionate and merciful to us through his prayers."

**Saints Marana and Kyra**, sisters by birth, lived during the fourth century in the city of Veria (or Berea) in Syria. Their parents were illustrious and rich, but the sisters left home and departed the city when they had reached maturity.

Having cleared off a small plot of land, the holy virgins sealed up the entrance to their refuge with rocks and clay, leaving only a narrow opening through which food was passed to them. Their little hut had no roof, and so they were exposed to the elements.

On their bodies they wore heavy iron chains and patiently endured hunger. During a three year period, they ate food only once every forty days. Their former servants came to them, wanting to join their ascetic life. The saints put them in a separate hut next to their own enclosure and they spoke to them through a window, exhorting them to deeds of prayer and fasting.

The life of the holy ascetics Marana and Kyra was described by Bishop Theodoret of Cyrrhus in his *RELIGIOSA HISTORIA*. Out of respect for his hierarchical dignity, the holy virgins allowed him into their dwelling. Theodoret conversed with them and persuaded them to remove the heavy chains they wore under their clothing. Kyra, who was weak in body, was always stooped under their weight and was unable to sit upright. Once he left, however, they resumed wearing the chains.

**Blessed Nicholas of Pskov lived** the life of a holy fool for more than three decades. Long before his death he acquired the grace of the Holy Spirit and was granted the gifts of wonderworking and of proph-

ecy. The Pskov people of his time called him Mikula [Mikola, Nikola] the Fool. Even during his lifetime they revered him as a saint, even calling him Mikula the saintly.

In February 1570, after a devastating campaign against Novgorod, Tsar Ivan the Terrible moved against Pskov, suspecting the inhabitants of treason. As the Pskov Chronicler relates, "the Tsar came ... with great fierceness, like a roaring lion, to tear apart innocent people and to shed much blood."

On the first Saturday of Great Lent, the whole city prayed to be delivered from the Tsar's wrath. Hearing the peal of the bell for Matins in Pskov, the Tsar's heart was softened when he read the inscription on the fifteenth century wonderworking Liubyatov Tenderness Icon of the Mother of God (March 19) in the Monastery of St Nicholas (the Tsar's army was at Lubyatov). "Be tender of heart," he said to his soldiers. "Blunt your swords upon the stones, and let there be an end to killing."

All the inhabitants of Pskov came out upon the streets, and each family knelt at the gate of their house, bearing bread and salt to the meet the Tsar. On one of the streets Blessed Nicholas ran toward the Tsar astride a stick as though riding a horse, and cried out: "Ivanushko, Ivanushko, eat our bread and salt, and not Christian blood."

The Tsar gave orders to capture the holy fool, but he disappeared.

Though he had forbidden his men to kill, Ivan still intended to sack the city. The Tsar attended a *Molieben* at the Trinity cathedral, and he venerated the relics of holy Prince Vsevolod-Gabriel (February 11), and expressed his wish to receive the blessing of the holy fool Nicholas. The saint instructed the Tsar "by many terrible sayings," to stop the killing and not to plunder the holy churches of God. But Ivan did not heed him and gave orders to remove the bell from the Trinity cathedral. Then, as the saint prophesied, the Tsar's finest horse fell dead.

The blessed one invited the Tsar to visit his cell under the belltower. When the Tsar arrived at the cell

of the saint, he said, “Hush, come in and have a drink of water from us, there is no reason you should shun it.” Then the holy fool offered the Tsar a piece of raw meat.

“I am a Christian and do not eat meat during Lent”, said Ivan to him. “But you drink human blood,” the saint replied.

Frightened by the fulfillment of the saint’s prophecy and denounced for his wicked deeds, Ivan the Terrible ordered a stop to the looting and fled from the city. The Oprichniki, witnessing this, wrote: “The mighty tyrant ... departed beaten and shamed, driven off as though by an enemy. Thus did a worthless beggar terrify and drive off the Tsar with his multitude of a thousand soldiers.”

Blessed Nicholas died on February 28, 1576 and was buried in the Trinity cathedral of the city he had saved. Such honors were granted only to the Pskov princes, and later on, to bishops.

The local veneration of the saint began five years after his death. In the year 1581, during a siege of Pskov by the soldiers of the Polish king Stephen Bathory, the Mother of God appeared to the blacksmith Dorotheus together with a number of Pskov saints praying for the city. Among these was Blessed Nicholas (the account about the Pskov-Protection Icon of the Mother of God is found under October 1).

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## ON REPENTANCE

*a brief excerpt by St. Ambrose of Milan*

**F**or repentance must be taken in hand not only anxiously, but also quickly, lest perchance that father of the house in the Gospel who planted a fig-tree in his vineyard should come and seek fruit on it, and finding none, say to the vine-dresser: “Cut it down, why doth it cumber the ground?” And unless the vine-dresser should intercede and say: “Lord, let it alone this year also, until I dig about it

and dung it, and if it bear fruit--well; but if not let it be cut down.”

Let us then fertilize this field which we possess, and imitate those hard-working farmers, who are not ashamed to satiate the land with rich dung and to scatter the grimy ashes over the field, that they may gather more abundant crops.

And the Apostle teaches us how to dung it, saying: “I count all things but dung, that I may gain Christ,” and he, through evil report and good report, attained to pleasing Christ. For he had read that Abraham, when confessing himself to be but dust and ashes, in his deep humility found favour with God. He had read how Job, sitting among the ashes, regained all that he had lost. He had heard in the utterance of David, how God “raiseth the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill.”

Let us then not be ashamed to confess our sins unto the Lord. Shame indeed there is when each makes known his sins, but that shame, as it were, ploughs his land, removes the ever-recurring brambles, prunes the thorns, and gives life to the fruits which he believed were dead. Follow him who, by diligently ploughing his field, sought for eternal fruit: “Being reviled we bless, being persecuted we endure, being defamed we entreat, we are made as the off-scouring of the world.” [3056] If you plough after this fashion you will sow spiritual seed. Plough that you may get rid of sin and gain fruit. He ploughed so as to destroy in himself the last tendency to persecution. What more could Christ give to lead us on to the pursuit of perfection, than to convert and then give us for a teacher one who was a persecutor?