



The Second Sunday of Lent - St. Gregory Palamas

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On this Sunday...we celebrate the memory of our Father among the saints, Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica and Wonder-worker. Our holy father Gregory was born in the imperial city of Constantinople. Gregory's father reposed while the saint was of a tender age; but his mother continued to rear him and his brothers and sisters in the law of the Lord, instructing them in the divine Scriptures and in the rules of good conduct. She arranged for them to be taught by learned teachers....

Gregory disdained everything worldly as a deceptive dream - and wishing to cleave to God, the well-spring of all wisdom - at the age of twelve resolved to take up the monastic life....In time, she came to rejoice in the Lord over Gregory's desire and decided to follow him in embracing the monastic life; moreover, with God's help, she persuaded all her other children to do likewise....After leaving his mother and sisters in a convent, he went with his brothers to the holy mountain of Athos where they took up their dwelling in one of the monasteries. He gave himself over in complete obedience to a wondrous and perfect holy man named Nicodemus...Under his guidance, Gregory advanced in the virtues, and because of this, the Virgin Theotokos deigned to appear to him, receiving him under her protection and promising to be his mediatrix.

[Later, he] settled in the wilderness, where he led a most severe life, burning with boundless love for God, to Whom he cleaved with his whole being. Thus he succeeded in prevailing over all the devices of the demons and was vouchsafed divine revelations. God bestowed upon him the gift of healing the souls and bodies of the infirm and of working miracles.

Gregory...was elevated to the priestly rank. He served the divine Mysteries like an angel of the Lord and those who beheld him celebrate the Liturgy were moved to compunction and tears. Many holy men marveled at his virtuous life and began to call him the "Godbearer," "the exorcist of demons," "he who brings forth fruit from barren trees," and "the holy prophet." Nevertheless, Gregory was still subjected to numerous trials and temptations in accordance with the words of the divine Scriptures: "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecutions (2 Tim. 3:12). He endured all things gladly, however, that the trial of his faith, "being made more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tested with fire, may be found to praise and honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, as the holy Apostle Peter said (2 Pet. 1:7).

For twenty-three years, Gregory bravely bore the innumerable sorrows and attacks he suffered at the hands of the God-hating heretics...for it was at that time that...the heretic Barlaam of Calabria, began to wage a fierce war against the Church. [Barlaam taught that "reason" was greater than the grace of God, that the philosophers were greater than the Apostles, and that the grace (or "energies") of God given to us are of a created nature. St. Gregory rightly taught in defense that the grace of God which may sometimes be seen visibly (the Uncreated Light) by the Saints - although not a participation in God's "essence" or inner nature - is truly the uncreated energy and grace of the Holy Spirit which He shares with His creation]. The blessed Gregory...was appointed to represent the Church of Constantinople at the council summoned by the pious emperor Andronicus Paleologus. When Barlaam appeared before

This council with his disciples, impiously spewing forth accusations against the Orthodox and belittling them, the great Gregory, clothed with invincible power from on high, opened his lips and swept away all



the heresy like dust from the face of the earth. Barlaam was unable to endure his disgrace, so the reviler of piety and schismatic fled to the West, from which he had come. Then Acindynus, a second heretic, appeared...another council was convened, and St. Gregory prevailed over Acindynus in debate before all the assembled fathers, scattering the tares of the heretic's teaching by his divinely inspired words. Nevertheless, the disciples of these heretics, who were hard of heart, continued to do battle with the Church of God, so all the bishops, clergy, and the emperor himself compelled St. Gregory to accept the rank of Archbishop. The saint ascended the throne of the holy Church of Thessalonica and became its pastor....

While the holy and most wondrous Gregory...was traveling from Thessalonica to the Imperial City to ensure that the Christian Empire would remain unshaken, he was captured by the Turks. In accordance with God's awesome judgments, he remained their captive for a year...Gregory was compelled to travel from place to place and was sold from city to city, since it was the will of God that he preach the Gospel of Christ like an Apostle, confirming the Orthodox and teaching them to stand fast....He also disputed with the Moslems....Some of those with whom he debated marveled at his wisdom and the grace which flowed from his lips, but others beat the saint furiously and would gladly have killed him....At length, the saint was ransomed...by a fervent Christian [and] returned to his flock in honor.

St. Gregory...was adorned with innumerable divine virtues, among which were meekness, quietness, and humility. Nevertheless, he did not hesitate to upbraid the enemies of God....He held no rancor against others...returned good for evil...gave no heed to those who told him how his enemies slandered him, and...counted hunger and thirst as satiety, poverty as wealth, sorrow and tribulation as joy, and mockery and persecution as honor and glory. [After shepherding the flock for thirty years] St. Gregory surrendered his spirit into the hands of the Lord and was translated unto celestial life. His holy relics lie today in the Cathedral church dedicated to his holy memory in Thessalonica, Greece. St. Gregory was glorified as a saint in 1368.

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