

*From the Divine Office of St. Gregory Palamas*

*With what words shall we who dwell on earth praise the holy bishop, Gregory Palamas? He is the champion of true devotion and the adversary of godlessness, the fervent protector of the Faith, the great guide and teacher, the well-tuned harp of the Spirit, the golden tongue, the fountain that flows with waters of healing for the faithful: Gregory the great and marvelous. (Vespers)*

*O blessed and holy Gregory, you planted the dogmas of Orthodoxy and cut down the thorns of heresy. With your words you watered the seed of the Faith, making it grow, and as a diligent farmer you brought to God wheat which had increased a hundredfold. (Kontakion)*

*Hail, glory of the fathers, voice of the theologians, tabernacle of inward silence, dwelling-place of wisdom, greatest of teachers, deep ocean of the word. Hail, O you who practiced the virtues of the active life and ascended to the height of contemplation! Hail, healer of man's sickness. Hail, shrine of the Spirit, father who though dead are still alive. (Exapostilarion)*



**SECOND SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT  
SUNDAY OF THE RELICS  
HOLY FATHER GREGORY PALAMAS  
FEBRUARY 25, 2024**



**ST. GREGORY PALAMAS**



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Divine Liturgy: Sunday 10:00 AM

### DIVINE LITURGY OF ST. BASIL

#### Antiphon (3rd)

1: Come, let us sing joyfully to the Lord; let us shout with joy to God our Savior.

*O Son of God, who are risen from the dead, save us who sing to You, Alleluia*

2: Let us come into His presence with thanksgiving and let us joyfully sing psalms to Him.

*Khallisna Ya-Bnallah, Ya Man qama min baynil-amwaat, nahnu muranneemeena Laka.*

*Haleloueya.*

3: For God is a great Lord and a great King over all the earth.

*O Son of God, who are risen from the dead, save us who sing to You, Alleluia.*

#### Entrance Hymn

**Priest:** Come let us worship and bow down before Christ.

**People:** O Son of God Who are risen from the dead, save us who sing to You, Alleluia.

#### Troparion of the Resurrection (Tone 6) Pg.50

The angelic powers were around your tomb, and the guards became as dead, and Mary stood at the tomb, seeking your spotless body; Then You despoiled Hades without being tried by it, and You met the Virgin O Bestower of life. O Lord, who rose from the dead, glory to You!

#### Troparion of the Holy Relics (Tone 2)

Victorious witnesses of the Lord, blessed is the earth that received your blood, and holy are the heavenly places that opened to your souls. You have vanquished the enemy in battle and proclaimed Christ with courage. We beg you to intercede with Him who is all good, that He may save our souls.

#### Troparion of our Holy Father Gregory Palamas (Tone 8)

O Gregory the Wonderworker, light of Orthodoxy, support and teacher of the Church, glory of monks and invincible protector of theologians, pride of Thessaloniki and preacher of grace: Pray without ceasing for the salvation of us all.

#### Patronal Troparion (Tone 1) Pg.13

In giving birth, you have preserved your virginity and in falling asleep you did not forsake the world, O Mother of God. You have passed to life being the Mother of Life. Through your intercession, save our souls from death.

#### Kontakion of the Annunciation (Tone 8) Pg. 14-Arabis this week

We your servants ascribe to you, O Mother of God, thank offerings of victory, O Champion Leader, for we have been liberated from terror. But as you have that invincible power do you free us from every kind of danger, so that we may cry out to you: “Hail O Virgin and Bride ever pure!

#### God’s Presence in “Mere Bones”

A second observance today points to the presence of the divine energies of God experienced in the very remains of the saints. In the Melkite Church, holy relics are solemnly venerated today as “the pledge of the glorious resurrection of sanctified bodies” (exapostilarion at orthros). Thus we venerate the relics of saints in anticipation of their future incorruptibility and their complete transformation after the resurrection.

The Second Council of Nicaea which affirmed the veneration of icons also spoke about the remains of the saints: “Our Lord Jesus Christ granted to us the relics of Saints as a salvation-bearing source which pours forth varied benefits on the infirm.”

What are the “varied benefits” which come from the relics of the saints? Firstly, miracles – particularly healings – have taken place at the tombs or reliquaries of the saints. As St Ephrem the Syrian observed in the fourth century, “Even after death they act as if alive, healing the sick, expelling demons, and by the power of the Lord rejecting every evil influence of the demons. This is because the miraculous grace of the Holy Spirit is always present in the holy relics.”

In some cases, the bodies of the saints have been preserved incorrupt (without decay). In other cases, relics have emitted a pleasing fragrance or exuded ointment. Believers see these occasions as evidence that deification is something that involves the body. The physical can be touched by the energies of God and participate in holiness. In the words of the kondakion, “It is a great marvel indeed that healing should come forth from mere bones. Glory to the Creator, to God alone!”

Fragmentary relics are placed in the holy table when a church is consecrated. They are also found in every antimimension used for the Divine Liturgy. Some icons have similar fragments in a small case embedded in them. Largely intact relics (skulls, limbs or even entire bodies) are generally preserved at the place where the saint lived. Thus the reputedly incorrupt relics of St. Gregory Palamas are kept in Thessalonika where he was bishop. Every year on this day they are brought forth in procession and placed before the bishop’s throne in the cathedral for veneration.

A Feast of the Holy Relics was formerly celebrated in the Roman Catholic Church on November 5 (or the Sunday after All Saints). It is still observed in the older rite but not in the ordinary (modern) form.

It has been said that “the work of the Church is to ‘produce relics,’” because the primary work of the Church is to lead us to theosis, to communion and union with God. By venerating the relics of the saints the Churches of East and West proclaim its commitment to that work and to the presence of the Holy Spirit in it enabling it.



## DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

Today            Our families living and deceased

This morning's Coffee Hr. will be hosted by Issam, Hiam and Mary Francis

**Please remember in your prayers:** Lorraine Lian, George Arraj, Jr., Peter Abraham, Robert Ghiz, Sadie Mirante, Archie Opatka, Charlotte Stockhaus, Richard Abraham, Sr., Frank Boyda, Carol Boyda, Bob Lynch, Joe Najemy, Michael Mooradian, Dennis Desplaines, Michael McNeil, Jeff McNeil, Billy Rahall, Dan Rahall, Lauren Abraham, Nicholas Haddad, Nicholas Halal, Elaine Foley, David Ahlin, Elio Kanaan, Tom Sarrouf, Sandra Hanlan, Susan Bailey, Jacqueline Ventriglia, those affected by the natural disasters throughout the world, the people of Gaza, and for peace in the Middle East.

If there are people for whom you would like me to pray, please reach out and give me their names. Part of our vocation as Christians is to pray for each other, especially when someone is sick or suffering in any way.

### Last Week's Collection

Weekly	\$1,052
Coffee Hr.	\$ 64
Candles	\$ 30
Memorials	\$ 310
Stole	\$ 25
Easter Fl.	\$ 75
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,556</b>



**Welcome to any visitors we have with us this morning! We are happy to have you worship with us.**

**Please join us downstairs in the church hall for the coffee hour so that we can get to know each other better and answer any questions you may have about the parish or the Melkite Church.**

### LITURGICAL SCHEDULE FOR THE THIRD WEEK OF GREAT LENT

**Mon Feb. 26, 6pm - Great Compline**

**Wed Feb. 28, 6pm - Presanctified Liturgy**

**Fri Mar 1. 23, 6pm- Compline & Akathist**

**Sun Mar. 3, 10am-Sunday of the Holy Cross w/Procession**

**Please join us!**

**"TRUE FASTING LIES IS  
REJECTING EVIL,  
HOLDING ONE'S  
TONGUE, SUPPRESSING  
ONE'S HATRED, AND  
BANISHING ONE'S  
LUST, EVIL WORDS,  
LYING, AND BETRAYAL  
OF VOWS.**

(St. Basil the Great)





## The Fathers Reaffirmed (St Gregory Palamas and the Veneration of the Relics)

WHAT DO FASTS, METANIES, PROSTRATIONS, and standing through long church services have to do with prayer? Isn't prayer the conversation with God we have in our hearts? Why is Eastern Christian spirituality so physical?

On the First Sunday of the Fast we proclaimed the Orthodoxy of incorporating material creation (sacred images) in our worship because the living Word of God assumed matter in becoming fully man. On this Second Sunday of the Fast we affirm our use of the material in worship for a similar reason. We worship using matter because to be fully human is to be physical. The physical, we believe, will not be left behind in eternal life. The resurrection of the body is the transfiguration, not the elimination, of our physical side. Fully human worship, then, must involve the material as we as the non-material.

Two commemorations observed on this Sunday help us reflect on the physical dimension of the life in Christ. The first is the remembrance of St. Gregory Palamas (1296-1359), who championed the Greek Fathers' teaching on the way we have communion with God. Brought up in the Byzantine court, Gregory entered the Vatopedi monastery on Mount Athos when he was 20 years old. A threatened Turkish invasion of the holy mountain in 1325 brought several monks including Gregory to Thessalonika where Gregory was ordained to the priesthood and, in 1347, chosen as Metropolitan of Thessalonika. The icon of his enthronement shows him surrounded by Greek Fathers of the previous millennium whose teachings he affirmed.

### Gregory and the Light of God

Gregory became involved in a controversy with another Greek monk, Barlaam of Calabria, over how we can know God. The West was just getting reacquainted with the philosophy of Plato, Aristotle and others of the classical era. Many adopted their view that dialectics and metaphysics were the highest form of knowledge. Some, like Barlaam, taught that the highest possible knowledge of God that anyone could have was through the intellect.

Gregory countered with the teaching of the Fathers that the highest knowledge of God comes, not through reasoning and the application of classical philosophy, but through an experience of God gained through application to a life of prayer. The theologian is the person who knows God through experience, not through intellectual study. Doctrinal statements are fully meaningful only for those who have encountered the living Christ. You can study the makeup of a city all you like, he observed, but you will not know what a city is until you visit one.

Gregory further taught that a life of prayer can bring us to experience the uncreated light of God, as Peter, James and John did on Mount Tabor. God's divine actions or energies, which are to God as the light is to the sun, can touch us physically as well as spiritually. This transformation of the whole person, or theosis, comes about by true participation in the very life of God. The whole of human existence becomes permeated by the Divine Presence.

Barlaam countered that the grace of God we may receive is something created, distinct from Him. In this Gregory was following the Greek Fathers while Barlaam was more in the tradition of Augustine. The issue thus became part of the East/West controversy of the Middle Ages.

In the West theology became increasingly influenced by Aristotelian philosophy and tied to academic study. Piety came to be divorced from theology and even from liturgy, and focused on devotional practices such as the rosary and the Stations of the Cross. In the East theology remained connected to liturgy, prayer and ascetic endeavor: the fruit of a personal experience of God involving the whole person.

Gregory's teaching was upheld by several local councils in Constantinople which were eventually accepted by the other Byzantine Churches. While Gregory himself is remembered on the day of his death, November 14, today's commemoration focuses on the place his holistic teaching has in our understanding of the Christian life. We can directly experience the action of God in us through the Spirit who dwells in us. We can bring our whole being into contact with God through physical prayer (fasts, vigils, prostrations, etc.) as well as interior meditation. And we may, as some have done, experience the uncreated light of God in this life as well as the next.

### Prokimenon

**Reader:** You, O Lord, will keep us and preserve us always from this generation.

**People:** You, O Lord, will keep us and preserve us always from this generation.

**Reader:** Save me, O Lord, for there is no longer any holy man, for truthfulness has vanished from among the children of men.

**People:** You, O Lord, will keep us and preserve us always from this generation.

**Reader:** You, O Lord, will keep us

**People:** And preserve us always from this generation.

### Epistle: Heb. 1:10-14; 2:1-3

### Alleluia Verses

Your favor, O Lord, I will sing forever; from generation to generation my mouth will proclaim your faithfulness.

**Verse:** For You have said, "My kindness is established forever." In heaven You have confirmed Your faithfulness.

### Gospel: Mk. 2:1-12

### Hirmos (Tone 3)-English this week

In you, O Full of Grace, all creation rejoices, the orders of angels and the human race as well: O Sanctified Temple, Spiritual Paradise, and Glory of Virgins, from whom our God, who exists before all eternity, took flesh and became a little Child! He has taken your womb as His throne, making it more spacious than the heavens. Therefore, O Full of Grace, in you all creation rejoices: glory to you!

