

ST. JACOB OF ALASKA ORTHODOX CHURCH
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February 28, 2010

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✠ ✠ ✠ Service Schedule ✠ ✠ ✠

Sunday, February 28th. **Second Sunday of Lent – Tone 5.** St Gregory Palamas. Ven Basil the Confessor, Companion of Ven Procopius at Decapolis (750). Bl Nikolai, Fool-for-Christ at Pskov (1576). Hieromartyr Proterius, Patriarch of Alexandria (457). Hieromartyr Nestor, Bishop of Magydos in Pamphyila (250). Ven Marina (Marana), Cyra (Kira) and Domnica (Domnina), of Syria (ca. 450). Ven John Cassian the Roman (435) [*from Feb 29 – commemorated Feb 28 in non-leap years*].

Wednesday, March 3rd. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy, 6:00 pm. Meal and Study Group to follow: St Isaac of Nineveh's *On Ascetical Life*.

Saturday, March 6th. Great Vespers of the Resurrection: 5:00 pm. **(Matins at 9:00 am has been cancelled.)**

Sunday, March 7th. **Third Sunday of Lent – Tone 6. Veneration of the Cross.** The Holy Hieromartyrs of Cherson: Basil, Ephraim, Capito, Eugene, Aetherius, Elpidius, and Agathodorus (4th c.). Ven Paul the Simple, disciple of Ven Anthony the Great (4th c.). St Paul the Confessor, Bishop of Plusias in Bithynia (9th c.). St Emilian of Rome. Icon of the Most-Holy Theotokos, **“Surety of Sinners”** in Odrina (Orlovsk – 1843) and Moscow (1848).

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Lenten Retreat

This year's Lenten Retreat will be held at Saint Jacob of Alaska Orthodox Church on Saturday, March 6, 2010 from 11:30 am to 5:00 pm. The retreat is entitled:

**The Whole Earth Is Sanctified:
Reclaiming the Christian Vision of Creation**

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St Gregory Palamas
Commemorated on February 28
(from oca.org)

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 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 Elder Nicephorus, and after the latter's death, Gregory transferred to the Lavra of St Athanasius (July 5). Here he served in the trapeze, 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).

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 on 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 1330's events took 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),

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Whose “apophatic” (“negative”, in contrast to “kataphatic” or “positive”) theology was acclaimed in equal measure in both the Eastern and 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 Mt. 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 anathematized 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 (1345-1355, 1364-1376), who compiled the Life and Services of the saint.

Second Sunday of Great Lent Saint Gregory Palamas

Troparian – Tone 8

O light of Orthodoxy, teacher of the Church, its confirmation,
O ideal of monks and invincible champion of theologians,
O wonder-working Gregory, glory of Thessalonica and preacher of grace,
always intercede before the Lord that our souls may be saved.

Kontakion – Tone 8

Holy and divine instrument of wisdom,
joyful trumpet of theology,
together we sing your praises, O God-inspired Gregory.
Since you now stand before the Original Mind, guide our minds to Him, O Father,
so that we may sing to you: “Rejoice, preacher of grace.”

Kontakion – Tone 4

Now is the time for action!
Judgment, Judgment is at the doors!
So let us rise and fast,
offering alms with tears of compunction and crying:
“Our sins are more in number than the sands of the sea;
but forgive us, O Master of All,
so that we may receive the incorruptible crowns.”