

You see very clearly that it is extremely difficult, and without God's grace and your own fervent prayer and abstinence, impossible, for you to change for the better. You feel within yourself the action of a multitude of passions: of pride, malice, envy, greediness, the love of money, despondency, slothfulness, fornication, impatience, and disobedience; and yet you remain in them, are often bound by them, whilst the long-suffering Lord bears with you, awaiting your return and amendment; and still bestows upon you all the gifts of His mercy.

Be then indulgent, patient, and loving to those who live with you, and who also suffer from many passions; conquer every evil by good, and, above all, pray to God for them, that He may correct them—that He may turn their hearts to Himself, the source of holiness.

Do not help the devil to spread his kingdom. Hallow the name of your Heavenly Father by your actions; help Him to spread His Kingdom on earth. 'For we are labourers together with God.'

Be zealous of the fulfilment of His will on earth, as it is in heaven. Forgive them that trespass against you with joy, as a good son rejoices when he has a chance of fulfilling the will of his beloved father.

Saint John of Kronstadt

**27 March 2016 is  
the Sunday of St Gregory Palamas**

**Matins Gospel:** John 21:1-14

**Epistle:** Hebrews 1:10-14; 2:1-3

**Gospel:** Mark 2:1-12

**Resurrectional Apolytikion:**

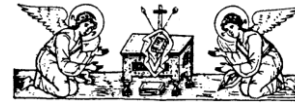
When Thou didst descend unto death, O Life Immortal, then didst Thou slay Hades with the lightning of Thy Divinity. And when Thou didst also raise the dead out of the nethermost depths, all the powers in the Heavens cried out: O Life-giver, Christ our God, glory be to Thee.

**Apolytikion for the Sunday of St Gregory Palamas:**

O Gregory the Miracle Worker, light of Orthodoxy, support and teacher of the Church, comeliness of Monastics, invincible defender of theologians, the pride of Thessalonica, and preacher of grace, intercede forever that our souls may be saved.

**Seasonal Kontakion:**

To you, Theotokos, invincible Defender, having been delivered from peril, I, your city, dedicate the victory festival as a thank offering. In your irresistible might, keep me safe from all trials, that I may call out to you: "Hail, unwedded bride!"



# Evangelion

*A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith*

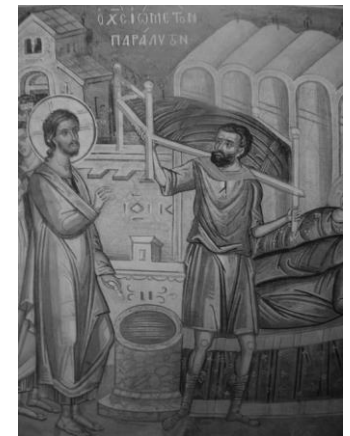
27 March 2016

## Your Sins are Forgiven

Today, on the second Sunday of Great Lent, which is also the Sunday of St Gregory Palamas, we hear Saint Mark's account of the healing of a paralytic man. We are told how this man was brought to Jesus by his friends and, because of the crowds in the

house where Jesus was, had to be lowered into the house through the roof. We are told that Jesus Christ responded to the faith of the man's friends by telling the paralytic that his sins were forgiven – something that angered the scribes, for it is only God who can forgive sins – and later instructing him to get up and walk.

As we continue on our Lenten journey, the Church gives us this reading to remind us that we are all sick and in need of healing. The entrance of sin into the world, and the loss of Paradise which we were reminded of at the beginning of the fast, has meant that our human nature has become corrupted and sick. The repentance that we are called to is most fundamentally a means whereby we can be healed by Christ who is the Divine Physician.



It is worth noting that this paralytic man was brought to Jesus Christ by his friends. He was not able to come on his own and it was in response to their faith that Christ healed him. We too need others to help us to approach Christ, to help us to acknowledge our own need for healing, and to cry out to him. We cannot do this on our own. The services of the Church in this Lenten period, and the means to repentance that she offers us, are not there to simply add one more burden to our lives, or to make us feel important about our own ascetical efforts. Rather, they are there to help us to repent, to help us to come to a place where – not only in words but in the depths of our hearts – we realize our own need for healing and so are able to open ourselves to the Divine Physician who longs to heal us.

Restore me from death to life and cleanse me by fasting as I weep unceasingly and cry to Thee: Take pity on me, Christ my Master, in Thy great and abundant mercy.

From Vespers of Sunday Evening

### *Readings and saints for this week:*

**Monday, 28 March:** Isaiah 8:13-9:7; Genesis 6:9-22; Proverbs 8:1-21  
3rd Monday of Lent; Hilarion the New; Herodion the Apostle of the 70

**Tuesday, 29 March:** Isaiah 9:9-10:4; Genesis 7:1-5; Proverbs 8:32-9:11  
Hieromartyr Mark of Arethusa; Martyr Cyril the Deacon & Companions

**Wednesday, 30 March:** Isaiah 10:12-20; Genesis 7:6-9; Proverbs 9:12-18  
John Climacus; Sosthenes Apollon, Cephas, Caesar, & Epaphroditos, the Apostles of the 70

**Thursday, 31 March:** Isaiah 11:10-12:2; Genesis 7:11-8:3; Proverbs 10:1-22  
Hieromartyr Hypatius; Metropolitan Innocent of Moscow

**Friday, 1 April:** Isaiah 13:2-13; Genesis 8:4-21; Proverbs 10:31-11:12  
Mary of Egypt; Martyrs Gerontius & Basilides

**Saturday, 2 April:** Hebrews 10:32-38; Mark 2:14-17  
Titus the Wonderworker; Theodora the Virgin-martyr of Palestine

## The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

One of the characteristic services of Great Lent is the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts which is often held on Wednesdays and Fridays. The Divine Liturgy is not usually celebrated on weekdays during Lent, but in order that we may be sustained by the reception of Holy Communion during our Lenten efforts, the Church developed this service from very early times. It is not a Eucharistic Liturgy in the full sense as there is no consecration of the Holy Gifts, but is rather a service at which we may receive Holy Communion from the Gifts that were consecrated at a previous Liturgy.



The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is combined with the solemn service of Vespers, and is thus an evening service although it is sometimes anticipated in the morning. During the psalms of Vespers the Presanctified Gifts are prepared for Holy Communion. After the Entrance and the evening hymn, the Old Testament readings from Genesis and Proverbs are read, between which the priest blesses the people with a lighted candle and the words: “The Light of Christ illumines all,” indicating that the Old Testament prophecies have reached their fulfilment in Jesus Christ. After this, verses from Psalm 141 are sung, together with the offering of incense, leading in to the second part of the service.

After the Litany of the Catechumens, the service continues with the solemn transferring of the Holy Gifts to the altar. Externally this resembles the Great Entrance during the Divine Liturgy, but its significance is different. We are not offering the Gifts to be consecrated, as we do in the Eucharistic Liturgy, but rather recognising and receiving Christ’s presence in the already consecrated Gifts that are brought forth in procession. As the priest prays just before the Entrance with the Holy Gifts:

*For behold, His most pure Body and His life-giving Blood,  
entering at this present hour,  
Are about to be spread forth upon this mystical altar,  
Invisibly escorted by a great multitude of the heavenly host.  
Enable us to partake of them in blamelessness,  
That the eyes of our understanding being enlightened thereby,  
We may become children of the light and of the day  
Through the gift of Thy Christ...*

After the Holy Gifts are placed on the altar there are more litanies and prayers and the Our Father is sung before the faithful receive Holy Communion to the chanting of “O taste and see how good is the Lord. Alleluia.” The service concludes with a prayer that sums up the meaning of the service and its role in our Lenten struggle:

*O Almighty Lord, who has made all created things in Wisdom, and by Thine inexpressible Providence and great goodness has brought us to these all-holy days for the purification of body and soul, for the controlling of carnal passions, and for the hope of the Resurrection; who during the forty days didst give into the hand of Thy servant Moses the Tables of the Law ... enable us also, O Good One, to fight the good fight, to accomplish the course of the Fast, to preserve inviolate the faith, to crush underfoot the heads of invisible serpents, to be accounted victors over sin and to attain uncondemned and adore the Holy Resurrection.*

## The Sunday of St Gregory Palamas

Today, on the second Sunday of Great Lent, the Church commemorates St Gregory Palamas. In a way this forms a direct continuation with the Triumph of Orthodoxy that we celebrated last week. For, in recognizing the role of Saint Gregory Palamas in defeating the heresies of the fourteenth century, we celebrate a renewed triumph of Orthodoxy against a grave threat to the faith.

St Gregory was born in 1296. After early secular studies, he embraced the monastic life on Mount Athos, which had become the flourishing centre of Orthodox monasticism. Although he is known for his contribution to the theology of hesychasm, or silent prayer, his contribution to the Church is far broader than this, and he stressed the integration of the private prayer of the monk with the public worship of the Church.

After about twenty years as a monk, St Gregory became involved in defending the traditional faith of the Church against a certain Barlaam who had been influenced by western Renaissance ideas. Barlaam claimed that we cannot know God and this evoked a strong response from St Gregory who argues that although God is unknowable, He does reveal Himself and that by becoming Incarnate, Christ has granted us a supernatural knowledge. Moreover, St Gregory’s defence of the hesychasts, which was soon widely accepted by the whole Church, provided a theological foundation that clarified the theological foundation of monasticism and integrated it into the liturgical life of the Church.

In 1347 St Gregory was consecrated as archbishop of Thessalonika and was known for his great pastoral zeal. His sermons from this time are remarkable for their pastoral simplicity and their focus on the centrality of Christ.



**What hymns of praise shall we sing in honour of the holy bishop? He is the trumpet of theology, the honoured vessel of the Spirit, the unshaken pillar of the Church, the great joy of the inhabited earth, the river of wisdom, the candlestick of the light, the shining star that makes glorious the whole creation.**

From Vespers for the Sunday of St Gregory Palamas

Humility is the chariot by which we ascend to God, like those clouds which are to carry up to God those who would dwell for endless ages with Him...

Saint Gregory Palamas