

Parish Prayer List (Living)

Alexandra	Sharon	Paige	Reader Mark
Andrea	Amanda	Sherry	Joretta
Fr. Michael	Barry	Sean	Kristi
James	Nicholas B.	Karin	Andrea & Kirby
Nanette	Michael	Illisa	Rachael
Michael	Helen	Susan K	Bob Wedder
Anna	Erin and baby	Alexandra	

Parish Prayer List (Fallen Asleep)

Metropolitan Nicholas (+3/13)	Lorraine Solinko (+2/28)
John Beach (+2/27)	Veronica Brickman (+3/5)
Laura Lamby (+3/17)	

Additional Announcements

St. Nicholas needs you! Each of us can render active service to God: We need people to read the epistle during services, the hours before Liturgy and post-communion prayers after Liturgy, or think about your own idea. If you have a desire to help out in any way, please see Fr. James.

Thoughts from the Fathers

"It is a strange phenomenon that with events of a purely earthly character the word of a single bystander is often relied on even by learned historians. But when the event is on another plane the testimony of hundreds of witnesses fails to awaken the right response. Why is this? I suggest that it is less because the testimony is false and does not correspond to actual fact than because the majority of us, satisfied with the things of the flesh, feel little desire for higher knowledge."

Archimandrite Sophrony

Like the sun's rays passing through a crack and lighting up the house, show up even the finest dust, the fear of the Lord on entering the heart of a man show up all his sins.

St. John Climacus, The Ladder of Divine Ascent

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Sainted Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonika, was born in the year 1296 in Asia Minor. During the time of a Turkish incursion the family fled to Constantinople and found refuge at the court of Andronikos II Paleologos (1282-1328). The father of Saint Gregory became a prominent dignitary under the emperor, but he soon died, and Andronikos himself took part in the raising and education of the orphaned boy. Endowed with fine abilities and great diligence, Gregory without difficulty 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, just barely age 20, withdrew to Holy Mount Athos in the year 1316 (per other sources, 1318) and became a novice under the guidance of the monastic-elder, the Monk Nikodemos of Vatopedi (Comm. 11 July), and there he accepted tonsure 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 likewise became monastics.

After the demise of Nikodemos, the Monk Gregory spent 8 years of prayerful effort under the guidance of the monastic-elder Nicephoros, and after the death of this latter elder Gregory transferred to the Great Lavra monastery. Here he served in the refectory, and then became a church singer. But after three years, striving for a greater degree of spiritual perfection, he re-settled in the small monastery of Glossia. The head of this monastery began to teach the youth the manner of concentrated spiritual prayer -- the mental activity, which by degrees gradually was appropriated and cultivated by monastics, beginning with the great wilderness ascetics of the 4th Century -- Evagrius, Pontikos and Makarios of Egypt (Comm. 19 January). During the time of his stay at Glossia the future hierarch Gregory became fully imbued with the spirit of hesychiasm and adapted it as fundamental to his life. In the year 1326, because of the threat of Turkish invasions, he together with the brethren retreated back to Thessalonika, where he was then ordained to the dignity of priest.

Saint Gregory combined his priestly duties with the life of an hermit: five days of the week he spent in silence and

prayer, and only on Saturday and Sunday did the pastor emerge 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, Isidor. Having returned from a visit at Constantinople, he found near Thessalonika the locale of Bereia, a place suitable for solitary life. Soon he gathered here a small community of hermit-monks and guided it over the course of 5 years. In 1331 the saint withdrew to Athos and lived in solitude at the skete-monastery of Saint Savva, near the Great Lavra monastery. In 1333 he was appointed hegumen of the Esphigmenou monastery in the northern part of the Holy Mountain. In 1336 the saint returned to the skete-monastery of Saint Savva, where he concerned himself with theological works, continuing on with it until the end of his life.

But amidst all this, in the 1330's culminated events in the life of the Eastern Church which put Saint Gregory amongst the most significant universal apologists of Orthodoxy, and brought him reknown as the teacher of hesychiasm.

In about the year 1330 the learned monk Varlaam had arrived in Constantinople from Calabria (in Italy). He was the author of tracts on logic and astronomy, a skilled and sharp-witted orator, and he received an university-chair in the capital city and began to expound on the works of Saint Dionysios the Areopagite (Comm. 3 October), whose "apophatic" ("negative", as contrast to "kataphatic" or "postive") theology was acclaimed in equal measure in both the Eastern and the Western Churches. Soon Varlaam journeyed to Athos, where he became acquainted with the spiritual life of the hesychiasts, and on the basis of the dogma about the incomprehensibility of the essence of God, he declared it an heretical error. Journeying from Athos to Thessalonika, and from there to Constantinople and later again to Thessalonika, Varlaam entered into disputes with the monks.

Saint Gregory, at the request of the Athonite monks, countered at first with spoken admonitions. But seeing the futility of such efforts, he put in writing his theological

argument. Thus appeared the "Triades in Defense of the Holy Hesychiasts" (1338). At the Constantinople Council of 1341 in the church of Saint Sophia there occurred a debate of Saint Gregory Palamas with Varlaam. On 27 May 1341 the Council accepted the position of Saint Gregory Palamas -- that God, inapproachable in His Essence, reveals Himself in energies, which are directed towards the world and are able to be perceived, like the Tabor light, but which are neither material nor created. The teachings of Varlaam were condemned as heresy, and he himself, anathemised, withdrew to Calabria.

But the dispute between the Palamites and the Varlaamites was far from finished. To these latter belonged a student of Varlaam, the Bulgarian monk Akyndinos, and also the patriarch John XIV Kalekos (1341-1347); to them inclined also the emperor Andronikos III Paleologos (1328-1341). Akyndinos came out with a series of tracts, in which he declared Saint Gregory and the Athonite monks guilty of church disorders. The saint in turn wrote a detailed refutation of Akyndinos' conjectures. The patriarch thereupon excommunicated the saint from the Church (1344) and had him locked up in prison, which lasted for three years. In 1347, when John XIV was succeeded on the patriarchal throne by Isidor (1347-1349), Saint Gregory Palamas was set free and elevated to the dignity of archbishop of Thessalonika. In 1351 the Blakhernae Council solemnly witnessed to the Orthodoxy of his teachings. But the people of Thessalonkia did not immediately accept St. Gregory, and he was compelled to live in various places. In one of his travels to Constantinople the Byzantine ship fell into the hands of the Turks. They offered to sell Saint Gregory in various cities as a captive during the course of a year, but he then also incessantly continued to preach the Christian faith.

Only but three years before his death did he return to Thessalonika. On the eve of his repose, Saint John Chrysostom appeared to him in a vision. With the words "To Heaven! To Heaven!", -- Saint Gregory Palamas reposed peacefully to God on 14 November 1359. In 1368 he was canonised at a Constantinople Council under Patriarch Philotheos (1354-1355, 1362-1376), who compiled the Life and Services to the saint.