



WEEKLY BULLETIN

Orthodox Church of the Annunciation

**The 2nd Sunday of Great Lent,
March 28st, Tone 8, Matt. 25:31-46**

Sunday of Gregory Palamas

Troparion of the Resurrection, Tone 1

When the stone had been sealed by the Jews, while the soldiers were guarding Thy most pure body, Thou didst rise on the third day, O Savior, granting life to the world. The powers of heaven therefore cried to Thee, O Giver of Life: Glory to Thy Resurrection, O Christ! Glory to Thy Kingdom! Glory to Thy dispensation, O Thou who lovest mankind!

Troparion Sunday of Gregory Palamas, Tone 8

O Light of Orthodoxy! Teacher of the Church. Its Confirmation! O Ideal of Monks and invincible Champion of Theologians! wonder-working Gregory, glory of Thessalonica and Preacher of Grace! Always intercede before the Lord that our souls may be saved

The Lenten Fast

The Lenten season is inaugurated in the Church with the words of the prophet Joel (Joel 2:15-17). The message is proclaimed in the midst of the congregation: "Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly. Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the Lord your God; and cry to the Lord".

Now is the truly great preacher of the Radiant Light led by the Source of Light to the never-setting Light. This son of the divine and never-setting Light was a true man of God indeed, and a wondrous servant and minister of the divine mysteries, having been born in the imperial city (Constantinople) of most radiant and glorious parents. Through his virtue and instruction he desired to adorn not only the outer of mankind according to the senses, but also much of the unseen inner being. When he was yet quite young, his father died. His mother, brothers and sisters raised him and instructed him in morals, catechism and sacred scripture, and sent him to teachers of worldly wisdom, from whom he learned well. Cleverly combining his learning with a natural zeal, he soon became skilled in verbal arts.

At the age of twenty, regarding all earthly things as inferior and passing dreams, he sought recourse to God the Author and Giver of all wisdom, to consecrate his entire self to God through a perfect life. Hence he disclosed his great love for God, his pious intentions and burning desire to his mother, and he found that for a long she too had been desirous of this and rejoiced at his decision. And straightway gathering her children his mother said with joy, "Behold, I and the children God has given me!" And she disclosed to them the intent of the great Gregory, asking if it seemed to them to be good. And he with words of instruction soon convinced them all in earnestness to follow him in his love and withdrawal from life. Distributing then his earthly possessions to the poor according to the teachings of the Gospel, and cheerfully abandoning human love, earthly honor and the approbation of men, he followed after Christ.

Placing his mother and sisters in a convent, he and his brothers went to the sacred Mount Athos, where he convinced his brothers to stay in different monasteries, so that they would have no time to be together, thereby perfecting their life in God. He himself became obedient to a wondrous man named Nicodemus who had consecrated his life of silence to God alone. Learning from him through actions every precept and every virtue, through a mystical revelation there he received the protection of the all pure Theotokos, an invincible help in all things. After Nicodemus' parting from this life to God, having lived for several years in the Great Lavra most zealously with perfection of thought and a love of silence, Gregory left the Lavra and embraced the wilderness. Increasing ever in love and always desiring to be with God, he dedicated himself to a life of utmost severity, strengthening his reasoning with earnest attention, raising his thoughts to God, practicing prayer at all times, meditating on divine things, and leading an excellent life. With the help of God he overcame the attacks of demons, and cleansing his soul with fountains of tears at all night vigils, he became a chosen vessel of the gifts of the Spirit of God, and often had visions of the Godhead. Wondrously, because of the commencement of attacks of the Ishmaelites on Thessalonica, he retreated to the summit skete, and was constrained to speak with several of the citizenry. Having led a diligent life, for he was no longer young, and having cleansed his body and soul entirely, at God's command, he received the great anointing to the priesthood, and like an angel, becoming transcendent in the celebration of the sacred mysteries, so that all who observed him were moved. He was truly great and was recognized as a bearer of the Spirit by

Announcements and Activities

Presanctified Liturgy- will be served on Wednesday, March 31st at 6PM. Those desiring to receive Holy Communion should not eat or drink after their noon meal.

Diocesan Council- Fr. Lawrence will be meeting with His Eminence and the other council members on Tuesday evening. Please pray for our meeting.

Lenten Vespers- Thursday, at 6PM.

Akathist for the Reposed- Friday, at 6PM. This is a beautiful service composed as a song of prayer for the reposed.

Great Vespers- Saturday, at 5:30 PM.

Divine Liturgy- Sunday, at 10AM.

40 years/ 40K Matching funds Mortgage Reduction Drive- Fr. Lawrence and your Parish Council introduced this marvelous goal at our parish feastday. The idea is to bring our mortgage down to under 100K, while marking our first 40 years of existence. We will use 20 K from reserve funds and seek to raise another 20K in matching funds. We will launch the Drive on PASCHA and conclude it on Sept. 1st. More later

Coffee Hours- as you know, the Archbishop blessed us to have social hour outside- weather permitting. Please check the Coffee Hour list for your name and day. Here's mine and council's recommendation for the time being: let's make it simple- bagles, with margarine or jams and coffee. I say this because we are still serving and pouring with gloves and masks and it just makes it easy to set bread on a plate and to grab a cup of coffee. It also happens to fit with the Lenten rules. Remember, no meat, eggs, or dairy may be served at Coffee Hour until PASCHA on May 2nd. That includes such byproducts as whipped cream, milk chocolate, sour cream, etc. The simpler the fare, the easier will be the service.

Back Indoors- up to 55 persons, masked and socially distanced. First-come, first-served. We will open the doors and employ the portico if numbers are too great.

those who lived godly lives, revealing himself to those who witnessed the following outward signs: He had authority over demons and was able to release those possessed from their wiles and deceit. He could change barren trees into fruitful ones. He foresaw things to come, and was blessed with other gifts and fruits of the Divine Spirit. For when it lies within our power to act upon the virtues,

Taken from *The Synaxarion*

From the Lives of the Saints... THE VENERABLE MARTYR EUSTRATIUS OF THE MONASTERY OF THE KIEV CAVES

Eustratius was very wealthy, but being moved by love for Christ he distributed his entire estate for the sake of Christ, and entered the Monastery of the Caves (Pecer), and was tonsured a monk. When the Polovtsians waged war against Kiev in 1097 A.D., they plundered the monastery and slew many Christians, including monks. Eustratius and some of the faithful were sold as slaves to a Jew in the city of Cherson. This Jew ridiculed the Christian Faith and tried to coerce the Christians into embracing the Jewish religion. Seeing that they had no other alternative, they all agreed to starve themselves to death rather than deny the true Faith. Eustratius encouraged the Christians to follow that decision. They all died of hunger--some after three days, some after four, and some after seven. Being accustomed to fasting, Eustratius was the only one to remain alive--enduring fourteen days without food. The Jew, angered because he had lost the money he had used to purchase the slaves, took out his revenge on Eustratius by nailing him to a cross. Eustratius praised God from the cross and prophesied a severe and imminent death for the Jew. Wild with rage, the Jew pierced him with a spear. The saint of God gave up his soul to his Savior. His body was thrown into the sea, but it floated to the surface. Great miracles occurred over this martyr's body. Shortly after the death of Eustratius, the Byzantine emperor decreed that the Jews of the city of Cherson be punished for their wickedness toward Christians. This tormentor of Christians was hanged on a tree and received the reward of Judas.

THE VENERABLE HILARION THE NEW CONFESSOR

Hilarion was the abbot of the Monastery of Pelekete, near the Hellespont. He shone like the sun with the spirit of God, healed people and expelled evil spirits. This man of God suffered at the time when Leo the Armenian began the iconoclastic persecution. With forty of his monks, Hilarion was sent into exile near Ephesus and died there in prison. He took up his habitation in the Kingdom of Christ in 754 A.D.

THE VENERABLE HESYCHIUS OF JERUSALEM

A presbyter and profound theologian, Hesychius was a disciple of St. Gregory the Theologian and a contemporary of St. Euthymius the Great. One should read his well-known work, "On Sobriety and Prayer." He reposed peacefully in the year 434 A.D.

Taken from the Prologue of Ochrid, by St. Nikolai Velimirovich

"There do not exist many or few, nor small or great problems. The only problem is the absence of Christ from our lives" (From the life and teachings of Elder Epiphanius Theodoropoulos)