

SOBORNOST

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

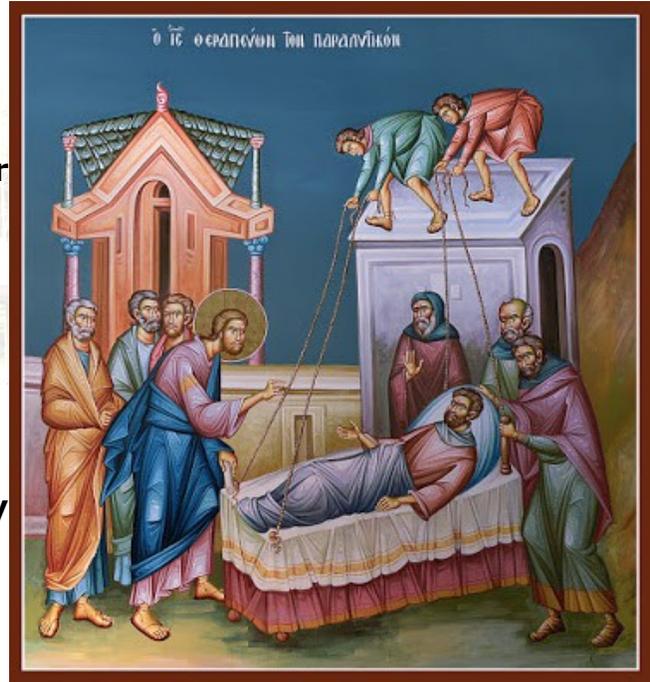
**Wednesday in Great Lent: Liturgy
of Presanctified Gifts 6:00 PM**

Friday: Mol. to the Cross 6:00 AM

Saturday: Great Vespers 5:00 PM

Sunday: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM

Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM



***Please note that attendance is currently limited by restrictions dictated by local response to the COVID-19 pandemic; if you are currently not assigned to an attendance group, please contact**

outreach@apostlethomas.org for information on when you may attend.

March 28, 2021 | St. Gregory Palamas (2nd Sunday in Lent)

Second Sunday of Great Lent - Saint Gregory Palamas and the Paralytic
(Metr. Hierotheos of Nafpaktos)

"Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four men." (Mk. 2:3) On the Second Sunday of the Fast, the Church decided to celebrate the memory of Saint Gregory Palamas, as a continuation of the Sunday of Orthodoxy. Indeed, today we heard the echo of last Sunday, since Saint Gregory was a worthy son of the Church, who contributed to the triumph of Orthodoxy in a difficult time.

Saint Gregory Palamas, a great hesychast, and then Archbishop of Thessaloniki, expressing the experience of all the Holy Fathers, fought the Rationalism of the fourteenth century and protected the Orthodox Faith from the danger of agnosticism and pantheism, developing the fundamental truth of the Church around the mystery of the indivisible division of the essence and energy of God. This teaching is necessary for our time, because many have a personal ignorance of the energy of God, as a result of which they confuse it with something created, while others speak thoughtfully about these great issues of the faith.

In honor of the memory of this great Father of the Church, we will present the interpretation he makes of two points of today's Gospel passage, which describes the healing of the paralytic of Capernaum. They are taken from the discourse that the Saint delivered that day to his flock.

The Holy Fathers are Infallible Interpreters of the Scriptures

We must first emphasize the great importance of the patristic interpretation of Holy Scripture. According to Orthodox teaching, Revelation is not synonymous with Holy Scripture. This is done by the Protestants as a result of which they fall into many sects. Orthodox believe that Holy Scripture is not Pentecost. Pentecost is the Saints, while the word of the Saints is the word about Pentecost. Thus those who have in them the sanctifying energy of divine Grace can understand the revelatory words of the Prophets, Apostles and the subsequent Saints. These are the infallible interpreters of the Holy Scriptures, because they have reached the illumination of the nous.

Thus the best "scientific" approach to Holy Scripture is through the Saints. Every phrase in the Bible has "hidden spiritual power", which is perceived by the one who has the Holy Spirit. The interpretation of Holy Scripture is not a matter of grammar, philological knowledge or history alone, but mainly of the vision of God. The nous of the Saint is purified, illumined and sees clearly the whole depth of each phrase. According to Saint Isaac, those who, illumined by divine Grace, are led to the perfection of life, always sense as if an imaginary ray protrudes through the verses of what is written and which separates with spiritual knowledge the meaning of the subtle words from the things said. That is why it has been said that even if all the books of Holy Scripture and the patristics writings are lost, there are Fathers who can rewrite them, since the life is not lost.

This explains why Saint Gregory Palamas was accused by some of his contemporaries as a conservative theologian and by others as a modernist. This happened because having the Holy Spirit, while being a Father of the Church, therefore he related in spirit to all the Holy Fathers, expressing the will of God in the specific time in which he lived. But it is time to look at the two interpretive points of today's reading made by the Holy Father.

Word and Action

The Evangelist tells us that the Lord was inside a house in Capernaum. "Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive them, not even near the door." Saint Gregory interprets that everyone listened to Christ, but not everyone obeyed. So we are all fond of hearing and fond of seeing, but not fond of virtue. We all want to learn about salvation, which is why most of us not only enjoy listening to the sacred teachings, but also "love the words." This

observation is remarkable. There are many pious Christians who desire to hear the word of God, to know the way of their salvation, and to know various theological truths, but they do not strive for the word of God to bear fruit within them.

In our time there is a mentality to listen to the analysis of patristic texts and to speak theologically, but at the same time we find it difficult to keep the word of God, to keep the commandments. In practice, we are completely powerless to deal with a difficult situation. So what is the point of having knowledge about the Christian life when in practice we are very poor? Saint Maximus says that knowledge without practice is the theology of demons. It takes a struggle to keep the commandments and thus proceed to the vision of the Word and not to be stuck in the hearing of the word. We must be fond of virtue and not just fond of hearing and fond of seeing.

Treatment of a Paralyzed Soul

The paralytic "carried by four men" arrived at the house where Christ was teaching. Because the crowd was large, they raised him to the roof, "uncovered the roof" and lowered the paralytic along with the bed in front of Christ, who gave him the healing and therapy of his soul and body.

Saint Gregory harmonizes this act to the treatment of the paralyzed soul. Everyone who is near to pleasures is paralyzed in the soul lying on the bed of lust and carnal comfort. The soul is paralyzed, stuck in a body that serves pleasures. The paralyzed soul needs to return to Christ to be healed. It is aided by four factors, namely, self-reproach, confession, the promise to abstain from evil and the supplication to God. These are required to uncover the roof. The roof is the rational part of the soul, which is burdened with materials, which come from the attachment to earthly things and the passions and separate the soul from Christ. When the thoughts are cleansed then we can humble ourselves, approach and fall down before Christ. Immediately then the paralyzed nous hears the sweetest word "child" and receives forgiveness of sins. It also takes strength to lift up the bed. That is, the healthy nous leads and directs the body to the works of repentance and is not directed by it, as it was before. Thus man is resurrected and lives the life in Christ.

These few things show us that in order to study Holy Scripture we must necessarily have the guidance of the ancient and modern Holy Fathers. We must read it in the atmosphere of the Church. Then reading will ignite the desire for communion with Christ and the soul will be resurrected from its death. From the book *Όσοι Πιστοί*. Translated by John Sanidopoulos. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 1:10-2:3

In the beginning, “You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You remain; and they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak You will fold them up, and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will not fail.” But to which of the angels has He ever said: “Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool”? Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation? Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*?

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Mark 2:1-12

At that time, Jesus entered Capernaum after *some* days, and it was heard that He was in the house. Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive *them*, not even near the door, and He preached the word to them. Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four *men*. And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven you.” And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, “Why does this *Man* speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?” But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, “Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘*Your* sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise, take up your bed and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins”—He said to the paralytic, “I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.” Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, “We never saw *anything* like this!”

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Brethren, by our actions let us lay hold of the benefit of fasting and self-control. Let us prove our good disposition towards them and give a practical demonstration of the fruit they bear. 'For every tree is known by his own fruit' (Lk. 6:44), and “The husbandman must be first partaker of the fruits. Consider what I say,” says the apostle (2 Tim. 2:6-7). Each of the other virtues cleanses and adorns either the soul or the body, or rather, just one part of the soul or body. The mind is cleansed

and adorned by prayer and knowledge, anger by meekness, and desire by chastity. But fasting and self-control lull the stirrings of the body and quench the raging of anger and desire. They make the understanding like a clear, cloudless sky, cleansing it from the rising vapors which result from large quantities of food, and the melancholy which they cause. The outward man perishes through fasting and self-control, but the more he does so, the more the inward man is renewed, as the apostle tells us (cf. 2 Cor. 4:16). Someone has said, "A fat belly does not bring forth a fine mind." A belly refined by fasting and self-control, however, necessarily refines the mind as well.

Everything noble and good is accomplished and perfected by these means. Fasting and self-control are a double wall of defense and whoever lives within them enjoys great peace, like someone inside Jerusalem, for the name Jerusalem means peace. The head cook of the ruler of Babylon makes war against this wall, and unless he finds those inside strongly defending the walls he razes them to the ground, bringing culinary delights into action as engines of destruction.

If the people on the walls not only despise rich and varied food but are extremely frugal even in making bread, then they can overturn the tent of Midian by their self-control, rather as the story of Gideon foreshadows. "Lo," it says, "cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian." The barley bread shows how frugal and restrained, even in necessary food, were the men fighting alongside Gideon. "And it came," it says, "unto the tent of Midian, and smote it and overturned it" (Judg. 7:13). Without doubt the tent overturned by a barley cake is the voracious appetite of the gullet and stomach, the force of which is taken away by fasting and plain fare. Daniel, a man subject to desires, did more than just destroy with a cake the dragon, the god of those whose god is the belly, who has power over the lings and the navel. He also, after not having eaten the bread of desires or drunk wine for many weeks, saw strange visions and was attended by an archangel.

Having spoken of Daniel, we turn now to that greedy and ungrateful race who said, "Who shall give us flesh to eat? Now our soul is dried away" (Num. 11:4-6). When they had eaten so much that it was coning out at their nostrils, they suffered a terrible blow. "The wrath of the Lord," it says, "was kindled against the people and their satiety became for them a very great plague" (Num. 11:33). The so-called "graves of greed" in that place are a monument to God's wrath against them, and with this in view we should flee gluttony, embrace self-control, and welcome these days of fasting with open arms, because they make the body obedient to the soul and lighten the mind in its ascent to God. John the Forerunner of Grace was content all his life living with locusts and wild honey. Peter used only salted olives, lupin seeds and light vegetables. To say nothing of Paul who, in his own words, lived "in hunger and thirst, in fastings often" (2 Cor. 11:27).

The forty day period of the fast is not your whole life, and every day your fasting ends when the sun sets. Going without food to this extent is surely easy and reasonable for nearly everyone. But when we eat let it also be with moderation, so that fasting and eating within due limits, we may not lag far behind those who do not eat at all. Perhaps you spare your flesh and avoid fasting in case you waste away. The opposite is true. Eating your fill unavoidably gives rise to gout, headaches and other illnesses, whereas fasting is the mother of good health. It seems that the fornicator is not the only one who sins against his own body, for the glutton also offends against his body by making it sickly and diseased.

We indulge ourselves through all our senses, so let us impose self-control on them all. If you abstain from food while your sight lures you into adultery, inquisitiveness and malice in the hidden places of your soul, your hearing is open to insulting words, lewd songs and evil slanders, and your other senses are open to whatever harms them, what is the benefit of your fasting? None whatsoever. For the evil which you avoid with one of your senses, you let into your soul through another. We are made up of a soul and a body, and both soul and body consist of many members. For the soul too has members after a fashion: those parts of it concerned with growth, desiring, anger and reason. Therefore true fasting must extend to every part, cleansing and healing them all. Fasting, brethren, gently and kindly restores the soul to health, and that is why our Fathers imposed it on us during these days.

If we shrink from fasting in our foolishness, hell waits to punish us, to cut us down and burn us, at that time when Christ will cut in pieces anyone incapable of being healed and consign them to the unquenchable fire to suffer eternal punishment. It was because we did not fast in paradise that we were thrown out into this life full of sufferings. In the same way, if we have not fasted here or lived with as much self-restraint as we could, we shall fall into that unquenchable and unbearable hell-fire.

The prophecy says, "Be converted, O backsliding children" (Jer. 3:14). For those who change their ways, nothing helps more than fasting towards forgiveness of their sins, as we learn from the conversion of the Ninevites (Jonah 3:5). But nothing is more deadly than gluttony. This is shown by the fact that the father said of the prodigal who returned, "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found" (Luke 15:24). He had embraced a piggish way of life and enjoyed the pig's filth. He was thrown together with them and, once he had cast aside his likeness to God, he became like them. According to the great Job, on the other hand, he resembled not only animals but completely unfeeling plants in watery places, the rushes, papyrus and reeds where the all-devouring Leviathan sleeps (Job 41:1). For this invisible monster is dependent on moist food. When

David had rid himself of this moist lushness by his temperate life he said, “My strength is dried up like a potsherd; my bones are parched like brushwood; my knees are weak through fasting; and my flesh fails of fatness” (Pss. 22:15, 102:3, 109:24). The right hand of the Most High had been alienated from him, but he transformed this situation by dedicating himself completely to the Lord, regarding himself as facing Him at all times, and setting Him always before him as the meditation of his heart.

Let us imitate David, brethren, and not only turn our backs on lush and dissipated living, but undertake fasts, psalmody and prayers, as if God Himself were present and watching. We know that fasting, psalmody and prayer by themselves cannot save us, but carrying them out before God can. For when the Lord's eyes are upon us they sanctify us, as the sun warms everything upon which it shines.

When our understanding gazes intently on God and, while looking towards Him, fasts, sings psalms and prays, then we are carrying out these actions before God. If during prayer and psalmody our mind is sometimes directed towards God and sometimes slips away and floats about, it is necessary to realize that we have not yet dedicated ourselves completely to God and that the purpose behind our actions is not wholly in accordance with the law of the Lord. The more we fall short in righteous works, the less we are able to remain in God's sight. “The lawless,” it says, “shall not stand in your sight” (Ps. 5:5 LXX). All the same, when we lie wounded let us call upon the Lord who can sooth and bind up our injuries.

Please do not let us give up calling upon Him with fasting, vows, tears and every other means, until He draws near and heals us. We should show by our deeds that we have Christ as our bridegroom and we wait for Him in hope, although He is far away from us for the present, hidden in the realms of heaven. “When the bridegroom,” it says, “shall be taken from them, then shall they fast” (Mat. 9:15). Clearly those called by Christ's name must pass their whole lives in self-control and fasting, looking forward with good hope to His terrible coming again. Let us fast particularly at this time, and prepare ourselves in every possible way while we wait for the yearly commemoration of Christ's Resurrection, that being cleansed we may glorify His passion with all purity and attain the blessed immortal life which the Lord achieved for us by this means.

May we all attain to this, by the grace and love towards mankind of your Lord Jesus Christ, to whom belong all glory, honor and worship, together with His Father without beginning and the all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and for ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

– St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 9*

Also Commemorated Today: Ven. Hilarion the New

Saint Hilarion the New, Igumen of Pelekete Monastery, from his youth devoted himself to the service of God and spent many years as a hermit. Because of his holy and blameless life he was ordained to the holy priesthood, and later he was made igumen of the Pelekete monastery (near the Dardanelles). Saint Hilarion was granted gifts of clairvoyance and wonderworking by the Lord.

Through prayer he brought down rain during a drought, and like the Prophet Elisha he separated the waters of a river, he drove harmful beasts from the fields, he filled the nets of fishermen when they had no success in fishing, and he did many other miracles. In addition to these things, he was able to heal the sick and cast out demons. Saint Hilarion suffered on Great and Holy Thursday in the year 754, when the military commander Lakhano-drakon suddenly descended upon the Pelekete monastery in pursuit of icon-venerators, boldly forcing his way into the church, disrupting the service and throwing the Holy Gifts upon the ground. Forty-two monks were arrested, slapped into chains, sent to the Edessa district and murdered. The remaining monks were horribly mutilated: they beat them, they burned their beards with fire, they smeared their faces with tar and cut off the noses of some of the confessors. Saint Hilarion died for the veneration of icons during this persecution.

Saint Hilarion left behind spiritual works containing moral directives for spiritual effort. Saint Joseph of Volokolamsk (September 9 and October 18) was well acquainted with the work of Saint Hilarion, and he also wrote about the significance of monastic struggles in his own theological works. (*from oca.org*)

Venerable Stephen the Wonder-worker

Saint Stephen the Confessor, Igumen of Triglia Monastery, suffered under the iconoclast emperor Leo the Armenian (813-820). From a young age, the holy ascetic dedicated his life to God and received monastic tonsure. He later became head of the Triglia monastery near Constantinople.

When persecution again began against holy icons, the saintly igumen was summoned for questioning, and they tried to force him to sign a document rejecting the veneration of icons. Saint Stephen steadfastly refused to betray Orthodoxy and he boldly denounced the emperor for his impiety. They subjected the saint to cruel torments, after which they sent him to prison in the year 815. Weakened and sick, the holy Confessor Stephen soon died in prison from his sufferings. (*from oca.org*)



April Anniversaries and Birthdays

Anniversaries:

Dennis & Phyllis Thomidis 24th Slava & Tatyana Chumak 25th
Richard & Carol Wright 26th Andrew & Shannon McNeil 27th



Birthdays:

Ryan Harris 3rd Christos Kopan 5th Isabella Hampton 7th
Joseph Karbowsky 17th Norman Harris 19th Ashley McNeil 19th
Kyle Samson 19th Bernie Vallandingham 22nd Mary Diane David 24th
Elizabeth Howl 25th Rachel Harris 26th

Patriarchal Pence – Support Patriarch Bartholomew



During this season of increased prayer, fasting, and charity all the parishes in our Diocese send a token of our affection to support the work of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. To this end we will take a special collection next Sunday. Please be generous!

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Camp Nazareth: <http://www.campnazareth.org>

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In Your Prayers – Please Remember... His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Eminence Metropolitan GREGORY, Fr. Joseph & Family, Greek Orthodox Archbishop Paul Yazigi of Aleppo, Syriac Orthodox Archbishop Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri & Mt. Kenya, Fr. John & Pani Betty Jean Baranik, Presbyteria Katie Baker & family, Santiago Alzugaray, Patty Blaydoe, Jeffrey Carey, Tatyana & Slava Chumak & family, Xenia Chilkowich, Jon Church, Ramius Connour, Luke & Marlena Cooper, Tina Crull, Mary Diane David, Ron Dominiecki, Linda A. Georgiev, Heather Himler, John Homick, Howl family, Helen Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Tucker Karl & family, Robert & Pam Karpin, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Brian, Helen, Luke & Mia Mahony, Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, Anna Meinhold, Dn. Henry Middleton, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & Family, Henry & Lisa Osborne, Nicholas Pavlik, Westin Perry & Parents, John Reece, Mary Reed, Chris & Kaitlin Rixey, Jerry Von Ronne, Anne Rosario, James, Theodore & Christina Ristas, Robinson Family, Samson Family, Sharon Sheptak, Bernie Takabayashi & family, Sandy Tucker, Dawn & Faith Ulmschneider, Joe & Darlene Waters, Christine, Jo, Marshall, Nathaniel, Dcn. Nectaros & Ia, the Syrian Christians displaced by war, Mother Virginia Marie & the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, and those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)