

ANNOUNCEMENTS

SECOND SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT

March 8, 2015 - Saint Gregory Palamas



- TROPARION OF ST. GREGORY PALAMAS, Tone Eight:

O light of Orthodoxy, pillar and teacher of the Church, glory of monks and invincible protection of theologians, O Gregory, thou wonderworker, boast of Thessalonika, and preacher of grace, ever pray that our souls be saved.

- KONTAKION OF ST GREGORY, Tone Eight, to the melody *To thee the Champion*:

With one accord, we praise thee as the sacred and divine vessel of wisdom and clear trumpet of theology, O our righteous Father Gregory of divine speech. As a mind that standeth now before the Original Mind, do thou ever guide aright and lead our mind to Him, that we all may cry: Rejoice, O herald of grace divine.

ACTIVITIES & EVENTS THIS WEEK

- Saturday, March 7: 3:30 PM, Catechism, *On Holy Baptism*
5 PM, VIGIL
- Sunday, March 8: 9–10 AM, Confession
10 AM, Divine Liturgy
11:45 AM—Church School; Noon—Agape luncheon in Hall
5 PM, Concert by the Yale Russian Chorus
- Tues., March 9: 8 AM, Lenten Matins
- Wed., March 10: 8 AM, Lenten Matins
11 AM, *Catechism Revisited*
5 PM, Redwood Empire Food Bank Distribution
5 PM, Confessions
6:15 PM, Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, Meal and Spiritual Reading
- Thurs., March 11: 8 AM, Lenten Matins
- Friday, March 12: 10:30 AM, Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts
6 PM, Akathist to the Theotokos (*Protection Church*)

- NEWS AND THANKS:

We congratulate Anastasia and Aaron Brodeur on the birth of their daughter, Thursday, March 5. Many Years. Thom Stewart is back home recuperating from his heart surgery. He welcomes phone calls and visits.

Many, many thanks to the men and women of the Parish Sisterhood who worked so hard hosting the reception which followed the Sunday of Orthodoxy Pan-Orthodox Vespers. Many of our guests commented on the outstanding hospitality shown to them.

• UPCOMING AND IMPORTANT:

Sunday, March 21: Concert by Nicolas Custer's Renaissance choral ensemble *Carmina Chromatica*, singing motets and lamentations from the Lenten and Paschal seasons. No charge.

Tuesday, March 24: Eve of the Great Feast of the Annunciation. Vigil for the Feast at 6:15 PM. The beautiful hymns of Matins are a joyful reminder, during this season of repentance, of the incarnation, the holiness of the Virgin Mary, and the goal of our life.

Wednesday, March 25, Annunciation Vespers Divine Liturgy at 5 PM. We fast starting at Noon (if not before) in preparation for Holy Communion. After Liturgy we may have fish, wine and oil.

Tuesday, March 31, Feast of St. Innocent of Alaska, 6:15 PM Presanctified Liturgy, presided by Archbishop Benjamin. Please note: this Service is an add-on to the monthly calendar.

• SAINT GREGORY PALAMAS:

On this Sunday, the second Sunday of Great Lent, our Orthodox Church celebrates the memory of St. Gregory Palamas, the Archbishop of Thessalonika, that great pillar of the Church. St. Gregory Palamas has such an exalted reputation in the Orthodox Tradition that he seems to inhabit another order of reality than your average saint—except for the fact that there are no “average” saints; holiness or godliness is a state of being that entirely transcends measurement or averaging, for “God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him” (John 3:34). These words of St. John the Baptist recounted in the Gospel of John refer to the Messiah himself, but as our Lord Jesus Christ is “wondrous in his saints,” they speak also of the immeasurable grace revealed in the theological achievement of St. Gregory Palamas. In this spirit the liturgical tradition of the Church celebrates the memory of St. Gregory with hymns of praise that soar with exultant abandon to almost hyperbolic heights. For example, at Vespers on Saturday evening we hear: “What hymns of praise shall we sing in honor of the holy bishop? He is the trumpet of theology, the herald of the fire of grace, the honored 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.”

And again: “What words of song shall we weave as a garland, to crown the holy bishop? He is the champion of true devotion and the adversary of ungodliness, the fervent protector of the Faith, the great guide and teacher, the well-tuned harp of the Spirit, the golden tongue, the fountain that flows with waters of healing for the faithful, Gregory the great and marvelous.”

Yet again: “With what words shall we who dwell on earth praise the holy bishop? He is the teacher of the Church, the herald of the light of God, the initiate of the heavenly mysteries of the Trinity, the chief adornment of the monastic life, renowned alike in action and contemplation, the glory of Thessalonika...”

As is very well known, St. Gregory Palamas was a monk on the Holy Mountain of Athos, a direct heir of outstanding hesychastic fathers, who was prepared by his ascetic life of prayer, worship, the cultivation of stillness (hesychia) and by the unsearchable Providence of God to respond to the call to defend the traditional hesychastic practices of Orthodox monasticism leading to the knowledge and experience of God against certain philosophically “cultured despisers” of these practices, such as Barlaam the Calabrian, Gregory Akindynos and Nikiphoros Gregoras. Today we might speak of this unholy trio as “academic” philosophers or theologians. Historically, the controversy that resulted in the Councils of 1341, 1347 and 1351 that were called in Constantinople to sort the matter out is known as The Hesychast Controversy.

In singing the praises of the great Gregory, the liturgical tradition does not exactly give us a history lesson, although it acknowledges the historical basis of St. Gregory's achievement. There are books aplenty for those who want history. For it is not a mere historical event that the Church wishes to celebrate in liturgically offering St. Gregory for our contemplation on this Second Sunday of Lent. It is rather a profound spiritual possibility, a mystical horizon, a Taboric vision quest, a beckoning path of prayer, an illumination of uncreated light and the transfiguring effect of a Divine encounter to which the Holy Church points us in honoring the achievements of the holy archbishop of Thessalonika.

By assigning the celebration of St. Gregory Palamas to the following Sunday after the celebration of the Sunday of the Triumph of Orthodoxy, the Church intends us to understand that the “faith that sustains the

universe,” the reality of the Incarnation of the God-man, Christ Jesus, the Icon of the Father, is the unshakeable foundation of transfiguring and deifying Light—the fullness of the knowledge of God possible for created human beings.

The writings of St. Gregory Palamas are numerous, and only a small portion of them are available in English, so it may seem difficult if not impossible to grasp in a practical way the full import of his celebrated teaching. But in the fourth volume of the English translation of the *Philokalia*, there is a brief work entitled “The Declaration of the Holy Mountain,” which is also called “The Hagioritic Tome.” It was written by St. Gregory Palamas himself and signed by the leading spiritual authorities on the Holy Mountain at the time. It is essentially a summary of the main themes of St. Gregory’s theological teaching, which the Church celebrates today as her own. There are seven main themes:

1. Uncreated deifying grace is the true teaching of the Church.
2. Deification—union with God—is possible in this life.
3. Nous and heart—the essence of prayer is praying with the mind in the heart.
4. Uncreated light: God’s glory is experienced as uncreated Divine light.
5. Essence and energy: the Divine essence is unknowable; we can know and experience God through his uncreated and equally Divine energies.
6. Deification of the body: the body will share in *theosis* by being transfigured.
7. Experience of the saints: holy men and women of the past and people today have known deification, transfiguration and the uncreated Light.

Each of these themes individually and all of them together add up to a single, stupendous, earth-shattering, soul-shaking and life-transforming meaning: God has become man so that man might become God. Created in His image and after His likeness according to the theanthropic principle (the Logos), every human being is called, invited, nay, invoked by name from before the foundation of the world to know God by experiencing Him, both in this life and the life to come, in spirit, soul and body, as Light, as Grace, as one’s very center of conscious being. This Sunday, therefore, places before us Orthodox the ultimate goal of our faith, not only of Great Lent but the very essence of our life: to live true theology, which is not to know about God, but to know God by experience, to become one with the Holy Trinity, to participate, as St. Peter’s 2nd epistle affirms, in the Divine nature. Our true destiny is so to be crucified with Christ that He may live in us completely, so that knowing and experiencing, through Christ, He Who Is, we may, in Christ, be one who knows even as he is known (1 Cor. 13:12). —*Vincent Rossi*

• LAST SUNDAY EVENING:

On the Sunday of Orthodoxy, March 1, 2015, St. Seraphim’s Orthodox Church in Santa Rosa hosted a pan-Orthodox Vespers in honor of the celebration of the Triumph of Orthodoxy. In attendance were 5 bishops, including Metropolitan Gerasimos and Bishop Apostolos of the Greek Archdiocese, Bishop Maxim of the Serbian Archdiocese, our own Archbishop Benjamin of San Francisco and the West, and Bishop Daniel of Santa Rosa. Many clergy and parishioners from other parishes throughout the Bay Area also came to celebrate with us.

The celebration of the Triumph of Orthodoxy has been observed for over a thousand years. Ever since 843 AD when iconoclasm was defeated in the reign of Empress Theodora and Patriarch Methodios, the Orthodox have celebrated the restoration of icon veneration as a definitive victory, not just of icon-veneration, but of the Orthodox faith as a whole, and have commemorated it with a festive procession with icons. In the West, and particularly in America, where various jurisdictions of the Orthodox Church reside in the same geographical area, the tradition has arisen of a pan-Orthodox celebration of Vespers on the evening of the Sunday of Orthodoxy.

The day began auspiciously in bright sunshine with the arrival and greeting of Archbishop Benjamin and Bishop Daniel followed by a splendid hierarchical Divine Liturgy. Then in the evening, hierarchs, clergy and faithful gathered in the nave of St. Seraphim church at 5 PM to listen to a presentation by Fr. Patrick Doolan, our

renowned chief iconographer, on the meaning of icons, on the on-going process of the iconographic decoration of the church building, and on the art and science of fresco painting. Fr. Patrick is an internationally recognized iconographer of the first rank, and after listening to his talk, one could justifiably conclude that he is also a peerless lecturer on all things iconographic. Vladyka Benjamin called it a “flawless presentation.”

Vespers commenced immediately after the talk, and as the service unfolded, one could sense that something extraordinary was taking place. It was not just that the church was full of people and clergy (38 priests), or that five bishops were present, or that choir director Nicolas Custer was doing his usual masterful job of eliciting beautiful sounds from the choir. Everything about the Vespers service was suffused with deep meaning. The words of Psalm 103, so familiar to everyone, resonated with the spirit of truth and the measureless cosmic significance of the Divine Presence in all things; the rhythm of the service itself moved with unusual solemnity and portent, the *Lord I Have Cried*, the Entrance, the *Lamp-Lighting Hymn of Thanksgiving*, sung magnificently in Greek by all the clergy, the Prokeimenon, the Litanies, the Aposticha, all were experienced in a new key, in unprecedented depth, in a great liturgical dance of solemnity and joy, which culminated in the procession with icons around the church, singing the *Troparion* of the Feast, and stopping at each of the cardinal points of the compass, South, East, North and West to sing the small litany. Finally, when Archbishop Gerasimos stood before the congregation and intoned the mighty words of the *Synodikon* of March 11, 843 AD:

As the prophets beheld, as the Apostles have taught, as the Church has received, as the teachers have dogmatized, as the universe has agreed, as grace has illumined, as truth has revealed, as falsehood has been dispelled, as wisdom has presented, as Christ has triumphed; this we believe, this we declare, this we preach: Christ our true God, and His saints we honor in words, in writings, in thoughts, in sacrifices, in temples, in icons, on the one hand bowing down and worshipping Christ as God and Master, on the other hand honoring the saints as true servants of the Master of all, and offering to them due veneration. This is the faith of the Apostles! This is the faith of the Fathers! This is the faith of the Orthodox! This is the faith which has established the Universe!

...all could hear in those majestic phrases the triumph of Orthodoxy, a triumph of faith and truth and beauty grounded in the absolute and immutable reality of the salvific Love of the Triune God, resounding throughout human history to the very heights of heaven. At the end of the service, Archbishop Benjamin gave an excellent homily, sober and compunctionate, and then invited everyone to the Church Hall for refreshments in honor of the Feast. I am sure that as the evening ended there was in every heart the feeling of inestimable joy in participating in the gift of Orthodoxy. —a parishioner

• PROPERTY IMPROVEMENTS

Concrete for a new sidewalk (between the Hall and the Rectory) was poured this week. The old concrete was too narrow and had many cracks and uneven sections. Next steps: install irrigation in the lawn, plant a tree and grass. Work also began this week, per the Master Plan and 2015 Budget, to build parish offices in the third bay of the storage building. There will be an entryway/secretary office leading to a private office for the rector. The current parish office will become the Parish Library (currently “hidden” in the Sunday School building) and high school class room.

ST. SERAPHIM OF SAROV ORTHODOX CHURCH

PRESENTS THE

YALE RUSSIAN CHORUS

Mark Bailey • Artistic Director

Sunday, March 8th

5:00 PM

St. Seraphim of Sarov Orthodox Church
90 Mountain View Ave, Santa Rosa, CA. 95407

TICKETS AT THE DOOR, OR CALL: 707-584-9491

GENERAL: \$20 STUDENTS: \$15.00