

MARCH 28, 2021

ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE DESERT

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THE LADDER

ST. GREGORY PALAMAS

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**– Fr. Theodore Pantels,
Proistamenos (Pastor)
– Deacon Euthym Kontaxis,
M.D.**

Holy Communion Order

1. Please remain standing while following the directions of our ushers.
2. Ladies, kindly remove lipstick before receiving.
3. When receiving Holy Communion, make the Sign of the Cross, state your name (baptismal name) , and naturally receive as if being fed.
4. Non-Orthodox Christians may not receive Holy Communion, but they may receive the Holy Bread at the end of the service.
5. All Orthodox Christians must be spiritually prepared to receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Please see the priest if you have any questions.

THE UNCREATED LIGHT

In commemorating St. Gregory Palamas today, we are reminded of the role of personal prayer according to the Holy Tradition of the Church.

He was so valiant in defending our Faith during his life time in the 14th Century. He defended the truth that prayer is the means by which we participate in the uncreated energies of God. By "prayer," St. Gregory spoke of the prayer of the heart, which is not encumbered by many words but is "silent" prayer ("silence," in Greek is *hissychia* –hence, the word, *hesychasm*). With the Name of Jesus

Christ always in our minds and thoughts, temptations are extinguished and evil imaginations are destroyed. The prayer "of the Name" is called "The Jesus Prayer," and it is: *"O Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."*

Through unceasing prayer, we thus allow Christ to enter our thoughts and illumine our souls, and we stand able to experience the uncreated energies of Christ as did the Saints of the Church. The Saints proved to be co-workers with our Lord in the working of miracles for the glory of God and

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FAITH SUMMONS FORGIVENESS, HEALING & SALVATION

Faith in our God Jesus Christ is the most critical condition for our salvation. This is made evident by way of the healing of the Paralytic. Faith is collective as well as personal, for the faith of the paralytic's friends helped in his healing. The divinity of our Savior is comprehended on three levels: 1) He knows the secrets of hearts; 2) He forgives sins, a power which belongs to God alone; and 3) He heals by the power of His word.

The purpose of Christ coming into the world is to forgive sins, freeing humanity from its bondage. Forgiveness of sins is a greater power and a more important gift than physical healing. It is truly *God's work*. By questioning the authority of Christ, the scribed unwittingly found themselves confessing that Christ is God; for, *"Who can forgive sins except only God?"* Though Christ is fully God and holds the authority to forgive, He condescends to those gathered and heals this man in order to draw people to God, Whom they glorified." – See *Orthodox Study Bible, pages 1283 and 1332*).

All of the miracles performed by our Savior inspired people to give glory to God. They did not express pride for receiving our Lord's blessings.



Καθως εορτάζουμεν σήμερα τον Άγιον Γρηγόριον Παλαμά σήμερα, μελετούμεν τον ρόλο της προσωπικής προσευχής σύμφωνα με την Ιερή Παράδοση της Εκκλησίας.

Ήταν πολύ γενναίος στην υπεράσπιση της πίστεώς μας κατά τη διάρκεια της ζωής του στον 14ο αιώνα. Υπερασπίστηκε την αλήθεια περι της σχέσεως μεταξύ της προσευχής και της ανθρώπινης συμμετοχής στις άκτιστες δυνάμεις του Θεού. Ο Άγιος Γρηγόριος ομίλησε για την «ψυχική προσευχή» η οποία είναι εσωτερική προσευχή χωρίς λόγια (δηλ., ισυχία - ως εκ τούτου, η λέξη, *ησυχασμός*). Με το Ονομα του Ιησού Χριστού συνεχώς στον νου και στις σκέψεις μας, εξαφανίζονται οι πειρασμοί και καταστρέφονται οι κακές φαντασίες. Οι Πατέρες εφάρμωσαν τον «ησυχαστικόν» τρόπον της προσευχής με την εξής προσευχή: «Κόριε, Ιησοού Χριστέ, Υιέ Θεού, ελέησον με ο αμαρτωλός».

Μέσω της αδιάκοπης προσευχής, παρακαλούμεν στον Χριστό να εισέλθει στις σκέψεις μας και να φωτίσει τις ψυχές μας, και είμεθα σε θέση να κατανοήσουμε τις άκτιστες ενέργειες του Χριστού όπως έγινε για τους Αποστόλους όταν Μεταμορφώθηκε ο Χριστός στον Ορο Θαβώρ. Ο Χριστός είπε στους Αποστόλους Του, όπως λέγει σε εμάς σήμερα: «είθε το φως του κόσμου» (Ματθ. 5:14).

Ως Θεός, ο Χριστός παραχώρησε συγχώρεση αμαρτιών στον παραλυτικό της σημερινής Ευαγγελικής περικοπής. Αυτό μας διδάσκει ότι η συγχώρεση είναι η έκφρασις της απεριόριστης αγάπης του Θεού.
+Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

the salvation of others. The uncreated energies of God are comprehended in the Uncreated Light of Christ, as was experienced by the Apostles when Christ was Transfigured on Mt. Tabor. Our Savior told His Apostles and followers: "You are the light of the world." (St. Matthew 5:14). This "light" is, in fact, the Light of Christ, Who is the True Light and the Origin from which our lives are enlightened with purpose; meaning, and the energy to truly love.

Our Holy Tradition involves our baptismal candle. The "theology" of the candle is consistent with St. Gregory Palamas' defense of our Faith in representing the uncreated Light of Christ God. It is the image of the Trinity: One God (represented by a single flame) in Three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (represented by light, heat and energy).

As God, our Savior granted forgiveness of sins to the paralytic of today's Gospel passage, teaching us that forgiveness is the expression of God's infinite love. While the physical malady of the paralytic was used by our Lord to illustrate His divinity and His authority to forgive sins, let us remember that spiritual paralysis is symbolized by a candle that is not lit and gives no light.

As God loves us, we are to love one another by forgiving one another, thereby living a God-centered way of life. Such a life begins with the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. Our baptismal candle signifies that we are the "light" of the world. This candle is also our Easter candle; our wedding candles; the candles that we light upon entering church.

Our baptismal candles will be aflame as we celebrate of our Lord's Resurrection. As a prelude to this celebration, we now see this candle during Great Lent in the celebration of the Presanctified Liturgy as the priest exclaims: "The Light of Christ, enlightens all!"

+FR. THEODORE

BIBLE STUDY –Tuesday March 31, 2021 - 10:00 a.m.

Please note: This Bible Study class will take place in-person outside on the patio outside our parish hall and will not be presented in a "zoom format."

The passage that we will be studying is:

Hebrews 4: 14-5:6

ICONS FOR HOMES:

Before leaving our parish to be with her family in New Jersey, **Matushka Gloria** donated a number of icons for our parishioners to have for their homes. Please feel free to visit our "icon display" following today's Church services and take an icon for your home at no charge. If so inclined, a donation of any amount is acceptable.



"Shine within our hearts, loving Master, the pure light of Your divine knowledge and open the eyes of our minds that we may comprehend the message of Your Gospel. Instill in us, also, reverence for Your blessed commandments, so that having conquered sinful desires, we may pursue a spiritual life, thinking and doing all these things that are pleasing to You. For You are the Light of our souls and bodies and to You we give glory together with Your Father Who is without beginning and Your all-holy, good, and life-giving Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen"

EPISTLE—Hebrews 1:10-14; 2:1-3

"In the beginning, Thou, Lord, didst found the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of thy hands; they will perish, but thou remainest; they will all grow old like a garment, like a mantle thou wilt roll them up, and they will be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years will never end." But to what angel has he ever said, "Sit at my right hand, till I make thy enemies a stool for thy feet?" Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation? Therefore we must pay closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For if the message declared by angels was valid and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him.

GOSPEL—St. Mark 2:1-12

At that time, Jesus entered Capernaum and it was reported that he was at home. And many were gathered together, so

that there was no longer room for them, not even about the door; and he was preaching the word to them. And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and when they had made an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven." Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, "Why does this man speak thus? It is a blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question thus in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your pallet and walk? But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins"— he said to the paralytic—"I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home." And he rose, and immediately took up the pallet and went out before them all; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Tuesday, March 30th.....Bible Study – 10:00 a.m.

Wednesday, March 31st...PRESANCTIFIED DIVINE LITURGY – 6:00 p.m.

Friday, April 2nd.....PRESANCTIFIED DIVINE LITURGY – 9:00 a.m.

Salutations for the Ever-Virgin Mary (Third Stanza) - 6:00 p.m.

Next Sunday.....THE VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS.