



Saint Gregory Palamas Monastery in Perrysville, Ohio and The Ancient Vatopadi Monastery on Mount Athos, Greece where Saint Gregory spent many years of his life in prayer and study.



Second Sunday of Lent Saint Gregory Palamas

On this second Sunday of Great Lent, we commemorate Saint Gregory Palamas. He was born in 1296. His Christian father, a courtier in Constantinople, died shortly after Gregory's birth. His mother continued to make sure that Gregory and his brothers and sisters were brought up as Christians.

Most people do not realize that we, in the Ohio Valley, have a local connection to this Saint. Just a couple hours' drive from here, in Perrysville, Ohio, is a Greek Orthodox Monastery dedicated to the mission of Saint Gregory Palamas. The Greek Orthodox Church of the Life-Giving Fountain in Martins Ferry, OH is blessed to have Hieromonk Michael, a priest from this monastery, serving there as parish priest.

At age 20, Saint Gregory left for Mount Athos, commonly called "The Holy Mountain." Many very ancient monasteries dot the Holy Mountain. Saint Gregory studied and prayed, and after many years of spiritual preparation, he was ordained a priest. Eventually, against his desires, he was ordained Archbishop. During this time, certain people had been led astray by the heretic Barlaam to abandon the teachings of the Apostles and early Christian Fathers. Important foundational doctrines, such as the Incarnation of Christ; and God being Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God, were distorted. This threat to Christ's Church spread throughout the Christian world. Saint Gregory's many years in prayer and study, as well as his fervent faith in God, prepared him for this very moment in time. He defended the Faith against the enemies of God, who were waging a fierce war against the Church of Christ and the Faith that had been taught from the very beginning.

Saint Gregory traveled from place to place, defending the Faith with wisdom and humility, restoring many to the Faith. While he was traveling, he was captured by the Turks. He was then "compelled to travel from place to place, and sold from city to city." (Synaxarion of the Lenten Triodion and Pentecostarion, 2001) This was the will of God, because it enabled him to become a teacher to lands and peoples that had not been accessible to him before.

Saint Gregory is known and remembered for his firm defense of the Faith, and for his devotion to prayer. We learn from Saint Gregory's life the importance of remembering not to neglect prayer. He taught that "... it is the duty of all of us Christians to remain always in prayer." This echoes the words of the Apostle Paul in First Thessalonians 5:17 (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, 2001). In this busy modern life, most of us need to find more time for quiet, stillness and prayer. The Jesus Prayer can help us pray continually in our hearts: "O Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." Saint Gregory also shows us how we can experience God, and grow more and more into the likeness of God.

It continues to be vital for US to know our faith. Many Christian groups, in this day, have become far removed from the original teachings of Christ and the Apostles. In this time, where nearly everyone has access to the internet, it is easy to find the writings of the Early Christian Fathers. A good online resource is the Ethereal Christian Classic Library.

(www.ccel.org)

This Lent, may we all endeavor to spend more time in prayer, and may we strive to learn more about our Christian Faith.