

Hebrews 1:10-2:3 (Epistle)

And: “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,

Mark 2:1-12 (Gospel)

And again He 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!”



Metropolitan Tikhon guest at luncheon honoring Syrian Patriarch Ignatius Aphrem II

On Wednesday, March 1, 2017, His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon was among those invited to a luncheon honoring His Holiness, Patriarch Mor Ignatius Aphrem II of the [Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch](#) at Saint Vartan Armenian Apostolic Cathedral, the headquarters of the [Diocese of the Armenian Church of America \(Eastern\)](#), New York, NY. Hierarchs of the Oriental and Eastern Orthodox Churches were invited to the luncheon, hosted by His Eminence, Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern).

His Holiness was accompanied by His Eminence, Mor Dionysius Jean Kawak, Patriarchal Vicar for the Eastern USA; His Eminence, Mor Teethose Yeldo, Archbishop of the Malankara Archdiocese for Northern America; His Eminence, Archbishop of the Knanaya Regions in Europe and America; the Very Rev. Raban Joseph, Patriarchal Secretary and Media Office Director; the Very Rev. Joseph Chamoun; and Deacon George Kiraz.

Archbishop Khajag welcomed His Holiness and assured him of the support of the Armenian Apostolic Church and all the Orthodox Churches in his mission. He expressed the solidarity and prayers of the heads of the churches present at the gathering.

In response, His Holiness thanked Archbishop Khajag for his support and spoke about the current situation of Christians in the Middle East. He also spoke about the ecumenical role of the churches in the Middle East and their common witness for Christ in their deeds and humanitarian actions in the face of the different crises in Syria and Iraq.

Also attending the luncheon were His Eminence, Geronta Archbishop Demetrios of the [Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America](#); His Eminence, Bishop Irinej of the [Diocese of Eastern America of the Serbian Orthodox Church](#); Archpriest Thomas Zain, who represented His Eminence, Metropolitan Joseph of the [Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America](#); and Protopresbyter Leonid Kishkovsky, Director of [External Affairs](#) for the Orthodox Church in America, who accompanied Metropolitan Tikhon.



Sunday of Orthodoxy Photos

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St Gregory Con't

monastery began to teach the young man the method of unceasing prayer and mental activity, which had been cultivated by monastics, beginning with the great desert ascetics of the fourth century: Evagrius Pontikos and Saint Macarius of Egypt (January 19).

Later on, in the eleventh century Saint Simeon the New Theologian (March 12) provided detailed instruction in mental activity for those praying in an outward manner, and the ascetics of Athos put it into practice. The experienced use of mental prayer (or prayer of the heart), requiring solitude and quiet, is called "Hesychasm" (from the Greek "hesychia" meaning calm, silence), and those practicing it were called "hesychasts."

During his stay at Glossia the future hierarch Gregory became fully imbued with the spirit of hesychasm and adopted it as an essential part of his life. In the year 1326, because of the threat of Turkish invasions, he and the brethren retreated to Thessalonica, where he was then ordained to the holy priesthood.

Saint Gregory combined his priestly duties with the life of a hermit. Five days of the week he spent in silence and prayer, and only on Saturday and Sunday did he come out to his people. He celebrated divine services and preached sermons. For those present in church, his teaching often evoked both tenderness and tears. Sometimes he visited theological gatherings of the city's educated youth, headed by the future patriarch, Isidore. After he returned from a visit to Constantinople, he found a place suitable for solitary life near Thessalonica the region of Bereia. Soon he gathered here a small community of solitary monks and guided it for five years.

In 1331 the saint withdrew to Mt. Athos and lived in solitude at the skete of Saint Sava, near the Lavra of Saint Athanasius. In 1333 he was appointed Igumen of the Esphigmenou monastery in the northern part of the Holy Mountain. In 1336 the saint returned to the skete of Saint Sava, where he devoted himself to theological works, continuing with this until the end of his life.

In the 1330s events took place in the life of the Eastern Church which put Saint Gregory among the most significant universal apologists of Orthodoxy, and brought him great renown as a teacher of hesychasm.

About the year 1330 the learned monk Barlaam had arrived in Constantinople from Calabria, in Italy. He was the author of treatises on logic and astronomy, a skilled and sharp-witted orator, and he received a university chair in the capital city and began to expound on the works of Saint Dionysius the Areopagite (October 3), whose "apophatic" ("negative", in contrast to "kataphatic" or "positive") theology was acclaimed in equal measure in both the Eastern and the Western Churches. Soon Barlaam journeyed to Mt. Athos, where he became acquainted with the spiritual life of the hesychasts.

Saying that it was impossible to know the essence of God, he declared mental prayer a heretical error. Journeying from Mount Athos to Thessalonica, and from there to Constantinople, and later again to Thessalonica, Barlaam entered into disputes with the monks and attempted to demonstrate the created, material nature of the light of Tabor (i.e. at the Transfiguration). He ridiculed the teachings of the monks about the methods of prayer and about the uncreated light seen by the hesychasts.

Saint Gregory, at the request of the Athonite monks, replied with verbal admonitions at first. But seeing the futility of such efforts, he put his theological arguments in writing. Thus appeared the "Triads in Defense of the Holy Hesychasts" (1338). Towards the year 1340 the Athonite ascetics, with the assistance of the saint, compiled a general response to the attacks of Barlaam, the so-called "Hagiorite Tome." At the Constantinople Council of 1341 in the church of Hagia Sophia Saint Gregory Palamas debated with Barlaam, focusing upon the nature of the light of Mount Tabor. On May 27, 1341 the Council accepted the position of Saint Gregory Palamas, that God, unapproachable in His Essence, reveals Himself through His energies, which are directed towards the world and are able to be perceived, like the light of Tabor, but which are neither material nor created. The teachings of Barlaam were condemned as heresy, and he himself was anathemized and fled to Calabria.

But the dispute between the Palamites and the Barlaamites was far from over. To these latter belonged Barlaam's disciple, the Bulgarian monk Akyndinos, and also Patriarch John XIV Kalekos (1341-1347); the emperor Andronicus III Paleologos (1328-1341) was also inclined toward their opinion. Akyndinos, whose name means "one who inflicts no harm," actually caused great harm by his heretical teaching. Akyndinos wrote a series of tracts in which he declared Saint Gregory and the Athonite monks guilty of causing church disorders. The saint, in turn, wrote a detailed refutation of Akyndinos' errors. The patriarch supported Akyndinos and called Saint Gregory the cause of all disorders and disturbances in the Church (1344) and had him locked up in prison for four years. In 1347, when John the XIV was replaced on the patriarchal throne by Isidore (1347-1349), Saint Gregory Palamas was set free and was made Archbishop of Thessalonica.

In 1351 the Council of Blachernae solemnly upheld the Orthodoxy of his teachings. But the people of Thessalonica did not immediately accept Saint Gregory, and he was compelled to live in various places. On one of his travels to Constantinople the Byzantine ship fell into the hands of the Turks. Even in captivity, Saint Gregory preached to Christian prisoners and even to his Moslem captors. The

WISDOM FROM A CHURCH FATHER

People say that it is not a matter of importance if you eat meat during Lent, for Lent does not consist in food; that it is not a matter of importance if you wear costly, fine clothes, frequent theatres, evening parties, masquerades; if you provide yourself with expensive plate, china, furniture, costly equipages, spirited horses; if you amass and hoard money, etc.

But what is it that turns away our heart from God, the Source of life; through what do we lose eternal life? Is it not through gluttony, through expensive dress, like the rich man in the Gospel! Is it not through theatres and masquerades? What is it that makes us hard-hearted to the poor, and even to our own relatives? Is it not our attachment to carnal pleasures in general, to our belly, to dress, plate, furniture, carriages, money, etc.? Can a man serve God and mammon; (Matthew 6:24) be a friend of God and a friend of the world, work for Christ and for the Devil? It is impossible.

Through what did Adam and Eve lose Paradise, through what did they fall into sin and death? Was it not through food alone? Let us consider well what makes us careless about the salvation of our soul, which cost the Son of God so dear; what makes us add one sin to another; what makes us fall continually into opposition against God, into a life of vanity. Is it not attachment to earthly things, and especially to earthly delights? What makes our heart gross? What makes us become flesh, and not spirit, perverting our moral nature? Is it not attachment to food and drink and other earthly goods? How after this can it be said that to eat meat during Lent is unimportant? To say so is nothing but pride, sophism, disobedience, want of submission to God, and estrangement from Him.

~ St. John of Kronstadt ~

St. Gregory cont'd

Hagarenes were astonished by the wisdom of his words. Some of the Moslems were unable to endure this, so they beat him and would have killed him if they had not expected to obtain a large ransom for him. A year later, Saint Gregory was ransomed and returned to Thessalonica.

Saint Gregory performed many miracles in the three years before his death, healing those afflicted with illness. On the eve of his repose, Saint John Chrysostom appeared to him in a vision. With the words "To the heights! To the heights!" Saint Gregory Palamas fell asleep in the Lord on November 14, 1359. In 1368 he was canonized at a Constantinople Council under Patriarch Philotheus (1354-1355, 1364-1376), who compiled the Life and Services to the saint.

STS. PETER & PAUL ORTHODOX CHURCH 85TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

When: Sunday, April 23, 2017, (St. Thomas Sunday) @ 5:00pm / Dinner to be served @ 5:30

Where: Capri Banquets @ 6240 Joliet Rd., Countryside, IL 60525

Price: Adults: \$40 / Teens 13-17: \$30 / Children 5-12: \$15 / Under 5 is free

RSVP: by April 9 (Palm Sunday) to *85th Anniversary Dinner* c/o Deacon & Matushka Kenny, 2805 Yosemite Dr., Aurora, IL 60503

PLEASE SIGN UP IN BACK OF CHURCH IF YOU PLAN TO GO & WE CAN SEND IN THE FORM FOR OUR CHURCH. SEE FR. ANDREW FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.

The following opportunities for special donations are being offered. A portion of the profits will go to benefit the Holy Trinity Building and Restoration Fund.

- THE 85 CLUB: Enjoy a special VIP reception beginning @ 4:00pm for 85 Club & 185 Club members only. Includes hors d'oeuvres, two drink tickets, and recognition in the program. (\$85 per family)
- THE 185 CLUB: Benefits of the 85 Club plus a commemorative icon and two additional drink tickets. (\$185 per family)
- SPONSOR GUEST CLERGY: Sponsor a clergy member's complementary ticket, with recognition in the program. (\$40)

MENU

First Course: Freshly Baked Bread & a Caesar Salad

Second Course: Rigatoni w/ Vodka Sauce / Chicken Vesuvio with garlic, white wine, special seasonings & peas / Homemade Italian Sausage with tri-colored peppers / Vesuvio Potato Wedges / Fresh Green Beans with garlic & oil

Children's Menu: Chicken fingers & fries

Third Course: Tiramisu & Gourmet Anniversary Cupcakes

40 DAYS REMEMBRANCE

March 12: Mat. Juliana Schmemann & William (Navy Seal from Peoria)

March 19: Jack

April 2 Pamela

April 9: Helen Spanovich

Mystery, Beauty and the Jesus Prayer

Priest Richard Rene from Saint Aidan Orthodox Church,
Canada

A friend and fellow pastor recently shared his opinion that the Orthodox Church in Cranbrook exists to offer a testimony to the dimensions of beauty and mystery that are too easily forgotten in post-modern Christianity. I would agree. Dostoevsky once said, "Beauty will save the world." He may well have been speaking of his own Orthodox Christian faith, which places both beauty and mystery at the heart of its spiritual culture and Worship.

What is beauty? It is not primarily a set of standards by which society deems certain things or people more pleasing to eye than others. Beauty, rather, is the glory of God shining in the lives of His children. One of the Church Fathers said, "The glory of God is a human being fully alive." When we live the full, authentic human lives as God created them to be, His glory radiates through us in a way that is unique to each one of us. This radiance is what makes us truly beautiful, regardless of our physical appearance or worldly attributes.

How then do we acquire this beauty in our lives? That's where mystery comes into play. In the Orthodox tradition, mystery has a very specific meaning, which is suggested in Saint Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians: "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the *mystery* of His will, according to His purpose, which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth." The mystery of God is nothing less than the divine-human person of Jesus Christ, who unites all things in heaven and on earth to God in Himself.

By encountering the mystery who is Jesus Christ—by putting on Christ, as Saint Paul puts it—we can become "partakers of divine nature." (2 Peter 1:4) And by participating in His divine life, we enter into His beauty and are reunited with the God who made us for Himself. Dostoevsky's prophecy is fulfilled: beauty does indeed save the world.

In the 6th century A.D., a monk and writer by the name of John Moschos took his disciple Sophronius on a pilgrimage the ancient holy sites of Christianity. Along the way, they visited a monastery in Egypt, located on

the site where Anthony the Great, the founder of monasticism, spent most of his life in a desert cave. They also went to Mount Sinai, where another monastery was built on the site where Moses saw the burning Bush. In making their pilgrimage, the pilgrims' purpose was simple: to discover a practical way to encounter the mystery of Jesus Christ and become partakers of divine nature. In short, they wanted to know how to be saved. The many Christian spiritual elders that they met on their travels testified to a single practice, which began in the early 3rd century and was later called Hesychia—the Way of Inner Stillness. The practice of Hescychia, according to the elders, involves sitting or standing in a quiet corner, focusing all of your attention on your heartbeat and repeating with attention a single short prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me."

John and Sophronius discovered that this simple prayer—called "the Jesus Prayer"—is in fact the heart of ancient Christian spirituality. To this day, Hescychia remains the most important spiritual practice of the Orthodox Church. The essence of the Jesus Prayer consists in the word "mercy," which in Orthodox tradition connotes healing and wholeness, rather than pardon or clemency. Daily, moment by moment and heartbeat by heartbeat, we call on Jesus Christ to heal us, binding up the self-inflicted, deadly wounds of sin, and reuniting us with God in love and joy. To invoke Dostoevsky's idea again, Hescychia allows us to call upon beauty—the glory of God revealed in Jesus Christ—to save us by restoring us to the true humanity for which we were created.

A recent documentary by Dr. Norris Chumley and Rev. Dr. John McGuckin entitled *Mysteries of the Jesus Prayer* (www.mysteriesofthejesusprayer.com) retraces the steps of those 6th century Christian pilgrims, taking us to the sites they visited, which still function as places of inner stillness today. If you have not had the opportunity to view this remarkable film, I invite you to do so. You will rediscover a two thousand year old secret, a hidden wisdom which speaks to us today with a fresh urgency, showing us how to find true beauty in a time of desolation and destruction; how to find inner peace in a time of conflict and hatred; and how to be reunited with God and each other in a time of alienation and division.