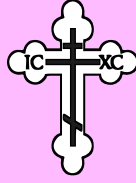


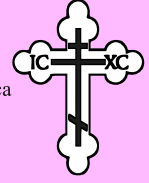


St. Basil the Great Orthodox Church

205 Highland Avenue
Des Peres, MO 63122



A parish of the Diocese of Chicago and Mid-America
Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia



V. Rev. Fr. Martin Swanson, Pastor
Fr. Sergii Alekseev, Associate Pastor
V. Rev. Fr. Radomir Chkautovich, Attached

March 2018

The Pure in Heart Shall See God: On St. Gregory Palamas

by Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit!

On the second Sunday of Great Lent the memory of St. Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica, is celebrated. Archbishop Gregory was an enlightened man and a remarkable theologian who had experience of the monastic life on Mount Athos. In the distant fourteenth century he distinguished himself as an especially penetrating spiritual thinker. In his works he defended the Divine Light of Tabor, asserting that the light Christ manifest to the disciples on Tabor was not an ordinary light, as some thought, but a visible manifestation of Divine energy, of Divine grace.

Why do we remember St. Gregory specifically during Great Lent? Because he reached his penetrating conclusions not on the basis of book learning, but on the basis of real spiritual experience – both his own and that of many other monks, anchorites on Mount Athos, who through fasting, solitude, and prayer overcame their passions and vices, thereby uncovering the path of Divine knowledge and becoming so imbued with the power of the Divine presence in their lives that it rested upon them visibly. Very many of these solitary Elders and ascetics indeed shone with light, as if repeating that which took place on Mount Tabor. It is no accident that this amazing spiritual phenomenon, which in theology received the name of Hesychasm, is remembered during Great Lent. The example of St. Gregory, Archbishop of Thessalonica, along with the example of many other ascetics of that time, and of other times, helps us to understand the meaning of fasting.

Fasting is a real opportunity and means to defeat sin, to destroy

vices and passions, and to make our hearts pure. We know from the Gospel that only the pure in heart shall see God (cf. Matthew 5:8). Today we should think about how fasting is the most direct and best way to overcome sin, to purify the heart, and therefore to see God. Fasting is a means towards knowledge of God. A multitude of people has travelled this path. When someone encounters God, when he feels the presence of His energy and His grace in his life, then how he wishes to safeguard this grace! It is no accident that, in the distant fourth century, monasticism arose as a withdrawal from life – not because of some strange people who were incapable of living socially, but because those who had had tangible experience of God through the struggle of prayer, fasting, and abstinence wanted to retain this state by all means. It is impossible to compare this spiritual condition with any kind of human joy – they are incommensurable. Man's contact with God puts him in touch with heaven, with the Kingdom of God, with unearthly joy. Already in the fourth century people understood that there is much in this world – with its vanity, problems, and false goals – that prevents one from safeguarding the Divine energy. They began to leave the world, to settle in the desert, thereby making a strange impression on very many people. But those who came into contact with the monastic life understood how much this experience helps retain grace in the heart.

Exactly one thousand years later, in the fourteenth century, the powerful spiritual movement of Hesychasm arose in Byzantium and St. Gregory became a remarkable exponent of this spiritual and mystical tradition. What does this have to do with the Divine Light of Tabor? The point is that Divine grace becomes visible. Each of us has had occasion in life to meet luminous people. You look into the face of such a person and you see light. We want to be near this luminous person, to be nourished by this energy, by this rich inner world belonging to him. But we also know about (continued on page 5)

Special Services & Events for March

3/2 Fri. 6:00 p.m. Pre-sanctified Liturgy
3/3 Sat. 4:00 p.m. Memorial Saturday-Pannyhida
3/7 Wed. 8:00 a.m. Pre-sanctified Liturgy
3/9 Fri. 6:00 p.m. Pre-sanctified Liturgy
3/10 Sat. 4:00 p.m. Memorial Saturday-Pannyhida
3/16 Fri. 6:00 p.m. Pre-sanctified Liturgy

3/17 Sat. 4:00 p.m. Memorial Saturday—Pannyhida
3/21 Wed. 8:00 a.m. Pre-sanctified Liturgy
3/21 Wed. 1:00 p.m. Kursk Root Icon at St. Basil's for private veneration
6:00 p.m. Matins and Canon of St. Andrew of Crete
3/23 Fri. 1:00 p.m. Kursk Root Icon at St. Basil's for private veneration
6:00 p.m. Matins & Akathist to the Theotokos
3/28 Wed. 8:00 a.m. Pre-sanctified Liturgy
3/30 Fri. 6:00 a.m. Vigil for Lazarus Saturday
3/31 Sat. 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy for Lazarus Saturday

St. Basil the Great Orthodox Church

St. Louis, MO

Parish News

Wonderworking Kursk Root Icon of the Mother of God will Visit Our Parish

With the blessing of His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion and His Eminence Archbishop Peter the wonderworking Kursk Root Icon of the Mother of God will visit the Diocese of Chicago & Mid-America from February 28, 2018 to April 1, 2018 and from April 10-25, 2018. The icon of the Most-Holy Theotokos will be in our temple on March 21 and March 23 from 1 P.M. till 8 P.M. This is a great blessing for our parish, and doubly so given that the icon is visiting us during the spiritually significant time of Great Lent.

Extraordinary Parish Meeting

An extraordinary parish meeting to be held on 3/4/2018 immediately following the Sunday Divine Liturgy of that day. The purpose of the meeting is to amend the parish By-laws in order to allow the parish to participate in the Diocesan group tax exemption. The meeting will be limited to discussion and a vote on the adoption of this amendment and no other business will be introduced.

The text of the paragraph (56) to be replaced is:

“The closing of the parish can take place only subject to the method set forth in Par. 54 of the By-laws, while the entire personal and real estate of the parish shall be turned over to the direct management and disposition of the Diocesan Authorities as per the direction of the ruling Bishop.”

The new text of paragraph 56 to replace the previous version above is:

“The closing of the parish can take place only subject to the method set forth in Par, 54 of these By-laws. The assets of the parish shall be distributed to the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, Diocese of Chicago & Mid-America or its successor organization, provided that the Diocese is and remains organized exclusively for charitable, religious education, and scientific purposes, including, for such purposes, the making of distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations described under Section 501 (C)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code. If assets cannot be distributed to the Diocese or its successor organization, then assets shall be distributed to the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, or its successor organization provided that said organization is organized for exempt purposes within the meaning of Section 501 (C) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code. If the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, or its successor organization no longer exists, then assets shall be distributed to any Eastern Orthodox Christian organization which is

organized for exempt purposes within the meaning of Section 501 (C) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future code. If no such organizations exist, then assets shall be distributed to any not-for-profit institution which is organized exclusively for charitable, religious education and scientific purposes, including, for such purposes, the making of distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations described under Section 501 (C) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future code, provided those purposes are not opposed to the moral, theological, and dogmatic tradition of the Russian Orthodox faith, and for a public purpose. Any such assets not disposed of shall be disposed of by a court of competent jurisdiction in the county in which the principal office of the organization is then located exclusively for such purposes or to such organization or organizations, as said Court shall determine, which are organized and operated for such purposes.”

Work Party on Saturday, March 17

The Grounds Chairman has scheduled a work party on Saturday March 17 beginning at 9:00 am. The work will be comprised of cleaning the church grounds and preparing it for the warm months ahead. Come when you can.

Parish Prayer List

Fr. Martin (Health)
Reader Gennady Barabtarlo (Health)
Boris Artemov (Health)
Archimandrite Seraphim of Holy Cross Hermitage (Health)
Carolyn Orlando—Health

Keep our parishioners, and those who ask us to pray for them in your prayers this month. Contact Fr. Martin to have yourself or your loved ones added to the parish prayer list. Let one of the Fathers know if you, a member of your family, or a friend is ill or hospitalized so that appropriate prayers and visits can be arranged. Please note: Hospitals don't notify clergy of patients, even if you list yourself as a parish member.

Contact Your Priest if You are Ill or Hospitalized

Contact Fr. Martin to have yourself or your loved ones added to the parish prayer list. Let one of the Fathers know if you, a member of your family, or a friend is ill or hospitalized so that appropriate prayers and visits can be arranged. Please note: Hospitals don't notify clergy of patients, even if you list yourself as a parish member.

USE eSCRIP

It costs \$0 and benefits the parish. Get Cards at the candle counter. Sign up for the AMAZON rebate program to have a

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St. Louis, MO

Kursk Root Icon

portion of you Amazon purchase donated by them to the parish. Please find sign up instructions next to the stair case in the hall.

SERVERS WANTED!

Boys may begin to serve in the altar at St. Basil's from the time they begin to go to Confession (usually about 9 years old). We encourage all our boys to serve in the altar! For more

information please contact Michael Orlando.

St. Basil's Parish Facebook Page:

www.facebook.com/StBasiltheGreatSTLMO

For daily edification and updates of interest, like our Facebook Fanpage! Parishioner Ron Wall brings the best of Orthodoxy to us there everyday! "Like" us to appear in your FB Newsfeed



where the chapel had stood. After a long search, while praying and fasting, he found both halves of the holy Icon, placed them side by side, and they grew together seamlessly, exhibiting only something "like dew".

In 1676 the holy Icon traveled to the Don River for blessing the Don Cossack troops. In 1684 Tsars Ivan and Petr Alekseev sent a copy of this Icon with the order that it accompany Orthodox troops into battle. In 1689 copies of the holy Icon were given to the armies in the Crimean campaign. In 1812 a copy of the holy Icon was sent to Prince Kutuzov and his troops fighting against Napoleon. Before this icon Venerable Seraphim of Sarov prayed and was healed.

Short History of the Kursk Root Icon

On September 8/21, 1295, on the day of the Nativity of the Most-Holy Mother of God, a group of men were hunting not far from Kursk. One of the hunters, an honorable and pious man, found a small icon lying face down on the root of a tree. He had barely lifted it to inspect it when the spot upon which the icon lay burst out with a strong spring of pure water. The icon turned out to be of the type referred to as the "Sign" of the Mother of God. The hunter who found the icon knew that this was no ordinary occurrence. He called his companions and together they built a small wooden chapel, into which they placed this icon. The local residents, hearing of the newly-appeared icon of the Mother of God, began to visit it for veneration, and many miracles began to appear from it.

In 1385 the Tatars on one of their slave-hunting raids were in the Kursk region. They tried to burn down the chapel and its Icon, but the wooden structure would not burn. The priest who lived by the chapel, Fr. Bogolep, explained to them that the reason for this miracle was the Icon itself. The incensed Tatars hacked the Icon in half and tossed the pieces in different directions, then burned the chapel and took Bogolep as a slave.

Some time later he was ransomed and returned to the place

On the night of 7-8 March, 1898, conspirator revolutionaries-atheists tried to blow up the Wonderworking Icon with a hellish bomb, but the Lord Jesus Christ glorified His Most-Pure Mother yet more, for despite the terrifying destruction in the cathedral surrounding the Icon, it remained untouched.

On 12 April 1918, the holy Icon was stolen from the cathedral of the Monastery of the Sign of the Mother of God and stripped of its ornamentation, but on 2 May it was found and returned to its place.

In 1919, the holy Icon was brought to the neighborly Serbia. In 1920 it again, at the behest of General Wrangel, visited Russia at the Crimea and remained there until the final evacuation of the Russian Army in the first days of November of 1920. The holy Icon returned to Serbia, where it remained until 1944, when, together with the Synod of Bishops, it went abroad, to Munich (Bavaria) with Metropolitan Anastassy. In 1951 Metropolitan Anastassy moved from Munich to America. Since 1957 the Icon had resided in the main cathedral dedicated to it in the Synod of Bishops in New York. The holy Icon regularly travels to all the dioceses of the Russian diaspora and, since reunification of the Moscow Patriarchate and the Russian Church Abroad, to Russia.

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May Their Memory be Eternal!



Ludmila, Vera, Nadezhda, Irina, Vera

St George's cathedral in the city of Kizlyar in the Dagestan region of Russia. Afternoon of the Forgiveness Sunday. As people (mostly women, mothers with children, the elderly) – at the time there were about 500 – leave the temple after the conclusion of the Vespers with the rite of forgiveness, a man with a hunting rifle in his hands appears in front of the cathedral and yelling “Allah akbar! We are going to cut you Russians as pigs” begins shooting.

A beggar woman Irina ran to the man, started beating him with her handbag and received a bullet in her chest. When she fell on the ground, Cossack Sergei who stood in a distance, began shouting to the murderer: “Shoot me, coward!”. The man with

the rifle turned to Sergei and began shooting at him but he missed. This diversion gave time to the people to run back into the cathedral and shut the doors. Soon arrived law enforcement officers and silenced the murderer and his rifle.

Although we have grown accustomed to reading such news, every new tragedy echoes with pain throughout the Christian world. Now it strikes in our midst. We too were at the rite of forgiveness on Forgiveness Sunday. We too asked for forgiveness from one another and we went home. Five women in Kizlyar went to home to Heavenly Kingdom. Their names are Ludmila, Vera, Nadezhda, Irina and Vera.

May their memory be eternal!



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Lenten Homilies for March

(continued from page 1) other faces: when, looking into someone's face, you see hellfire; when a single look at someone's face causes a feeling of confusion, and sometimes even of horror. Just as Paradise and God's grace are reflected in someone's person in a visible manner, so too are hell and demonic power displayed outwardly. Would we believe someone with hellfire in his eyes? We would want to run away from him!

Sometimes we find it difficult to understand people. This can be especially difficult in youth: when young people seek to get married, how difficult it can be to understand another person! One needs to learn how to read people by their eyes, by their faces; but in order to do this one needs to be pure oneself. If the pure in heart shall see God, then the pure in heart shall see God in others – just as they also feel an absolute incompatibility in another person. We sometimes try to find some kind of wisdom, some kind of ability to establish proper relations with people – business, official, or personal. In fact, this is all simple, because God's law is simple: the pure in heart shall see God, period. No more philosophical constructs are needed – everything is clear and understandable. Fasting means working on oneself in order to acquire this purity; it is the spiritual effort of washing oneself from defilement. Why did holy people go into the desert, to Mount Athos, into reclusion? In order to safeguard this spiritual condition of purity and the joy of the Divine presence – because this is not

only a perfectly special, incomparable condition on an emotional level, but a state that gives one strength, for after having come into contact with God's majesty, everything human becomes insignificant.

We need to be able to see people in order to establish proper relations, especially in order to avoid evil people and not to trust people who are capable of laughing at our trust and trampling upon our souls. We often need inner strength so that external circumstances not remove us from the life path that God has called us to follow. We need wisdom and strength, both everyone individually and society as a whole. We can overcome all difficulties and construct a good, just, and flourishing life only when we have within ourselves an unerring criterion of discerning good and evil as well as the inner strength and ability to serve good and resist evil.

It is no accident that we speak of this during Great Lent. When else will we give thought to the soul, if not during these holy days? May the contemplation of our inner life, prayer, abstinence, and the small but real ascetic struggle that we have taken upon ourselves help us to cleanse our hearts! Then perhaps, as if through a small opening, we shall see, if not God, then God's light. And, in the rays of this light, we will be able to see truth and falsehood, to distinguish good from evil, and to live according to God's law. Amen. (from www.pravmir.com)

Sunday of St. John of the Ladder (March 5/18)

by Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh

In the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Lent is a time of repentance, a time when our heart of stone must be made by the power of God into a heart of flesh, from insensitive to perceptive, from cold and hard to warm and open to others—and indeed, to God Himself.

Lent is a time of renewal when like spring, everything become new again; when our life that had gone into a twilight becomes alive with all the intensity that God can communicate to us, humans, by making us partakers of His Holy Spirit, by making us partakers, through the Holy Sacraments and the direct gift of God, of the Divine nature.

It is a time of reconciliation, and reconciliation is a joy: it is God's joy, and it is our joy; it is a new beginning.

Today is the day of Saint John of the Ladder, and I want to read to you a few phrases of his that are relevant to the particular time of the year in which we live:

“Repentance, that is, our return to God, is renewal of our baptism; it is our effort to renew our covenant with God, our promise to change our life. It is a time when we can acquire humility, which is peace—peace with God, peace with ourselves, peace with the whole created world. Repentance is born of hope and rejection of despair. One who repents is one who deserves condemnation—and yet goes away from the tribunal without shame, because repentance is our peace with God. And this is achieved through a worthy life, alien to the sins we committed in the past. Repentance is cleansing of our conscience. Repentance implies carrying off all sadness and pain.”[1]

And if we ask ourselves how we can achieve it, how we can come to this, how we can respond to God Who receives us as the father received the prodigal son, a God Who has waited for us longingly, Who though rejected never turned away from us. How can we respond to Him? Here is a short word about prayer:

“Don't use in prayer falsely wise words; because it is often the simple and uncomplicated whispering of children that rejoices our heavenly Father. Don't try to say much when you speak to God, because otherwise your mind in search of words will be

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lost in them. One word spoken by the publican brought Divine mercy upon him; one word filled with faith saved the thief on the cross. The use of the multiplicity of words when we pray disperses our mind and fills it with imaginations. One word spoken to God collects the mind in His presence. And if a word, in your prayer, reaches you deeply, if you perceive it profoundly dwell in it, because at such moments our Angel guardian prays with us because we are true to ourselves and to God.”

Let us remember what Saint John of the Ladder says, even if you forget the short comments (which I introduced) to make his text more readily understandable. Let us remember his words because he was a man who knew what it means to turn

to God, to stay with God, to be God’s joy and to rejoice in Him. He is offered to us in this time when we are ascending towards the days of the Passion; he is offered us as an example of what Divine grace can do to transform an ordinary, simple human being into a light to the world.

Let us learn from him, let us follow his example, let us rejoice in what God can do by His power in a human being, and let us confidently, with faith, with an exulting and yet serene joy follow his advice, listen to God begging us to find a way of life and telling us that with Him, in Him we will be alive—because He is the Truth but also the Way, and Life eternal. Amen.
(from orthochristian.com)

Learning Resolve From St. Mary of Egypt

by Archpriest Alexander Iliashenko

(On 5th Sunday of Lent) we celebrate the memory of one of the greatest saints known to the history of the Church: Mary of Egypt. She spent her life not as an ordinary person, but as a highly spiritual one, as an angel in the flesh. Her life was beyond our comprehension: how can someone live for forty-seven years in the desert, perfectly alone and in silence, enduring terrible demonic temptations and the horror of death? The only kind of person who could take on such an ascetic struggle is one who loved Christ with all her being and was prepared to renounce even her natural human needs. And the Lord, beholding this extraordinary resolve, this extraordinary love, granted her everything needful. We do not understand how, spending forty-seven years in the desert, she did not perish from hunger, thirst, or disease. But the Lord strengthened her in this ascetic struggle by His grace-filled power.

St. Seraphim of Sarov was asked: “How do our times differ from those of the first Christians?” St. Seraphim replied that we do not share their resolve to follow Christ everywhere and at all times, to be with Him alone until the end. Here Mary of Egypt, embarking on this path after the most terrible fall that can be committed, rose to unattainable heights.

Today’s Gospel reading is about how Simon the Pharisee invited Jesus Christ to be his guest [Luke 7:36-50; reading for St. Mary]. When a sinful woman heard that the Savior had taken His place at table in Simon’s house, she brought a vessel with precious myrrh. Weeping, she washed His feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. She anointed His feet with the precious myrrh that was traditionally used in worship for anointing the head. She saw and understood Who was before her. But Simon and the others began to murmur: How can He allow a sinful woman to touch Him? But the Lord said: Why do you upbraid her, when you yourselves have not observed

the elementary rules of hospitality? You have not washed your Guest’s feet to ease the heat and you have not anointed His head with ointment, but she has anointed My feet therewith. Since she loved much, her many sins are forgiven.

It was the same with Mary of Egypt: she so loved the Lord that He not only forgave her terrible and innumerable sins, but raised her to the heights of holiness. Like the Lord, she walked on water by God’s power. Also like the Lord – Who loves everyone and all of humanity, Who cares for each one of us, Who strives to grant everything that is needful for salvation – she prayed for the entire world. It is said that the world coheres by the prayers of the righteous. And indeed, there are men of prayer who pray not only for those closest to them, but for everyone. They pray in such a way that they are ready to sacrifice everything, that the Lord might have mercy on us and save us. They put all their strength into prayerful entreaty for our sinful world. We differ from these saints in that we do not have that resolve, that love and selflessness, which the Holy Venerable Mary of Egypt expressed so clearly.

In these remaining days of Lent, let us try to make an effort to make up for what we have not managed to accomplish in the days of the fast that have gone by. Only one week is left before Holy Week begins. Each of us should resolutely battle against and defeat his sins: if you have quarreled, then do not quarrel; if you have judged, then do not judge – but if you do judge, then repent immediately; if you have been disobedient, then be obedient, obliging, and solicitous; if you have been offended, then do not take offence. Put all your effort into overcoming those sins from which we, and those around us, suffer so much. May God grant that, through the prayers of the Holy Venerable Mary of Egypt, the Lord might strengthen us in spiritual warfare! The Gospel reading concludes with these words: Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace (Luke 7: 50). May God grant that we be strengthened so that our faith might be saving! Amen. (from www.pravmir.com)