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Saint Nestor

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"I am the Resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live." (John 11: 25)



"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me will not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." (John 8: 12)

The Prodigal Son: True Humility

Gospel Reading

Then He said: 'A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me. ' So he divided to them his livelihood. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. But when he had spent all there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything.

"But when he came to himself, he said, How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, 'rather, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants. ' " And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, rather, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son. ' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found. 'And they began to be merry.

"Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the

fatted calf.' But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.' And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.'"

(Luke 15:11-32)



This Gospel contains what I think is the greatest story ever to be told. From all of the Lord's parables, the best known is perhaps that of the prodigal son. We hear it every year, and every year I am amazed at the wisdom of our Lord Jesus and at the great depth that is to be found in this story. It constitutes the second Sunday Gospel lesson of the *Triodion* (the Lenten Service Book), and its message is one theme of the Great Fast: when one of God's children leaves Him for something else, but no matter how far he strays, if he returns penitent, God will receive him with open arms.

The first line that strikes me is found towards the beginning: "he came to himself." Here is the prodigal son, a son who has been raised in luxury and has had everything he could want a son whose father was so gracious that he gave him half of his living.

I can remember when I was about sixteen I read this and I thought it sounded good to get half of my dad's wealth. I went and asked him if he would be like the father in the parable and split the inheritance, because I had things I wanted to buy - chiefly a new car. He looked at me like I was crazy and said, "You don't

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get it until I die, so forget it."

In the story we see this father, who has such grace and love that while he is living he gives the inheritance to the son. The son then goes out and has everything that he could need, and yet eventually he finds himself feeding pigs, so hungry that he is jealous of the food the pigs are eating. And then, "he came to himself."

It is the great mystery of humanity how we can be in the pigsty, sloshing around with the pigs and feeding them and jealous of what they have, and still we do not come to ourselves. What is striking to me is not that he realized where he was; it is that he was so deceived that he ended up in the pigsty, and only later did he come to himself

We too can be so deceived by Satan and by ourselves that we cannot even see the pigsty we are living in. How is it that some wake up and see the filth that surrounds them, and the emptiness of their lives, and others do not see?

Jesus does not answer this question; He simply tells us that the prodigal son came to himself. He came to himself by remembering what real life was like. Deep in his consciousness there was a memory that he had pushed away and forgotten: the memory of life with his father. He could not push that memory away forever; it came back, and he awoke and came to himself

We know that memory – it's a memory that all human beings have. The Fathers tell us that deep within our souls there is the memory of Paradise, of life in the Garden with God. We try to run from that memory, to push it away, but in the darkness of our own despair, the memory comes and speaks to us.

I remember the moment when I awoke, when I came to myself and realized the emptiness of my life. I remembered in the depth of my soul what humanity once enjoyed. I remembered what it was like for man to be in communion with God, and I arose and went to my Father and said, "I have sinned, I am not worthy to be called Your son, make me as one of Your hired servants."

There is another mystery in this parable. The parable ends with the prodigal son at the banquet. Many of us have experienced this in our lives. We remember when we came and the Father met us with open arms

and invited us to the heavenly banquet. But if you're like me, the story does not end with the heavenly banquet.

The great tragedy of my life is that I have not been a prodigal only once, but over and over again. I come to my Father in my despair and my emptiness, in those moments of existential awareness that I am nothing, that I have nothing, and that I am in need of God. I come and weep before Him and say, "Father, I need you," and He meets me and fills me with His goodness and kills for me the fatted calf and divides His inheritance and gives it to me. And I am clothed, I take the wealth, and I go out and squander it again.

Maybe I'm smarter now, and I don't squander it in the same way that I did last time. But the mystery of my life is my ability to always invent new ways to squander wealth. We know this on a material level, we can cut up our credit cards and still go into debt. We can get new credit cards. We have an amazing ability to squander what God has given us.

Every year when this Sunday comes, I'm such a terrible sinner that I come to it thinking, "I'm so glad that we're coming to the Sunday of the Prodigal Son, because there are a few people in my church that I hope realise how prodigal they are." I always think that this year maybe this Prodigal Son Sunday will not be for me.

But in the course of my reflections every year, I see that this Sunday is for me, that I have

invented a new way of squandering the richness and the wealth that God has given me, that I have been in the pigsty and have not even known it. I have been in this pigsty, looking around and seeing all the pigsties that everyone else is in and telling myself that my pigsty isn't nearly as bad as everybody else's pigsty. I used to do that when my father complained about my dirty room. I would tell him that my brother's room was far dirtier, that he should get my brother to clean up before he bothered with my almost perfectly clean room. My father would look at me and say, "This room is as much a pigsty as your brother's - clean it up!"

Every year, God comes to me and says, "Your life is as much a pigsty as everyone else's. I'm speaking to



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you - not to that other person, but to you. *You* have squandered, *you* must repent, and *you* must come home."

That's what Lent is all about - getting our eyes back on ourselves. We are so good at fixing everybody's life except our own. We are so good at seeing the filth in everyone else's life, and we become so used to the stench of our own that we don't notice it.

I am the prodigal son. I have squandered the riches and the wealth that God has given to me. I am in the pigsty. And I am not worthy to be called the son of God. Until we can say those words in honesty and sincerity, we have not begun to repent. We must see that we all are far from God, that we have strayed and wandered and we must return to God.

I love the words of Jesus to the church of Ephesus in the Book of Revelation: "Remember from whence you have fallen, and repent and return" (Rev. 2:5). Remember: deep in your soul is the memory of communion with God. Let that memory consume you. Long only for God and for a relationship with God that is living and active. Long only to be received by God, to feed at His heavenly banquet.

The reflection on the Gospel lesson provided by the hymns and verses for the Sunday of the Prodigal Son emphasises points that every Orthodox Christian must take to heart. In almost every line of the liturgical texts, the expressions of the prodigal's conviction of sin, his decision to return to his father, and the spirit in which he returned are put into the worshiper's mouth. As children often do not realise what a great debt they owe to their parents - their birth, their nurture, their training, their knowledge, their health and many other things - so to as human beings we often think nothing of all

owed to God, Who has brought us into being, crowned us with glory and honour, endowed us with talents and abilities and brought us to adulthood by His Providence.

Also often, without physically going anywhere, we leave God in our minds and hearts, we forget Him and become ungrateful children. Some leave His Church, which is the most concrete evidence of His care. We put a distance - if only spiritually, between It and ourselves, sometimes finding some cheap substitute, some-

times abandoning all Its teachings and adopting a wholly ungodly way of life.

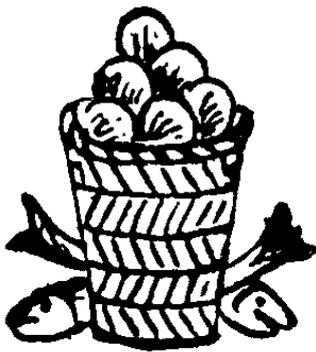
Thereby we can all identify ourselves with the son who strayed and recognise that we too in our own ways have squandered our gifts and rejected the Giver.



(Source: *Journey to the Kingdom* by Fr. John Mack, Published by Conciliar Press, California, U.S.A, 2001.)

" . . . But by Prayer and Fasting "

There is no Lent without fasting. It seems, however, that many people today either do not take fasting seriously or, if they do, misunderstand its real spiritual goals. For some people, fasting consists in a symbolic "giving up" of something; for some others, it is an observance of dietary regulations. But in both cases, seldom is fasting referred to the total lenten effort. Here as elsewhere, therefore, we must first try to understand the Church's teaching about fasting and then ask ourselves: how can we apply this teaching to our life?



Fasting or abstinence from food is not exclusively a Christian practice. It existed and still exists in other religions and even outside religion. Today people fast (or abstain) for all kinds of reasons. It is important, therefore, to discern the uniquely Christian content of fasting. It is first of all revealed to us in the

interdependence between two events which we find in the Bible: one at the beginning of the Old Testament and the other at the beginning of the New Testament. The first event is the "breaking of the fast" by Adam in Paradise. He ate of the forbidden fruit. This is how man's original sin is revealed to us.

Now Christ is the New Adam—and this is the second event—begins by fasting. Adam was tempted and he succumbed to temptation; Christ was tempted and He overcame temptation. The results of Adam's failure are expulsion from Paradise and death. The fruits of Christ's victory are the destruction of death and our return to Paradise. It is clear, however, that in this perspective fasting is revealed to us as something decisive and ultimate in its importance. It is not a mere "obligation," a custom; it is connected with the very mystery of life and death, of salvation and damnation.

In the Orthodox teaching, sin is not only the transgression of a rule leading to punishment; it is always a mutilation of life given to us by God. It is for this reason that the story of the original sin is presented to us as an act of eating. For food is means of life; it is that which keeps us alive. But here lies the whole question: what does it mean to be alive and what does "life"

mean? For us today this term has a primarily biological meaning: life is precisely that which entirely depends on food, and more generally, on the physical world. But for the Holy Scripture and for Christian Tradition, this life "by bread alone" is identified with death because it is mortal life.

God, we are told, "created no death." He is the Giver of Life. How then did life become mortal? Why is death and death alone the only absolute condition of that which exists? The Church answers: because man rejected life as it was offered and given to him by God and preferred a life depending not on God alone but on "bread alone." Not only did he disobey God for which he was punished; he changed the very relationship between himself and the world. To be sure, the world was given to him by God as "food," as means of life; yet life was meant to be communion with God; it had not only its end but its full content in Him. "In Him was Life and the Life was the light of man." The world and food were thus created as means of communion with God, and only if accepted for God's sake were to give life. In itself food has no life and cannot give life. Only God has Life and is Life. In food itself God—and not calories—was the principle of life.

Thus to eat, to be alive, to know God and be in communion with Him were one and the same thing. The unfathomable tragedy of Adam is that he ate for its own sake. More than that, he ate "apart" from God in order to be independent of Him. And if he did it, it is because he believed that food had life in itself and that he, by partaking of that food, could be like God, i.e., have life in himself. To put it very simply: he *believed in food*, whereas the only object of belief, of faith, of dependence is God and God alone. Worldly/physical, food, became his god, the source and principle of his life.

Adam in Hebrew means "man." Man is still Adam, still the slave of "food." He may claim that he believes in God but God is not his life, his food and the all-embracing content of his existence. He may claim that he receives his life from God but he doesn't live in God and for God. His science, his experience, his self-consciousness are all built on that same principle: "by bread alone." We eat in order to be alive but we are not alive in God. This is the sin of all sins and a verdict of death.

Christ is the New Adam. He comes to repair the damage inflicted on life by Adam, to restore man to true life and thus He also begins with fasting. "When

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He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He became hungry" (Matt. 4:2).

Hunger is that state in which we realise our dependence on something else (when we urgently and essentially need food) showing thus that we have no life in ourselves.

It is now the time when we face the ultimate question: on what does my life depend? It is also the time of temptation. Satan came to Adam in Paradise; he came to Christ in the desert. He came to two hungry men and said: eat, for your hunger is the proof that you depend entirely on food, that your life is in food. And Adam believed and ate; but Christ rejected that temptation and said: man shall not live by bread alone but by God. He refused to accept this lie and by doing so, Christ restored that relationship between food, life and God which Adam broke, and which we still break every day.

What then is fasting for us Christians? It is our entrance and participation in that experience of Christ Himself by which He liberates us from the total dependence on food, matter and the world. By no means is our liberation a full one. Living still in the fallen world, in the world of the Old Adam, being part of it, we still depend on food. But just as our death, through which we still must pass, has become by virtue of Christ's Death a passage into life, the food we eat and the life it sustains can be life in God and for God. Part of our food has already become "food of immortality" the Body and Blood of Christ Himself. But even the daily bread we receive from God can be in this life and in this world that which strengthens us, our communion with God, rather than that, which separates us from God. Yet it is only fasting that can perform that transformation, giving us the existential proof that our dependence on food and matter is not total, not absolute, that united to prayer, grace, and adoration, it can itself be spiritual.

All this means is that fasting is the only means by which man recovers his true spiritual nature. It is not a theoretical but truly a practical challenge to the great Liar (satan) who managed to convince us that we de-

pend on bread alone and built all human knowledge, science and existence on that lie. Fasting is a denunciation of that lie and also the proof that it is a lie. It is highly significant that it was while fasting that Christ met Satan and that He said later that Satan cannot be overcome "but by fasting and prayer." Fasting is the real fight against the devil because it is the challenge to that one all-embracing law which makes him the "Prince of this world." Yet if one is hungry and then discovers that he can truly be independent of that

hunger, not be destroyed by it but just on the contrary, can transform it into a source of spiritual power and victory, then nothing remains of that great lie in which we have been living since Adam.

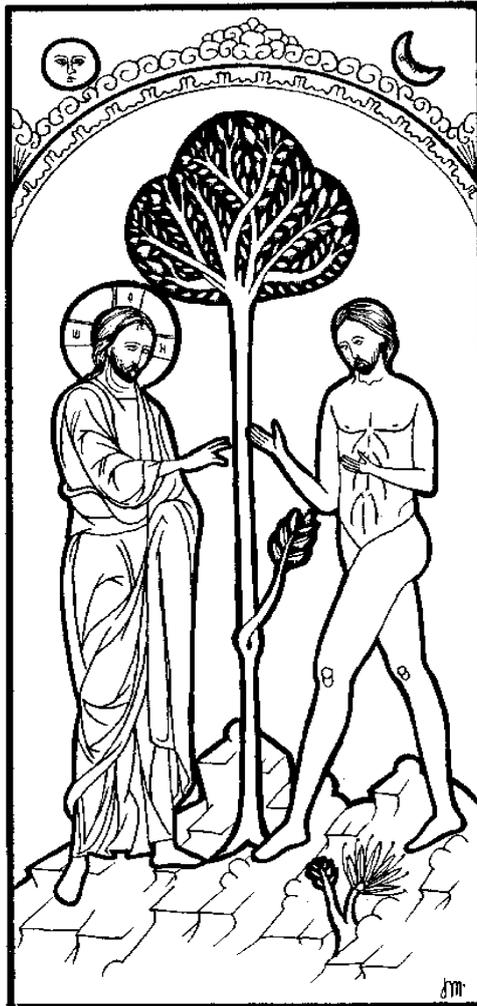
Ultimately, to fast means only one thing: *to be hungry* to go to the limit of that human condition which depends entirely on food and discover that this dependency is not the whole truth about man, that hunger itself is first of all a spiritual state and that it is in its last reality *hunger for God*.

In the early Church, fasting always meant total abstinence, a state of hunger, pushing the body to the extreme.

It is here, however, that we discover also that fasting as a physical effort is totally meaningless without its spiritual counterpart: "... *by fasting and prayer*." This means that without the corresponding spiritual effort, without feeding ourselves with Divine Reality, without discovering our total dependence on God alone, physical fasting would indeed be suicide.

If Christ Himself was tempted while fasting, we have not a single chance of avoiding that temptation. Physical fasting, essential as it is, is not only meaningless, it is truly dangerous if it is disconnected from the spiritual effort, from prayer and concentration on God. Fasting is an art fully mastered by Saints.

The entire lenten worship is a constant reminder of the difficulties, the obstacles, and the temptations that await those who think that they may depend on their will power and not on God. It is for this reason that we need first of all a spiritual preparation for the effort of



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fasting. It consists in asking God for help and also in making our fast God-centered. We should fast for God's sake. We must rediscover our body as the Temple of His Presence. We must recover a religious *respect* for the body (a temple for the Spirit), for food, for the very rhythm of life. All this must be done before the actual fast begins so that when we begin to fast, we would be supplied with spiritual weapons, with a vision, with a spirit of fight and victory.

Then comes the fast itself. In accordance with what has been said above, it should be practiced on two levels: first, as *ascetical* fast; and second, as *total* fast.

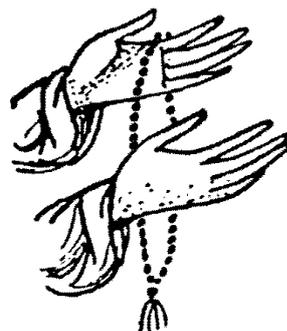
The *ascetical* fast consists of a drastic reduction of food so that the permanent state of a certain hunger might be lived as a reminder of God and a constant effort to keep our mind on Him. Everyone who has practiced it, be it only a little, knows that this ascetical fast rather than weakening us makes us light, concentrated, sober, joyful, pure. One receives food as a real gift of God. The exact amount of food to be received in this ascetical fasting, its rhythm and its quality, need not be discussed here; they depend on our individual capacities, the external conditions of our lives. But the principle is clear: it is a state of half-hunger whose "negative" nature is at all times transformed by prayer, memory, attention and concentration into a *positive* power.

As to the *total* fast, it is of necessity to be limited in duration and coordinated with the Eucharist – Holy Communion. In our present condition of life, its best form is the day before the evening celebration of the Presanctified Liturgy. Whether we fast on that day from early morning or from noon, the main point here is to live through that day as a day of expectation, hope, hunger for God Himself. It is a spiritual concentration on that which comes, on the gift to be received and for the sake of which one gives up all other gifts.

After all this is said, one must still remember that however limited our fasting, if it is true fasting it will lead to temptation, weakness, doubt and irritation. In other terms, it will be a real fight and probably we shall fail many times. But the very discovery of Christian life as fight and effort is the *essential aspect of fasting*. A faith which has not overcome doubts and temptation is seldom a real faith. No progress in Christian life is possible, alas, without the bitter experience of failures. Too many people start fasting with enthusiasm and give up after the first failure. I would say that it is at this first failure that the real test comes. If after having failed and surrendered to our appetites and passions we start all over again and do not give up no matter how many times we fail, sooner or later our

fasting will bear its spiritual fruits. Between holiness and cynicism lies the great virtue of *patience*, *patience* first of all with ourselves. There is no short cut to holiness; for every step we have to pay the full price. Thus it is better and safer to begin at a minimum, just slightly above our natural possibilities and to increase our effort little by little, than to try jumping too high at the beginning and to break a few bones when falling back to earth.

From the nominal fast – the fast as obligation and custom – we must return to the *real* fast. Let it be limited and humble but consistent and serious. Let us honestly face our spiritual and physical capacity and act accordingly – remembering however that there is no fast without challenging that capacity, without introducing into our life a divine proof that things impossible with men are possible with God.



(Source: *Great Lent – Journey To Pascha*, By Alexander Schmemmann, Published by St Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York, 1996.)

St. Gregory the Theologian

St. Gregory the Theologian emphatically proclaimed



the truth of the divinity and the *homoousia* (oneness in essence), of the Holy Spirit within the Holy Trinity: God is 'Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Trinity of one essence and inseparable' as we sing at every Divine Liturgy. His theology would have the desired lasting effect that he had hoped for however, as he returned to Cappadocia in 381 AD, following the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople, bitter from his experience, he knew little of the great impact that his theological orations would have on the life and understanding of the Orthodox Church. It is for this reason that the Orthodox Church has given him the title 'The Theologian', a title which he shares with only two other Saints, the Apostle John and St. Symeon the New Theologian.

St. Gregory was a prolific writer and it is through his own autobiographical works, poems and letters that so much is

known about his life. St. Gregory was born into an aristocratic family in 329/330 AD in the city of Karbala, which was one of the family estates at Arianzen near Nazianzus in South West Cappadocia. His mother, St Nonna, was a Christian and his father, St Gregory, was the Bishop of Nazianzus, having been converted to Christianity by his wife. It was through St Nonna's steadfast faith that St Gregory was initially influenced in his own Christian faith.

Due to his family's affluence, the expectation was that St. Gregory would be well educated and he had the

opportunity to study in some of the great schools of the time. He studied rhetoric at the university in Caesarea which was established by Origen. It was here that he first met St. Basil the Great of Caesarea. His friendship with St. Basil would be long and arduous, describing their friendship as being of 'one soul, only separated in body'. He continued his studies at the great city of Alexandria, but it was in Athens that he really flourished, arriving in 348 AD. His stay in Athens lasted 10 years during which time he developed and honed his rhetorical skills and he was exposed to everything that a Greek philosophical education could give, while remaining steadfastly Christian.

On his reluctant return to Cappadocia, he was eventually coerced into the priesthood by his father. St Gregory had wanted to live a monastic life of peaceful meditation. However he resisted St. Basil's attempts at persuading him into the monastic life, since he was opposed to St. Basil's idea of monasticism, which centred on physical labour. He had also rejected any career in rhetoric that would remove him from his Christian roots, and his father saw this as an opportunity for the church to gain a rhetorician of great quality. After his ordination he fled to Pontus to be consoled by his friend, St. Basil, who eventually convinced him to face up to his responsibility as a presbyter of the church and return to Nazianzus. It was in 372 AD, that St. Basil, now the Bishop of Caesarea, with the aid of St. Gregory's father, persuaded him to be ordained the Bishop of Sasima, an insignificant village in Cappadocia.

At this time the majority of the Eastern Christian Empire, and the capital, Constantinople, was Arian. The Arians believed in the heresy that the Son was a creation of the Father and that there was a time when the Son did not exist. In 379 AD Theodosius, a staunch follower of the true Nicene faith of the Orthodox Church was crowned emperor. Theodosius was preparing to enter Constantinople for the first time as Emperor, and would follow this with religious reforms, reinstating and reinforcing the Nicene faith as the state religion. St. Gregory was asked to be a missionary Bishop to Constantinople, in order to prepare the way for Theodosius' arrival.

Thus at the age of fifty, St. Gregory travelled to Constantinople in order to resurrect the Nicene faith. From 379 to 381 AD St. Gregory wrote and presented his most profound works. During his short stay in Constantinople he prepared and delivered twenty two of

Saint Gregory the Theologian

his forty two orations, and composed many epistles and poems. Among his orations were the five theological orations, as they are now known (orations 27-31). These five theological orations are the primary reason that St. Gregory is known as 'the Theologian,' *par excellence*, within the Orthodox Church. It is the theology within these orations which the doctrine of the Church is based on.

On his arrival in Constantinople he established a house church from where he preached. He called the church the Anastasia, having the two fold meaning of the resurrection of the Lord and the resurrection of the Nicene faith in Constantinople and the Eastern Empire.

To many of the people in Constantinople he was considered a provincial with an odd Cappadocian accent, who was attempting to make a name for himself in the capital. The Arian Bishop of Constantinople, Demophilus, and the clergy of the capital ignored his existence, however it wasn't long before they sensed a real threat. The local population of Constantinople were mainly Arian and the crowds were initially hostile towards St. Gregory, although his orations were well attended by the few Nicene faithful left in the city. During a baptismal service held during Pascha of 380, the church of Anastasia was attacked by an angry neo-Arian mob. There was also an assassination attempt on St Gregory's life. However St. Gregory showed restraint, patience, kindness and love towards all those who fought against him. He believed that it was 'better to be patient and to give an example of patience to many by [his] sufferings'. (Epistle 77) After struggling with these difficulties, the violence towards him and his congregation eventually settled down into a verbal and intellectual battle, which suited St. Gregory well.

In 381 AD he became Archbishop of Constantinople, and found himself presiding over the Second Ecumenical Council. After attempting to guide and control the proceedings, and those attending the council, he resigned from this position in exasperation. St. Gregory was a sensitive soul who was not cut out for ecclesiastical politics. He had been greatly disappointed; not only by the infighting among the Bishops but also at the lack of conviction which many of the attendees, mostly Bishops, had with regard to a categorical proclamation of the Spirit as God. However the emphasis which he had placed on the importance of articulating the theology and deity of the Holy Spirit is reflected in the revised Creed which was ratified at this council. The text on the Holy Spirit in the Creed was expanded, and has not been altered to this day within the Orthodox Christian Church.

In 381 AD St. Gregory was pressured into resigning from his position as Archbishop of Constantinople, after which he retired to Nazianzus, where he adminis-

tered his father's church until a suitable replacement could be found.

In 384 AD and with increasingly ill health, he retired to his estate in Arianzum. It was during this time, whilst living a secluded monastic life, that he wrote vast amounts of poetry. It is within his poems that his sensitivity and humanity comes through. They show his struggle with life and his love for God. He was steadfast and passionate about his beliefs, sometimes angry, and he was unwavering to the point of stubbornness, as a Christian ought to be about the Truth.

It was sometime between 389 and 391 AD that St. Gregory fell asleep in the Lord, leaving behind a lasting theological legacy. In 451 AD St. Gregory was designated 'The Theologian' by the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon. His relics were at rest in Constantinople until the siege of the city in 1204 AD where they were taken to Rome. They were at rest in the Vatican until 22nd of November 2004, when they were returned to the Patriarchate of Constantinople in a gesture of love by the Roman Catholic Church. The feast day of St. Gregory the Theologian is celebrated on January 25th and he is also remembered on the feast day of the Three Holy Hierarchs, January 30th, along with St. Basil the Great and St. John Chrysostom.

Footnote:

For further reading on St Gregory's life, see John McGuckin, *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus. An intellectual biography*. Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 2001.



By Kelly Anna Tsoi

Sayings of the Desert Fathers

St. Anthony the Great

(Saint Anthony the Great is called "The Father of Monks." He was born in Egypt in about A.D. 251, the son of peasant farmers who were Christians. From about the age of 18, he devoted himself to a life of self-denial and living alone. His reputation for spirituality attracted many followers, and for some years he acted as the spiritual father to a group of monks. Later, he again re-turned to living completely alone. He died at the age of 105)

Would you be truly intelligent? Then book learning isn't enough; you must also have spiritual knowledge. This includes being able to tell the difference between what is good and what is evil. Then you must avoid what is sinful and harmful to your soul and, with thanks to God, carefully keep what is good and what benefits your soul. If you do that, you are truly intelligent.

The truly intelligent person has only one aim in life: to obey God and conform to His will. With this one aim in mind, the person disciplines his soul. In addition, whatever the person may meet in life, he thanks God for the greatness of His arranging of all things. It is foolish to be grateful to doctors who give us bitter-tasting medicines to cure our bodies, yet to be ungrateful to God for things that appear harsh to us. We don't understand that all we experience in life is for our benefit and according to His plan. Knowing God and having faith in Him is the salvation and perfection of our souls.

It is important to realize that gaining material things and their lavish use is only a short-lived fantasy. What is most important is a virtuous way of life that conforms to God's will. That kind of life offers more than any amount of wealth. When you think about this and keep it in mind constantly, you will not grumble, whine or blame anyone, but will thank God for everything, because you will see that those who rely on reputation and riches are worse off than yourself. Desire, love of glory and ignorance are the worst impulses of the soul.

Do not say that it is impossible to achieve a virtuous life, but say that it is not easy. Those who have achieved the virtuous life find it is not easy to maintain. Those who

are devout, and whose intellect enjoys the love of God, take part in the life of virtue. The unspiritual intellect, however, is concerned with material things and wavers back and forth, producing both good and evil thoughts. It does this because it is changeable by nature and directed towards material things. But the intellect that enjoys the love of God punishes the evil, which arises on its own through human laziness.

Strive to practice the life of virtue in a genuine way, because when you achieve this life, it is easy to learn about God. When you worship and honor God with all your heart and with faith, God gives you the power to control anger and unholy desire, because unholy desire and anger are the cause of all evil.



Spiritually intelligent people don't need to listen to much talk; they need only to pay attention to that which is profitable and guided by God's will. In this way, people gain life and eternal light. Those who seek to lead a life of holiness and enjoy the love of God need to free themselves from thinking they know more than they really do, and from all empty and false pride. By correcting their life and way of thinking, the mind then constantly enjoys the love of God and they are able to approach Him.

When Anthony thought about the depth of the judgments of God, he asked, "Lord, how is it that some die when they are young, while others live to extreme old age? Why are some poor and others rich? Why do wicked men prosper and why are honest and just people in need?" He heard a voice answering him, "Anthony, keep your attention on yourself. These things are according to the judgment of God, and it is not to your benefit to know anything about them."

Another holy man named Pambo asked Anthony, "What ought I to do to live a righteous and spiritual life?" Anthony replied, "Do not trust in your own righteousness, do not worry about the past, but control your tongue and your stomach."

" True Repentance Will Bring Sanctification "

" True Repentance Will Bring Sanctification "

By Elder Porphyrios

'Come to me all you who labour and are heavy laden... '

There is nothing higher than what is called repentance and confession. This sacrament is the offering of God's love to mankind. In this perfect way a person is freed of evil. We go and confess and we sense our reconciliation with God; joy enters us and guilt departs. In the Orthodox Church there is no impasse. There is no impasse because of the existence of the confessor who has the gift of grace to forgive. To be a confessor is a great thing.

I had the habit from the time I was a boy - and it's a habit I still have - that whenever I sinned I went and confessed and everything went away. I would jump for joy. I am sinful and weak. I resort to God's compassion and I am saved, I become calm and I forget everything. Every day I think that I sin, but I desire that whatever happens to me I turn it into prayer and I don't keep it locked within me.

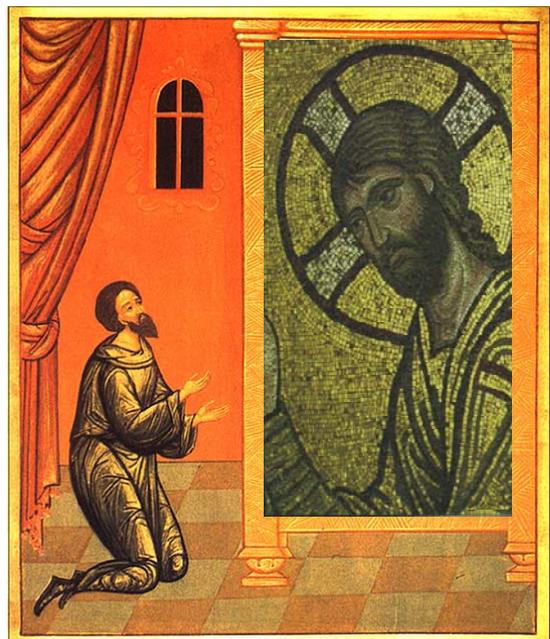
Sin makes a person very confused psychologically. The confusion doesn't dissipate whatever you do. Only with the light of Christ does the confusion depart. Christ makes the first move, *Come to me all you who labour and are heavy laden...* Thereafter we accept this light in our good will, which we express with our love towards Him, with our prayer and with the sacraments.

For the soul to repent it must first awake. It is in this awakening that the miracle of repentance occurs. This is where human will plays its role. The awakening, however, is not something that rests only with the individual man or woman. The individual on his own is unable to bring it about. God intervenes. Then divine grace comes. Without grace a person cannot repent. The love of God does everything. He may use something - an illness, or something else, it depends - in order to bring a person to repentance. Accordingly repentance is achieved through divine grace. We simply make a move towards God and from then onwards grace supervenes.

You may say to me, 'If that is so, all things are done by grace.' This is a fine point. Here, too, we have a case of what I say, namely, that we cannot love God if God does not love us. Saint Paul puts it very well:

Now having known God, or rather having been known by God... The same happens with repentance. We cannot repent unless the Lord gives us repentance. And this holds for everything. It is a case of the scriptural principle, *Without me you can do nothing*. If there are not the preconditions for Christ to enter into us, repentance does not come. The preconditions are humility, love, prayer, prostrations and labour for Christ. If the sentiment is not pure, if there is no simplicity and if the soul is moved by self-interest, then divine grace does not come. In that case we go and confess, but we don't feel relief.

Repentance is a very delicate matter. *True repentance will bring sanctification. Repentance will sanctify us.*



(Source: *Wounded By Love*, Translated by John Raffan, Published by Denise Harvey - Holy Convent of the Life-giving Spring, Chrysopigi, 2005.)

Orthodox Christian Calendar 2006

This monthly (x2) calendar is provided for your information. It aims to give you an insight into the Orthodox Christian Church year of 2006 and hopes to prove useful and beneficial with its indications. The calendar provides you with a day-by-day outlook of the following pieces of information: **1.** The Greater Feastdays (†) celebrated in the Orthodox Christian Church. **2.** The main fasting and non-fasting periods in the Church and the strictness of each of these fasts. **3.** The schedule of English Divine Liturgies, where these are held and at what time. **4.** Main Vespers Services held at each of our Melbourne, VIC Parishes (commence 7p.m.) **5.** Public Holidays and other events held.

Month of March

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4 † SATURDAY OF THE SOULS
5 † CHEESEFARE SUNDAY	6 † CLEAN MONDAY (FAST FOR PACHA COMMENCES)	7	8	9	10 1 st SALUTATIONS TO THE THEOTOKOS (AKATHIST HYMN)	11 † SATURDAY OF THE SOULS (MIRACLE OF ST. THEODOROS)
12 † 1 ST SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT (SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY)	13	14 GREAT COMPLINE IN ENGLISH AT ST. EUSTATHIOS, SOUTH MELBOURNE, 7.30 - 8.30 p.m.	15	16	17 2 nd SALUTATIONS TO THE THEOTOKOS (AKATHIST HYMN)	18 ENGLISH LITURGY AT GEE LONG MONASTERY, 9.00—10.00 a.m.
19 † 2 ND SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT (ST. GREGORY PALAMAS)	20	21	22	23	24 3 rd SALUTATIONS TO THE THEOTOKOS (AKATHIST HYMN)	25 † THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE VIRGIN MARY (GREEK NATIONAL DAY) (Fish consumed)
26 † 3 RD SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT (VENERATION OF THE PRECIOUS CROSS)	27	28	29	30	31 4 th SALUTATIONS TO THE THEOTOKOS (AKATHIST HYMN)	

Month of April

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
30 † SUNDAY OF ST. THOMAS					1	
2 † 4TH SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT (ST. JOHN OF THE LADDER)	3 4 GREAT COMPLINE IN ENGLISH AT ST. EUSTATHIOS, SOUTH MELBOURNE, 7.30 - 8.30 p.m.	5 6 THE HOLY CANON OF ST. ANDREW	7 8 THE AKATHIST HYMN TO THE MOTHER OF GOD	14 15 † SATURDAY OF LAZARUS		
9 † 5TH SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT (ST. MARY OF EGYPT)	10 11 17 (HOLY WEEK BEGINS) † HOLY MONDAY	12 13 19 † HOLY TUESDAY	14 15 20 † HOLY WEDNESDAY	21 † 22 † HOLY THURSDAY	28 † 29 FRIDAY OF BRIGHT WEEK (THE SOURCE OF LIFE)	
16 † PALM SUNDAY	17 18 † HOLY TUESDAY (ST. RAPHAEL, NICHOLAS & IRENE)	19 † 20 † HOLY WEDNESDAY (ST. RAPHAEL, BENTLEIGH (Fast free week))	21 † 22 † HOLY THURSDAY	23 † 24 † MONDAY OF BRIGHT WEEK (ST. GEORGE THE GREAT MARTYR VESPERS: ST. RAPHAEL, BENTLEIGH (Fast free week))	25 † 26 † TUESDAY OF BRIGHT WEEK	27 † 28 † WEDNESDAY OF BRIGHT WEEK
23 † THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST (PASCHA)	24 † MONDAY OF BRIGHT WEEK (ST. GEORGE THE GREAT MARTYR VESPERS: ST. RAPHAEL, BENTLEIGH (Fast free week))	25 † TUESDAY OF BRIGHT WEEK (ST. RAPHAEL, NICHOLAS & IRENE)	26 † WEDNESDAY OF BRIGHT WEEK	27 † THURSDAY OF BRIGHT WEEK (ST. IRENE THE GREAT MARTYR)	28 † FRIDAY OF BRIGHT WEEK (THE SOURCE OF LIFE)	29 FRIDAY OF BRIGHT WEEK (THE SOURCE OF LIFE)

GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA
SECOND ARCHDIOCESAN DISTRICT OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

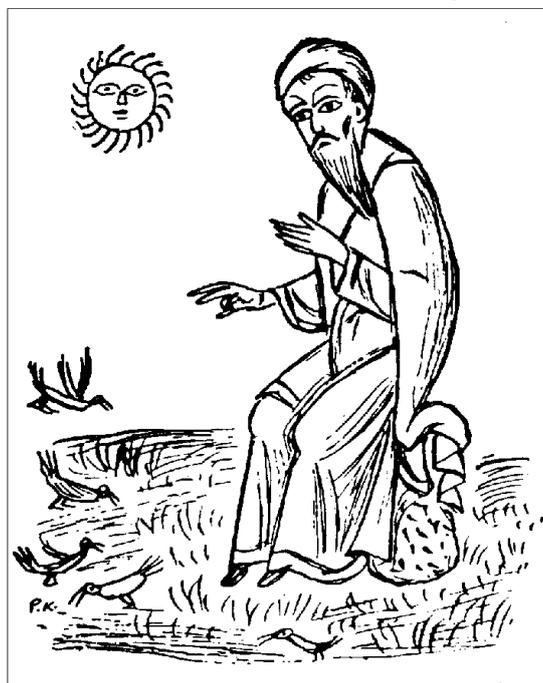
Central Youth Monthly Lectures

The first CYC talk for the year will be given in 2 parts

“Gratitude and Ungratefulness:
The Basic Attributes of the Person”

presented by

His Eminence Archbishop Stylianos



Part 1: Saturday 5th April, 2006

At the Greek Orthodox church of St. Vasilios,
15 Blyth Street, Brunswick, @ 7.30 p.m.

Part 2: Sunday 9th April, 2006

At the Greek Orthodox church of St. Eustathios,
221 Dorcas Street, South Melbourne, @ 7.30 p.m.

*Please note: This talk will be given in the Greek Language
There will be ample opportunity to ask questions.*

GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA
SECOND ARCHDIOCESAN DISTRICT OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

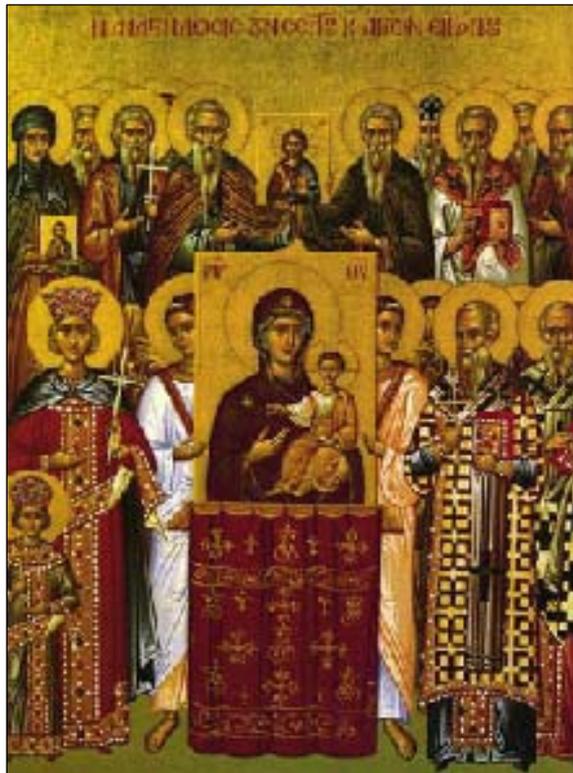
Central Youth Monthly Lectures

***“Is it possible to have unity with
other ‘Christians’ ?”***

presented by

Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Lykopandis

*(Graduate of St Andrew’s Theological College
Member of the Executive Committee of the Victorian Council of Churches)*



Monday 15th May, 2006

at the

***Greek Orthodox church of St. Eustathios
221 Dorcas Street, South Melbourne***

Commencing at 7.30pm

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION TELEPHONE: (03) 9696 2488

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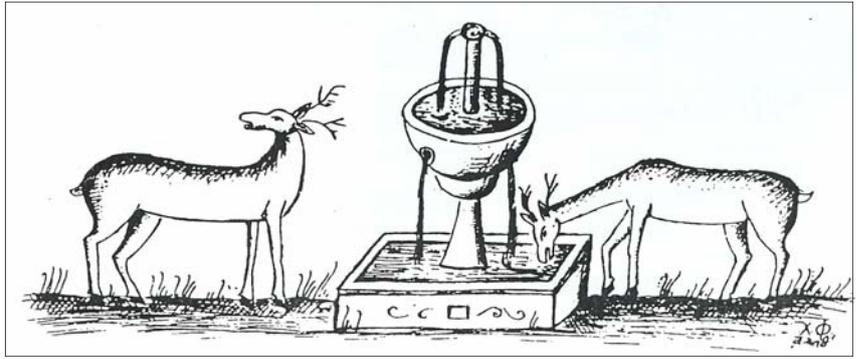
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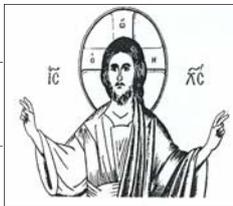
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Saint Nestor

Saint Nestor
CENTRAL YOUTH COMMITTEE MAGAZINE



Youth Group Meetings in Victoria

Ascot Vale: St.Dimitrios

Tuesday 7.30 p.m.

Bentleigh: Sts.Raphael, Nicholas and Irene

Call church

Box Hill: Holy Cross

Thursday 7 - 8.00 p.m.

Brunswick: St.Basil

Tuesday 7 - 8.00 p.m.

Coburg: Presentation of our Lord

Tuesday 7.30 p.m.

Dandenong: St.Panteleimon

Thursday 7.00 p.m.

East Keilor: Dormition of the Theotokos

Sunday 2.00 p.m.

East Malvern: St.Catherine

Tuesday 7.30 p.m.

Fawkner: St.Nektarios

Wednesday 7.00 p.m.

Northcote: Axion Estin Monastery

Monday 7.30 p.m.

Nunawading: St.Andrew

Monday 7.30 p.m.

Oakleigh: Sts.Anargiri,

Cosmas & Damianos

Tuesday 7.30 p.m.

South Melbourne: St.Eustathios

Tuesday 7.30 p.m.

Springvale: St.Athanasios

Saturday 5.30 p.m.

Templestowe: St.Haralambos

Tuesday 8.30 p.m.

Thomastown: Transfiguration of the Lord

Thursday 7.30 p.m.

Yarraville: St.Nicholas

Tuesday 7.30 p.m.

Icon of Saint Nestor from the Monastery of Stavronikita (Mount Athos) by Theophan the Cretan