

January 25

B. + Our Father among the Saints Gregory, Archbishop of Constantinople, the Theologian



St. Gregory was born about 326-328 in Arianzus near Nazianzus in Cappadocia where his father was at first the town mayor and then Bishop (see Jan. 1). As the son of promise, St. Gregory was dedicated to God from his very childhood by his own pious mother Nonna and very early began to find love for the ascetics of piety and remained as a virgin all his life.

At first he received his formation in Neocaesarea from Amphilocius, the famous teacher of rhetoric, then in Alexandria and, finally, in Athens where he became friends with St. Basil the Great. The saintly friends in Athens had a single room and one way of life. Only two roads were known to them: one is to the holy temples and the trainers in the Word of God and the other is to the school where they heard the teachers of the external sciences. They did not know the streets leading to the shows, considering them unworthy of their attention and which does not lead to virtue.

In 356 St. Gregory was baptized and with no less zeal continued to study the Holy Scriptures and practice the asceticism of meditation on God, fasting and prayer.

The desert strongly attracted St. Gregory, but he decided to remain in the home of his parents to personally serve them and at the same time to live as a strict ascetic. His clothes were rough, he ate bread with salt, drank water, his bed was the bare ground and his regular occupation was exercise in the Word of God.

Known for his special love for his parents and always treating them with true filial respect and moving care, St. Gregory, at the insistence of his father, was ordained a presbyter. Being weighed down with this rank, which he did not want; St. Gregory left for the desert to St. Basil the Great. Having returned from there reconciled in soul, he also began to reconcile others: he reconciled the Nazianzians to his father, who according to them signed a clever symbol of faith of the half-Arian.

In 372 St. Basil the Great used a few strong measures to incline his friend to accept the rank of bishop. St. Gregory considered himself, in deep humility, unworthy of this dignity, but, convinced by his father and although not willingly, accepted from St. Basil consecration as the bishop of the city of Sasima. Meanwhile due to the intrigues of the enemies of St. Basil, another bishop was assigned to Sasima and St. Gregory conceded the Sasimian See to him.

The father of Gregory, feeling his infirmity, made St. Gregory his assistant, and St. Gregory, sharing the episcopal labors of his father, preached the Word God and enlightened the presbyters. Together with this lovingness and special feelings of tenderness, St. Gregory was a feeder of the needy, minister of the sick, repose of

strangers, comfort of those living in misery and protector of the unfortunate. After the death of his father, St. Gregory left for solitude in the Seleucian Monastery of St. Thecla.

In 379 St. Gregory, as most experienced in the affairs of faith, was invited by the Orthodox to Constantinople where the heretics dominated for 46 years for the building up of the church. St. Gregory could preach only in one private house when he was in the capital, and at first only before a small number of the Orthodox. Observing in the Orthodox a tendency for excessive talk and disputes on the subjects of faith, St. Gregory tried to inspire them, debate the faith and however useless this was, but to the contrary, however this was very important for the fulfillment of the commandments of God for those interested to be confirmed in the lofty truths of the faith. At the same time St. Gregory with his irresistible power of persuasiveness seeded all the objections of the heretics (Arians, Eunomians, Macedonians, Novatians and Apollinarians) and with inimitable skill revealed the true teaching of the Church. As the inhabitants of the capital, enemies of Orthodoxy, being seduced only by the external glamour of luxury, at first looked contemptuously at the holy elder, stooping under the burden of years, with his simple and poor clothes, his bare head and his face exhausted by tears of repentance. They laughed at his origins from an unknown poor village. St. Gregory with the power of his mind and eloquence turned to shame the malicious attacks of his enemies. The fame of the inspired orator grew quickly and his sermons were flowed down for the same heretics, but also Jews and Pagans, to hear. He surprised all with his profound knowledge of Holy Scripture, with right judgment and authority, with fruitful and brilliant expression, with warmth and depth of feeling, with an usual easiness of explanations and precise and concise speech. The hearers were agitated about the cathedra, similar to the rough seas, loudly expressed signs of approval by applause and exclamation and wrote down his words. Fierce and persistent enemies of Orthodoxy slandered Gregory for this; rushing with sticks among his hearers, they tried to disperse them with threats; they roused the people against him; they extended the hatred to even threaten the life of St. Gregory. But the courageous advocate of Orthodoxy took all this with remarkable calmness and patience and, disregarding the danger that threatened the entire Orthodox world at that time, he did not lose courage, but courageously and incessantly continued to be on guard for the faith of the Orthodox, as "the most respectable shepherd". The very private life of St. Gregory involuntarily inspired special respect for him even by his fierce enemies. Neither public assemblies nor the chambers of the aristocrats were familiar to him; he ate little food, wore poor clothes, did not engage in the intrigues of secular society, avoided every external limelight, and did not change the simplicity of his manner even after the unusual success which crowned his labors in building up of the holy actions of the Church.

"Preserving the flock in tranquility" with his "unsinkable ark of orations", he "with the streams of wise teaching dried up the mind of Arius" and over all "taught that the Trinity is to be worshipped in a way pleasing to God".

In 381 at the Second Ecumenical Council St. Gregory was assigned to the quite worthy Constantinopolitan See and presided over the Council after the death of Meletius of Antioch. Meanwhile other bishops began to challenge the assignment of St. Gregory to the see. The humbly wise, gentle and peace loving Gregory offered himself for peace in the Church and asked the bishops who have gathered at the Council Cathedral to dismiss him from Constantinople.

The rest of his life (about 8 years) St. Gregory spent in his native land. Continuing to care about Church affairs and with the struggle against the heretics in writing, St. Gregory led a strict ascetic way of life: he walked barefooted, wore only tattered clothes, slept on the bare ground or on a bed made from wood branches under the covering of sackcloth and never lit a fire that warms the body; bread with salt and garden vegetables served him for food and water in which he sometimes added a little vinegar served him for drink. The holy ascetic extended his deprivations even to sometimes refuse to use his gift for speaking. He kept such a vow of silence during one of the Holy Forty Day fasts.

St. Gregory was honored by the Church for his sermons with the name of Theologian similarly to the Holy Apostle and Evangelist John: St. Gregory in his research of true Christianity, in the light of the book of Revelation, so deeply comprehended and expressed so fully and precisely the depths of the Divinity as only as this is possible for a human being.

Five Theological Orations, Panegyrics on Saints, Festal Orations on the Feasts, defensive and accusatory orations and besides these, dogmatic treatises and historical sketches and verses distinguished with lofty poetry came down to us.

In 389 St. Gregory died. In church hymnography he is glorified, as "the advocate of piety" "the sower of the all-wonderful right teaching, the driver away of those very much holding the strongest heretical opinions", "great teacher of the Church of Christ", "the bright candlestick of the universe, the glory of Orthodoxy".

In 950 his relics were transferred from Nazianzus to Constantinople (see January 19). Part of them was transferred to Rome.

Troparion, tone 1

**The shepherd's pipe of your theology,
Conquered the trumpets of the rhetors:
For having searched the depth of the Spirit,
The goodness of the news was bestowed on you:
But pray to Christ God, O Father Gregory, to save our souls.**

Kontakion, tone 3

**O Glorious One, you destroyed rhetorical traps with your theological tongue,
And you adorned the church with the robes of Orthodoxy woven from on high:
And wearing them she cries out with us, your children:
Rejoice, O Father, supreme mind of theology.**

Paramoia: 1 and 2nd see 1 and 3rd for Jan. 9, 3rd see 3rd for Jan. 10.
Matins Gospel: Jn. 10:1-9; sel. 35. **Epistle:** 1 Cor. 12:7-11; sel. 151. **Gospel:** Jn. 10:9-16; sel. 36.

If the rector wishes, we do the Vigil.

Commemorating the Image of the All-holy Theotokos, "Assuage My Sorrow"

This wonderworking icon is in Moscow in the Church of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker that is in the Pupisha. They posit that it was brought to Moscow during the reign of Alexis Michaelovich by the Cossacks. On it the Mother of God is depicted with a hand bending toward her head and with the Child holding a scroll in both hands directly sitting on her left hand. The reverent honoring of this holy icon was especially shown during the plague of 1771. There is a special "Service with Akathistos to the All-Holy Theotokos, Assuage My Sorrow", a publication of the Kievan Monastery of the Caves printing house, 1888. (See *Sobranie mneniy i otziv [Collection of Opinions and Responses]*, Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow, vol. V., pages 391-4, about the first edition of this service)

Troparion, tone 5

**Assuaging every tear on the face of the earth,
Assuage the pain of my much sighing soul:
For you being human drive away pain and destroy the woes of sinners:
For you are the firm hope and confirmation,
All-holy Virgin Mother.**

Kontakion, tone 6

**Do not entrust me to human intercession,
O All-holy Sovereign Lady,
But accept the prayer of your servant;
For grief will improve me,
I can not endure the demonic arrows,
We do not have protection,
Nor do we have recourse where the impious always conquered
And we do not have comfort unless we have recourse to you,
O Sovereign Lady of the world, the hope and intercession of the faithful,
Despise not my supplication that is useful to do.**

Prayer

**O my All-gracious Queen Theotokos, my hope, who befriends orphans,
and intercedes for strangers, Joy of those who sorrow, Protectress of those
offended, look upon my troubles and see my sorrow: help me for I am weak,**

guide me for I am wandering: for you know my offense, resolve it as you will: for I have no other help than you, no other intercessor nor good comforter, only you, O Mother of God, may keep and protect me, unto ages of ages. Amen.

Ven. Publius, Syrian Ascetic

St. Publius was born in the city of Zeugma-on-the-Euphrates and held the position of senator. Then he abandoned temporal glory, distributed his estate to the poor and left for one of the neighboring mountains. Soon many adherents of piety came there for edification and understanding and built kellias near his cave. The vigilant caring of Ven. Publius for those gathered brought wealthy fruit: the monks led a truly ascetic and holy life. He died about 380.

Ven. Maro, Church Singer

Ven. Maro practiced asceticism for 37 years in a crude hut in the village of Omir, not far from the city of Cyrrhus, Syria. He ate very little food and wore clothes made from the skins of wild goats. Ven. Maro had a gentle and pleasant voice with a beautiful persona. He peacefully died about the year 430.

Martyrs Felicity and her Seven Sons: Januarius, Felix, Phillip, Silvanus, Alexander, Vitalis and Martial

Coming from a rich and famous family in Rome, St. Felicity distributed all her estate to the poor and together with her seven sons declared herself a Christian woman. They began to torture all of them. Felicity courageously supported her sons and asked God that they would die before her as she feared for their endurance. All the children died as martyrs before her eyes. After them the mother also received the crown of martyrdom. All suffered in Rome about the year 164. The relics of Felicity are in the Church of the Virgin Martyr Susanna in Rome, but some of the relics of her sons are in the Church of Pope Saint Marcellus.

St. Moses, Archbishop of Novgorod

St. Moses, in the world Metrophanes, was born of pious and wealthy parents in Novgorod. From youth being distinguished by the asceticism of piety, he secretly left his parental home for the Tver Otroch [Child] Monastery where he accepted monasticism.

From here, at the request of his parents, he transferred to the Kolms Monastery (found near Novgorod and closed in 1764, and now the city hospital and home for the mentally ill is in place of the monastery). In this monastery he was ordained a presbyter, and later in the St. George Monastery (see Novgorod Diocese) he was elevated to the rank of archimandrite.

In 1325 Metropolitan Peter, after a national election, consecrated him as archbishop of Novgorod. But St. Moses did not rule his Novgorodian flock for long. Contentions and civil strife among the Novgorodians, fires and other common misfortunes were too burdensome for the soul of the hierarch, aspiring for tranquil monastic solitude. After a four year rule and disregarding the strong petitions of the Novgorodians, the hierarch retired to the Kolms Monastery.

But he also did not stay here long. Having chosen a solitary place, he constructed a stone Temple of the Resurrection of Christ in Derevianitsa (see Novgorod Diocese). At this place the hierarch spent 20 years in monastic asceticism and then in 1352, after persistent petitions of the Novgorodians, he again took on the direction of the Novgorodian pastorate.

During the time of this rule, when he sent representatives to Constantinople for the resolution of some church enigmas, Emperor John Cantacuzenus and Patriarch Philotheus, respecting the lofty virtue of Moses, welcomed him with the gracious award of polystavrion vestments.

The second episcopate of Moses continued for seven years. It was marked by the building of many churches in Novgorod and its environs. As a good and zealous shepherd, St. Moses protected widows and orphans, helped the poor and, being a teaching shepherd, confirmed his teachings for his flock in piety and true faith. Besides this according to the tales of the ancient chronicles, "having gathered many scribes, he wrote many books for his account".

In 1359 the hierarch, feeling in weak health, left for the Skovorodian Monastery founded by him (see Novgorod Diocese) for a silent solitary life and practiced asceticism in it before his very death which followed in 1362.

On April 19, 1686 his relics were found incorrupt and from this time openly repose in a bronze reliquary in the cathedral temple of the Skovorodian Monastery. In 1693 parts of them were transferred to the men's (now women's) Spirit Monastery (see Novgorod Diocese). There is a hand-written service to this Hierarch.

Castinus, Bishop of Byzantium, lived in Third Century and died peacefully.

Ven. Demetrius the Skevophylax (i.e. keeper of vessels) lived in the Eighth Century. Some think that he read about icons from the fathers at the Seventh Ecumenical Council.

Martyr Auxentius, for confession of the Christian faith, after tortures, was beheaded by the sword in Constantinople in 1720.

*S. V. Bulgakov, Handbook for Church Servers, 2nd ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900) pp. 0047-0051.
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