

OUR LADY OF THE CEDARS CHURCH

A MELKITE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

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RT. REV. ANDRE ST. GERMAIN (retired)

REV. ROGER BOUCHER - Weekend Ministry

REV. DEACON ROBERT SPENCER

REV. DEACON PAUL LEONARCZYK

*"Enter the Church and repent ... for here is the physician, not the judge.
Here one is not investigated, one receives remission of sins." (St. John Chrysostom)*

March 1, 2015

The Second Sunday of the Great Fast

THE SUNDAY OF ST. GREGORY PALAMAS THE SUNDAY OF THE HOLY RELICS

Parish Advisory & Finance Council:

KEN MONTY (PRESIDENT), RICHARD ASHOOH, ROBERT ANDERSON, ROBIN ANDERSON, MARY CULLEN, MARTHA DAGHER, MARYLOU LAZOS, TERRI LEONARCZYK, MATTHEW LOMANNO, PAUL MANSUR, NAJWA MOUSSOBA, JENNA NEHME, PAUL ST. GERMAIN, AND CHRISTELLE SLAYBE

Parish Secretary: ROBIN ANDERSON

Cedars Society President: MARYLOU LAZOS

Sunday School Coordinator: MARTHA DAGHER

N.A.M.Y. Advisor: ROBIN ANDERSON

HOLY MYSTERY OF CONFESSION: Before or after any service, or by appointment;

HOLY MYSTERY OF CHRISTIAN ILLUMINATION: Please contact the clergy in advance to arrange for the required baptismal instructions;

HOLY MYSTERY OF CROWNING: At least six months prior to the proposed wedding, please contact the clergy to arrange for the required interview and instructions;

HOLY MYSTERY OF THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK: Please contact the pastor at any time when this sacrament is needed;

HOLY COMMUNION FOR THE SICK: Anyone too infirm to attend our services may receive Communion in the home. Please advise the clergy whenever this sacrament is needed.

THE ORDER OF TODAY'S LITURGY

The Troparion of the Resurrection (5th Tone) Page 51

The Troparion of the Holy Relics (2nd Tone)

O victorious witnesses of the Lord, blessed is the earth fertilized by your blood, and holy are the heavenly places that opened to your souls. You have vanquished the enemy in the stadium, and proclaimed Christ with courage. We beg you to intercede with Him who is all good, that He may save our souls.

The Troparion of St. Gregory Palamas (8th Tone)

O Gregory the Wonderworker, light of Orthodoxy, support and teacher of the Church, glory of monks and invincible protector of the theologians, pride of Thessalonica and preacher of grace: pray without ceasing for the salvation of us all.

The Troparion of the Dormition of the Theotokos (1st Tone): Page 15

The Kontakon of the Annunciation (8th Tone): Page 16

THE PROKIMENON:

YOU, O LORD, WILL KEEP US
AND PRESERVE US ALWAYS FROM THIS GENERATION.

*Save me, O Lord, for there is no longer any holy man,
for truthfulness has vanished from among the children of men.*

Today's Readings: Hebrews: 1: 10-14; 2: 1-4 and Mark 2:1-12

LITURGY INTENTIONS

Saturday, 4:30 PM:

For the repose of Sophi Potczyny (18th), Samuel Ashooh (75th), Joseph Abood (29th), Sara Anton (18th), Fred Kfoury Sr. (15th), and Rose Solomon (17th)

Sunday, 11:00 AM:

For the repose of the Twenty-One New Martyrs of Egypt, beheaded on Feb. 12, and for the peace and consolation of their family, friends and loved ones

Next Saturday, 4:30 PM:

For the repose of John Dagher (6th Anniversary), by Elias, Linda, and George Dagher

For the repose of Ernest Elhady (17th), Eugene McGrail (35th), John Devine (39th), and Sada Kfoury (11th)

Next Sunday, 11:00 AM:

For the repose of Stewart Spencer (10th Anniversary), by his son Deacon Robert, and Family





**The Sunday of
St. Gregory Palamas
and of
The Holy Relics**

**The Second Sunday of
Great and Holy Lent**

Although the commemorations for this Sunday have changed over the years, the focus has always been on those who have stood fast against the tide of sin and heresy. In early Church history, this Sunday was first set aside for the commemoration of the Holy Hiero-martyr Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, who was martyred on February 23, 155. Later, in 1368, the Patriarch of Constantinople, Philotheus, set aside the Second Sunday of Lent as a day of commemoration of St. Gregory

Palamas, who had died nine years earlier. Finally, in 1843, the Patriarch of Antioch, Maximos III Mazloum, declared that on the Second Sunday of Lent the relics of all saints should be venerated. As a result, we maintain two commemorations today: St. Gregory Palamas and the Holy Relics.

Our annual Lenten Dinner will be held on Sunday, March 15.

Lenten Mission: Continues Fri. Mar. 5, and 13

The video presentation of Fr. Robert Baron's Lenten Mission continues this Friday evening after Akathist, about 7:45 PM, and will conclude on Friday March 13.

The topic of the mission is "Conversion: Following the Call of Christ." This Friday evening Fr. Baron will discuss the Old Testament story of Jonah, and the Gospel story of the Samaritan Woman at the Well.

Please Support the Lenten Raffle!



SATURDAY KITCHEN-Next Saturday! Meat & spinach

pies will be available from the Saturday Kitchen next Saturday morning. Please call in your order in advance at 625-9966. Any help you can offer that morning will be greatly appreciated!

Got Falafel? The parish N.A.M.Y. group will be selling falafel following the Sunday Divine Liturgy. The money raised will help the youth group attend the 2015 National N.A.M.Y. Conference in Michigan.

Attendance Last Saturday 4:30 PM: 12 Sunday 11:00 AM: 78

Last Weekend's Collection: \$ 1,074.⁰⁰ Mortgage: \$561.⁰⁰

The average Sunday envelope donation: \$38.²⁷

The balance remaining on our mortgage is: \$ 303,725.³⁰

SERVICES FOR THE WEEK

Mon., Mar. 2	7:00 PM	Great Compline
Wed., Mar. 4	7:00 PM	Presanctified Liturgy
Fri., Mar. 6	7:00 PM	Akathist Hymn – followed by Lenten Mission
Sat., Mar. 7	4:30 PM	Divine Liturgy: The Sunday of the Holy Cross
Sun., Mar. 8	10:15 AM	Sunday Orthros
Sun., Mar. 8	11:00 AM	Divine Liturgy: The Sunday of the Holy Cross

Why do we venerate the relics of saints?

The relics are the physical remains of saints, as well as clothing, or other articles that have been sanctified by being touched to the physical body or grave of the saint. Relics, like the holy icons, are a means of Divine Grace for us -- a visible and tangible means of contact, and a vehicle of innumerable miracles.

The Bible describes many events in which the relics of saints perform miracles. It also testifies that even material articles associated with saints have divine powers:

- * When Elisha struck the water of river Jordan with the cloak of Prophet Elijah, the river divided into two parts. (2 Kings 2:14)
- * When a man's corpse fell into Elisha's tomb and touched his bones that man resurrected to life (2 Kings: 13:21)
- * People used to bring the sick into the streets and lay them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. (Act 5:15)
- * Acts 19:11-12 reads: "God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them."

The earliest surviving mention of relic veneration after the New Testament occurs in a work called *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, dated to about 150 AD. St. Polycarp was the bishop of Smyrna and a disciple of the Apostle John. In this account of his death, his admirers in Smyrna wrote: "We took up his bones, which are more valuable than precious stones and finer than refined gold, and laid them in a suitable place, where the Lord will permit us to gather ourselves together, as we are able, in gladness and joy and to celebrate the birthday of his martyrdom."

The relics of the saints are a reminder to us of the real, physical, historical, and human presence of these champions of God. Relics, like icons, affirm that the physical world indeed *DOES* have the potential for being transfigured and resurrected, as it participates in the restoration of humanity to the beauty of the Divine Image and Likeness. They are remnants of those who said "yes" to God and allowed themselves to become transformed into the Divine Image and became filled with God's life-giving energy.

The sanctified and transfigured bodies of the saints, are so powerful that numerous miracles occur by means of the saint's relics, or even by being anointed with oil from the lamps burning by their relics, or from soil from the ground where the saints are or were buried. Of course, most of the saints were also vehicles of miracles while they were yet in their bodies, and this miraculous grace continues to flow from them after their repose. In venerating their relics we give honor to God, the source of this grace, as well as to the holy saint from whom the relic comes.



The Fathers Reaffirmed

WHAT DO FASTS, METANIES, PROSTRATIONS, and standing through long church services have to do with prayer? Isn't prayer the conversation with God we have in our hearts? Why is Eastern Christian spirituality so physical?

On the First Sunday of the Fast we proclaimed the Orthodoxy of incorporating material creation (sacred images) in our worship because the living Word of God assumed matter in becoming fully man. On this second Sunday of the Fast we affirm our use of the material in worship for a similar reason. We worship using matter because to be fully human is to be physical. The physical, we believe, will not be left behind in eternal life. The resurrection of the body is the transfiguration, not the elimination, of our physical side. Fully human worship, then, must involve the material as we as the non-material.

Two commemorations observed on this Sunday help us reflect on the physical dimension of the life in Christ. The first is the remembrance of St. Gregory Palamas (1296-1359), who championed the Greek Fathers' teaching on the way we have communion with God. Brought up in the Byzantine court, Gregory entered the Vatopedi monastery on Mount Athos when he was 20 years old. A threatened Turkish invasion of the holy mountain in 1325 brought several monks including Gregory to Thessalonika where Gregory was ordained to the priesthood and, in 1347, chosen as Metropolitan of Thessalonika.

Gregory and the Light of God

Gregory became involved in a controversy with another Greek monk, Barlaam of Calabria, over how we can know God. The West was just getting reacquainted with the philosophy of Plato, Aristotle and others of the classical era. Many adopted their view that dialectics and metaphysics were the highest form of knowledge. Some, like Barlaam, taught that the "direct" experience of God was not possible because one can know God only through human reason.

Gregory countered with the teaching of the Fathers that the highest knowledge of God comes, not through reasoning and the application of classical philosophy, but through an experience of God gained through application to a life of prayer. The theologian is the person who knows God through experience, not through intellectual study. Doctrinal statements are fully meaningful only for those who have encountered the living Christ. You can study the makeup of a city all you like, he observed, but you will not know what a city is until you visit one.

Gregory further taught that a life of prayer can bring us to experience the uncreated light of God, as Peter, James and John did on Mount Tabor. God's divine actions or energies, which are to



God as the light is to the sun, can touch us physically as well as spiritually. This transformation of the whole person, or *theosis*, comes about by true participation in the very life of God. The whole of human existence becomes permeated by the Divine Presence.

Barlaam countered that the grace of God we may receive is something created, distinct from Him. In this Gregory was following the Greek Fathers while Barlaam was more in the tradition of Augustine. The issue thus became part of the East/West controversy of the Middle Ages.

In the West theology became increasingly influenced by Aristotelian philosophy and tied to the scholastic method. Piety came to be distinct from theology and from liturgy, and focused on devotional practices such as the rosary and the Stations of the Cross. In the East theology remained connected to liturgy, prayer and ascetic endeavor: the fruit of a personal experience of God involving the whole person.

Gregory's teaching was upheld by several local councils in Constantinople which were eventually accepted by the other Byzantine Churches. While Gregory himself is remembered on the day of his death, November 14, today's commemoration focuses on the place his holistic teaching has in our understanding of the Christian life. We can directly experience the action of God in us through the Spirit who dwells in us. We can bring our whole being into contact with God through physical prayer (fasts, vigils, prostrations, etc.) as well as interior meditation. And we may, as some have done, experience the uncreated light of God in this life as well as the next.

God's Presence in "Mere Bones"

A second observance today points to the presence of the divine energies of God experienced in the very remains of the saints. In the Melkite Church holy relics are solemnly venerated today as "the pledge of the glorious resurrection of sanctified bodies" (exapostilarion at orthros). Thus we venerate the relics of saints in anticipation of their future incorruptibility and their complete transformation after the resurrection.

The Second Council of Nicea which affirmed the veneration of icons also spoke about the remains of the saints: "Our Lord Jesus Christ granted to us the relics of Saints as a salvation-bearing source which pours forth varied benefits on the infirm."

What are the "varied benefits" which come from the relics of the saints? In some cases miracles, particularly healings, have taken place at the tombs or reliquaries of the saints. As St Ephrem the Syrian observed in the fourth century, "Even after death they act as if alive, healing the sick, expelling demons, and by the power of the Lord rejecting every evil influence of the demons. This is because the miraculous grace of the Holy Spirit is always present in the holy relics."

Fragmentary relics are placed in the holy table when a church is consecrated. They are also found in every antimimension used for the Divine Liturgy. Some icons have similar fragments in a small case embedded in them. Largely intact relics (skulls, limbs or even entire bodies) are generally preserved at the place where the saint lived. Thus the reputedly incorrupt relics of St. Gregory Palamas are kept in Thessalonika where he was bishop. Every year on this day they are brought forth in procession and placed before the bishop's throne in the cathedral for veneration.

It has been said that "the work of the Church is to 'produce relics,'" because the primary work of the Church is to lead us to theosis, to communion and union with God. By venerating the relics of the saints the Churches of East and West proclaim its commitment to that work and to the presence of the Holy Spirit in it enabling it to bear fruit.

The Fathers Speak.....On Prayer:

...be not afraid, for He Who said: 'Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid;' (Matt. 14:27) is Himself with us, He Whom we seek and Who always protects us. So in calling to God we must neither fear nor sigh. -*St. Gregory of Sinai (Instructions to Hesychasts no. 7)*

...he who loves God cultivates pure prayer, driving out every passion that keeps him from it. -*St. Maximos the Confessor (Second Century on Love no. 7 Lecture 9 no. 2)*

Abba Macarius was asked, 'How should one pray?' The old man said, 'There is no need at all to make long discourses, it is enough to stretch out one's hands and say, "Lord, as You will, and as You know, have mercy." And if the conflict grows fiercer say, "Lord, help!" He knows very well what we need and He shows us His mercy.'

-*Sayings of the Dessert Fathers by Benedicta Ward*

Brethren, let us also occupy ourselves with prayer..., and seeking God's mercy, cry out with a humble heart from morning till night and if possible all night long, saying constantly: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us." -*Saint John Chrysostom*

Let no one think, my brother-Christians, that it is the duty only of priests and monks to pray without ceasing, and not of laymen. No, no; it is the duty of all of us Christians to remain always in prayer. So, my Christian brethren, I too implore you, together also with St. Chrysostom, for the sake of saving your souls, do not neglect the practice of this prayer. Imitate those I have mentioned and follow in their footsteps as far as you can.

-*St Gregory Palamas, from "Early Fathers from the Philokalia,"*

WEEKDAY SERVICES DURING LENT

To assist us in our Lenten effort, we are called to come to make a special effort to pray. Let us come together as a parish family to support and encourage one another at the special prayer services that are offered throughout Lent:

Monday evenings, 7:00 PM: Great Compline

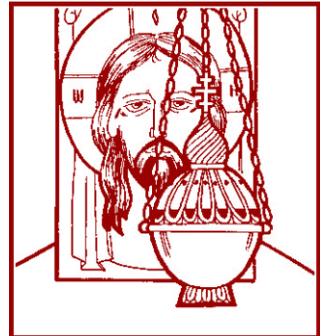
The Office of Compline is the nighttime prayer of the church. It is enhanced during Lent to contain beautiful prayers of repentance and to remind us during our Lenten struggle that "*God is with us!*"

Wednesday evenings, 7:00 PM: Presanctified Liturgy

During the season of Great Lent, we traditionally "fast" from the joy of the Divine Liturgy on weekdays. However, so as not to be denied the strength that comes from receiving from the Lord's Table, the church offers us this service, which is Lenten vespers followed by Holy Communion.

Friday evenings, 7:00 PM: The Akathist Hymn

This service presents a beautiful series of hymns to the Mother of God. We pray this service during Lent in anticipation of the great feast of the Annunciation that comes on March 25th.



Please remember to pray for the health and protection of Genevieve Allen, Elizabeth Ashooh, Elsie Ashooh, Ernie Ashooh, Louise Ashooh, Al Auclair, Alice Auclair, Erin Baroody, Michael Baroody, Ted Baroody, Sarah Beadle, Anthony Blando, Helena Burkush, Fr. Michael Carl, Danielle Caron, Michael Cavanaugh, Meghan Connors, Lucy Corriveau, Theresa Cullen, Jamileh Dagher, Sher Farrow, Declan Finn, Janet Drake, Julie Fregeau, Mary Fregeau, Peter Fregeau, Christine Freitas, Loretto Gauvin, Nick Haddad, Jean Hannoush, Lucille Harper, Howard Jabaley, Laura Jorba, Virginia Kearney, Shirley Lanoue, Roger Lawrence, Sadie Grace McCallum, Miriam McCallum, Susan Merrill, Margaret Mitchell, Alfred Nasr, Afef Nasr, Blaise Notter, Steven O'Leary, Denis O'Keefe, Helen Baroody Payne, Josephine Paquette, Russell Pond, Sheila Quinn, Deborah Roberts, Adam Rubin, Fr. Andre St. Germain, Nassim Sleiman, Salwa Sleiman, Tarrant Smith, Mary Stephen, Catherine Waldron, Laura Weingast, and Iris Angelina Velasquez.

If you are visiting our church, our parish family is delighted to welcome you here! Please give us the chance to get to know you by joining us for some coffee, pastry, and conversation in the church hall following the Divine Liturgy. If you would like to know more about the Melkite Catholic Church, check out the brochure entitled **“Welcome to this Holy House,”** located on the table in the back of the church.



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