



*Welcome to St. Olympia Orthodox Church,
a young and, God willing, growing community of worshipers.*

Fr. Gregory Fedorchak, Parish Rector 607-427-3286, father.fedorchak@gmail.com

Upcoming Services:

March 12, Wednesday

6pm – Presanctified Liturgy

March 15, Memorial Saturday

9am (8:40am Hours) – Divine Liturgy

5pm – Great Vespers

March 16, Sunday (St. Gregory Palamas)

10am (9:40am Hours) – Divine Liturgy

March 19, Wednesday

6pm – Presanctified Liturgy

March 21, Friday

6pm – Salutations (Reader's service)

March 22, Memorial Saturday

9am (8:40am Hours) – Divine Liturgy

5pm – Great Vespers

March 23, Sunday (The Precious Cross)

10am (9:40am Hours) – Divine Liturgy

March 24, Monday

6pm – Annunciation Vigil

March 25, Tuesday Feast of the Annunciation

8am – Vesperal Liturgy

Daily weekday Vespers – 5pm at the Hermitage

**The Second Sunday of Great Lent:
Saint Gregory Palamas
March 16**



Holy and divine instrument of wisdom, joyful trumpet of theology, together we sing your praises, O God-inspired Gregory. Since you now stand before the Original Mind, guide our minds to Him, O Father, so that we may sing to you: "Rejoice, preacher of grace."

Kontakion of Saint Gregory Palamas

Now is the time for action! Judgment is at the doors! So let us rise and fast, offering alms with tears of compunction and crying: "Our sins are more in number than the sands of the sea; but forgive us, O Master of All, so that we may receive the incorruptible crowns."

Kontakion of Sunday of Saint Gregory Palamas

2nd Sunday of Great Lent: St Gregory Palamas

The Second Sunday of Lent is the commemoration of Saint Gregory Palamas. It was Saint Gregory (d.1359) who bore living witness that men can become divine through the grace of God in the Holy Spirit; and that even in this life, by prayer and fasting, human beings can become participants of the uncreated light of God's divine glory.

From *The Orthodox Faith*, Volume II, by Fr. Thomas Hopko

The Church in the Fourteenth Century: Saint Gregory Palamas

The 14th century was the time of the Palamite controversy in the Eastern Church. St Gregory Palamas (1296–1359), a monk of Mount Athos, was a practitioner of the method of prayer called hesychasm (*hesychia* means 'silence'). This method of prayer is centered in the continuous repetition of the name of Jesus, usually in the form of the Jesus Prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." And a rigorous bodily discipline—emphasizing certain sitting postures and breathing techniques—is employed in order to help unite the mind and heart in God. Through the use of this method of prayer, the hesychast monks claimed to experience genuine communion with God, including sometimes a vision of the Uncreated Light of Divinity such as that seen by Moses on Mount Sinai, and by the Apostles Peter, James, and John at the Transfiguration of Christ on Mount Tabor.

In 1330 Barlaam the Calabrian, an Italo-Greek monk raised in an Orthodox family in southern Italy but educated in the Scholastic spirit prevailing in Western Europe at that time, came to Constantinople and accepted a chair in philosophy at the University of Constantinople. Barlaam, along with a number of other Byzantine humanists who were highly influenced by Western philosophical and theological ideas, ridiculed the practice of hesychastic prayer. They denied the possibility for human beings to be in direct, genuine communion with God.

Essence and Energies

In 1337 Gregory Palamas confronted Barlaam's position and began his defense of hesychasm and the various contemplative practices of the Athonite monks. He confirmed the Orthodox doctrine that man can truly know God and can enter into living communion and relationship with Him through Christ and the Holy Spirit in the Church. He explained that the Essence (or Super-Essence) of God is utterly unknowable and incomprehensible, while at the same time, the actions, operations, or Energies of God, which are also uncreated and fully divine (such as the Divine Light), are communicated to people by divine grace and are open to human knowledge and experience. This is what is meant when Christians are said to become "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet 1.4).

A local council held in 1341 in Constantinople upheld Gregory's teaching. Amid ten more years of political turmoil and theological controversy, local councils held in 1347 and in 1351 reaffirmed Gregory's position as that of the Bible and the whole Tradition of the Orthodox Church. From that time this crucial theological distinction between the divine Super-Essence and the divine Energies became an official part of the doctrine of the Orthodox Church.

From the Church History section of the OCA website

For a more detailed account, see <https://www.oca.org/saints/lives/2025/03/16/12-2nd-sunday-of-great-lent-st-gregory-palamas>

Spiritual Joy

**By Fr. Vladimir Berzonsky
Reflections in Christ, February 28, 2010**

"When spiritual joy comes to the body from the mind, it suffers no diminution by this communion with the body, but rather transfigures the body, spiritualizing it—rejecting all evil desires of the flesh, it no longer weighs down the soul but rises up with it, the whole person becoming spirit, as it is written: 'He who is born of the Spirit is spirit'" (John 3:6-8)

St. Gregory Palamas, *Triads*, II, 2.9

The definition of human beings: We are creatures in the state of an ongoing transition. We are neither angels nor animals. Jesus Christ is the *Way*, and we follow Him on the way towards unity with the Holy Trinity, or else we are descending into a dark pit of self-destruction—but we are never satisfied with where we are. Great Lent provides us with spiritual energy to become who we are, or whom our Creator intends us to be. Great Lent is a process intended to guide us

to a bond with divinity by stages, to the extent that we are capable of overcoming selfhood and making advances nurtured by the Holy Spirit and led by the example of Jesus Christ. It's why ladders appear in our icons to lead ever onward and upward, but allowing for descent if we should need it.

One Sunday is devoted to St. Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica, a special saint of the fourteenth century who had the wisdom, faith and insight to harmonize the advances made in monasteries with the spiritual strivings of ordinary Orthodox Christians such as us. You may notice our bishops and monastic women and men wearing a cord on their left wrists. It has many separated knots, and it's used to count short prayers in rhythm with their breathing. You may have such a rope yourself. It's one way to pray in silence or *hesychia*—of course, not the only way, but a method that some in St. Gregory's time thought of as foolish and worthless. They considered it a time waster for monks who should more profitably serve God by work or study.

Those who criticized the Hesychasts, as they were called, went further and condemned the goal of the monks who were convinced that it is possible for human beings to witness the light of divinity just as the three apostles had who were with Jesus Christ when He was transfigured on the mountain [Matthew 17:2, Mark 9:2]. Even today the phenomenon divides Christians into those like us who believe it actually happened from those who understand it as mere metaphor. How can it be possible for mere humans to behold divinity? Was it not just the light of the sun that blinded the apostles?

St. Gregory explained that while the essence of Godliness is reserved for the Holy Trinity, even since the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, our bodies have become "*temples of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us*" [I Corinthians 6:19]. It is in our bodies that are baptized into Christ, and through the Holy Eucharist that we receive God, no longer outside of us, but within us. The light that the apostles witnessed was external to them since Christ had not died and was risen, but now we are capable of knowing ourselves and growing into the awareness that Christ is alive not just outside but within us as well. We are dust and matter, but with the dignity and potential of sanctification. God in Christ is not just saving our souls, but our bodies and minds as well. By grace the whole person is saved, and this is not some abstract theology, but St. Gregory uses the New Testament to explain how this happens.

St. Gregory goes on to describe deification, the process of incorporating ever deeper into the Body of Christ by drawing our minds into our hearts, uniting thought with feeling. We don't abstract ourselves from the Church. Indeed, it's only through the Church and the sacraments do we find our way to God, as members of the Body of Christ, because He is the heart of the Church where we find our true selves.



Saint Sophronius
March 11



Venerable Benedict of Nursia
March 14

Saint Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem **March 11**

Saint Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, was born in Damascus around 560. From his youth he was distinguished for his piety and his love for classical studies. He was especially proficient in philosophy, and so he was known as Sophronius the Wise. The future hierarch, however, sought the true philosophy of monasticism, and conversations with the desert-dwellers.

He arrived in Jerusalem at the monastery of Saint Theodosius, and there he became close with the hieromonk John Moschus, becoming his spiritual son and submitting himself to him in obedience. They visited several monasteries, writing down the lives and spiritual wisdom of the ascetics they met. From these notes emerged their renowned book, the LEIMONARION or SPIRITUAL MEADOW, which was highly esteemed at the Seventh Ecumenical Council.

To save themselves from the devastating incursions of the Persians, Saints John and Sophronius left Palestine and went to Antioch, and from there they went to Egypt. In Egypt, Saint Sophronius became seriously ill. During this time he decided to become a monk and was tonsured by Saint John Moschus.

After Saint Sophronius recovered his health, they both decided to remain in Alexandria. There they were received by the holy Patriarch John the Merciful (November 12), to whom they rendered great aid in the struggle against the Monophysite heresy. At Alexandria Saint Sophronius had an affliction of the eyes, and he turned with prayer and faith to the holy Unmercenaries Cyrus and John (January 31), and he received healing in a church named for them. In gratitude, Saint Sophronius then wrote the Lives of these holy Unmercenaries.

When the barbarians began to threaten Alexandria, Patriarch John, accompanied by Saints Sophronius and John Moschus, set out for Constantinople, but he died along the way. Saints John Moschus and Sophronius then set out for Rome with eighteen other monks. Saint John Moschus died at Rome. His body was taken to Jerusalem by Saint Sophronius and buried at the monastery of Saint Theodosius.

In the year 628, Patriarch Zacharias of Jerusalem (609-633) returned from his captivity in Persia. After his death, the patriarchal throne was occupied for two years by Saint Modestus (December 18). After the death of Saint Modestus, Saint Sophronius was chosen Patriarch. Saint Sophronius toiled much for the welfare of the Jerusalem Church as its primate (634-644).

Toward the end of his life, Saint Sophronius and his flock lived through a two-year siege of Jerusalem by the Moslems. Worn down by hunger, the Christians finally agreed to open the city gates, on the condition that the enemy spare the holy places. But this condition was not fulfilled, and Saint Sophronius died in grief over the desecration of the Christian holy places.

Written works by Patriarch Sophronius have come down to us in the area of dogmatics, and likewise his “Excursus on the Liturgy,” the Life of Saint Mary of Egypt (April 1), and also about 950 troparia and stikheras from Pascha to the Ascension.

While still a hieromonk, Saint Sophronius reviewed and made corrections to the Rule of the monastery of Saint Savva the Sanctified (December 5). The saint’s three Canons for the Holy Forty Day Great Fast are included in the contemporary Lenten Triodion.

Patriarch Sophronius, you were glorious in the splendor of sobriety, and through the radiance of your words you revealed ineffable enlightenment from heaven. For by your life you attained wisdom and now you confirm the Church as an illustrious hierarch and intercessor for us with the Lord.

Troparion

You were most wise among patriarchs, Sophronius of Jerusalem. You struggled with divine zeal, spreading the commandments of truth with your lips. You set right the foundations of the Church and firmly established the monastic order. You brought to light wise sermons, and instructed by them, therefore we cry out to you: “Rejoice, splendid boast of the Orthodox.”

Kontakion

Venerable Benedict of Nursia

March 14

Saint Benedict, founder of Western monasticism, was born in the Italian city of Nursia in the year 480. When he was fourteen years of age, the saint’s parents sent him to Rome to study. Unsettled by the immorality around him, he decided to devote himself to a different sort of life.

At first Saint Benedict settled near the church of the holy Apostle Peter in the village of Effedum, but news of his ascetic life compelled him to go farther into the mountains. There he encountered the hermit Romanus, who tonsured him into monasticism and directed him to live in a remote cave at Subiaco. From time to time, the hermit would bring him food.

For three years the saint waged a harsh struggle with temptations and conquered them. People soon began to gather to him, thirsting to live under his guidance. The number of disciples grew so much, that the saint divided them into twelve communities. Each community was comprised of twelve monks and was a separate skete. The saint gave each skete an igumen from among his experienced disciples, and only the novice monks remained with Saint Benedict for instruction.

The strict monastic Rule Saint Benedict established for the monks was not accepted by everyone, and more than once he was criticized and abused by dissenters.

Finally he settled in Campagna and on Mount Cassino he founded the Monte Cassino monastery, which for a long time was a center of theological education for the Western Church. The monastery possessed a remarkable library. Saint Benedict wrote his Rule, based on the experience of life of the Eastern desert-dwellers and the precepts of Saint John Cassian the Roman (February 29).

The Rule of Saint Benedict dominated Western monasticism for centuries (by the year 1595 it had appeared in more than 100 editions). The Rule prescribed the renunciation of personal possessions, as well as unconditional obedience, and constant work. It was considered the duty of older monks to teach the younger and to copy ancient manuscripts. This helped to preserve many memorable writings from the first centuries of Christianity.

Every new monk was required to live as a novice for a year, to learn the monastic Rule and to become acclimated to monastic life. Every deed required a blessing. The head of this cenobitic monastery is the igumen. He discerns, teaches, and explains. The igumen solicits the advice of the older, experienced brethren, but he makes the final decisions. Keeping the monastic Rule was strictly binding for everyone and was regarded as an important step on the way to perfection.

Saint Benedict was granted by the Lord the gift of foresight and wonderworking. He healed many by his prayers. The monk foretold the day of his death in 547. The main source for his Life is the second Dialogue of Saint Gregory.

Saint Benedict's sister, Saint Scholastica (February 10), also became famous for her strict ascetic life and was numbered among the saints.

By your ascetical contests, O God-bearer Benedict, you were true to the name that you bear; for you blossomed as a son of benediction, and became a Rule for all who desire to emulate your life. Thus, with one voice we cry: "Glory to Him Who strengthened you; glory to Him Who crowned you; glory to Him Who, through you, works healings for all."
Troparion

You were enriched with God's grace; your works agreed with your name, O Benedict, helpful servant of Christ God. Through prayer and fasting you were revealed to be filled with the gifts of the Spirit of God! You are a healer of the sick, the banisher of demons and speedy defender of our souls!

Kontakion



Are you fasting?

Give me proof of it by your works.

If you see someone who is poor, take pity on them.

If you see a friend being honored, do not be envious.

Do not let only your mouth fast, but also the eyes, and the feet, and the hands and all the member of our bodies.

Let the hands fast, by being free of greed.

Let the feet fast, by ceasing to run after sin.

Let the eyes fast, by disciplining them not to glare at what is sinful.

Let the ears fast, by not listening to evil talk and gossip.

Let the mouth fast from foul words and unjust criticism.

For what good is it if we abstain from eating birds and fishes, but bite and devour our brothers and sisters?

--- St John Chrysostom

St. Olympia Lenten Fellowship

The Fast & The Curious



1 March

Hymns of Repentance: The Orthodox Essence of Lenten Worship (Dr Jessica Suchy-Pilalis)

8 March

Lenten Nourishment (Pres Krista Fedorchak)



15 March

Repentance in Western Saints (Joseph Stark)

22 March

Movie Night: Prince of Egypt



29 March

Themes of Repentance in Byzantine Iconography (Mother Sophronia)

5 April

Chess Tournament



12 April

Sing for Joy with Hymns of Pascha (an informative song-filled session w/ Dr Jessica)

come for Vespers at 5PM
stay for Fellowship (~6-8PM)
34 N Main St, Norwood

UPCOMING DIOCESAN & PARISH EVENTS

Book Study

Thursday, March 13, 5:45 – 7:15PM @ the church. This session will feature Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*, Part 1. See Joseph Stark with questions. Bring friends!

Work Days

This Friday, March 14, 2:00 PM to 5:00 PM.

Men's Retreat – Cold Weather Camping

Friday, March 14 – Sunday, March 16 @ the Adirondacks. Contact Subdeacon Julio if you're interested.

Memorial Saturdays

March 15th and March 22nd we will have Liturgy for Memorial Saturday. You can still submit names to Fr Gregory to be commemorated.

Lenten Fellowship

This series will continue this Saturday, March 15 (see attached flyer). It will be potluck style – bring something Lenten (no meat/dairy) to share *if you'd like*, but food is in no way a requirement for attending.

Parish Council Meeting

Tuesday, March 18, 7:30 PM @ the Hermitage.

Sunday School

On Sunday, March 23, we invite the kids to participate in a Sunday School lesson at the beginning of coffee hour. We will meet in the sanctuary and learn a hymn for the Sunday of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross.

Lenten Women's Retreat

Friday, March 26 – Sunday, March 28 @ St Andrew's Camp. The theme is "Be Who You Are in the Body of Christ," and the keynote speaker is Mother Melania of Holy Assumption Monastery in Calistoga, CA. Learn more [here](#).

OTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS

SAFETY – Please steer clear of the basement as work intensifies. You may still use the bathroom, but please avoid the kitchen area.

Coffee Hour – We are looking for someone to host coffee hour this coming Sunday. Sign up [here](#) or on the list at Church.

Commemoration Lists – Submit names of Living and Departed to be commemorated at the Divine Liturgy. Lists can be found near the candles.

PARISH NEEDS

- Removal of wood and other debris from the basement
- Help with general cleaning of the nave, side room, and bathroom

God's mercy is hidden in our mercy towards our neighbor.

St. Maximus the Confessor