

The Second Sunday of Lent

The first Sunday of Lent is called the Triumph of Orthodoxy, because it remembers the restoration of icons to the churches and the confirmation of the truth of Orthodox belief. **The Second Sunday of Lent** is dedicated to one of the pillars of Orthodoxy, St. Gregory Palamas the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Thessalonica. St. Gregory established a triumph of his own, denouncing the claim that God cannot be met through contemplative prayer. Reaffirming that the still, small voice of God is heard when we make our minds get out of our own way and let our hearts pray like they are already burning to do.



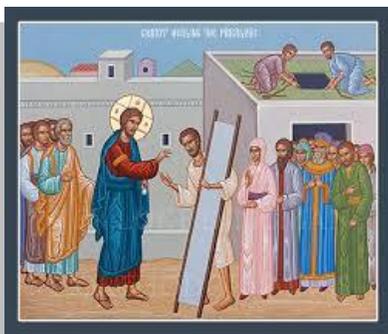
Icon courtesy of Dmitry Shkolnik

St. Gregory was one of the main supporters of a theory of contemplation called **Hesychasm**. Hesychasm means "prayerful stillness before God." It is prayer of the heart; it is a gathering of thoughts and feelings in the presence of God by means of spiritual reading and prayer. It is a quiet time with God. By following the ways of Hesychasm, we discover Christ hidden in our hearts. He is waiting for us to discover Him in stillness through quiet contemplation.

We cannot know God; we cannot define the infinite. God is incomprehensible in His **essence**. The phrase "Essence of God" refers to God's personal characteristics or to the aspects of His personality that can be described to a degree, but they cannot be fully defined.

The Bible is the Word of God, and as such it reveals those facts about the Creator that He has seen fit to reveal about Himself. God, who is love, allows us to know Him through His divine **energies**, those actions whereby He reveals Himself to us in creation, providence, and redemption. It is through the divine energies, therefore, that we achieve union with God.

St. Gregory Palamas gives us the key: This Sunday is a day to remember what we often forget. The stillness. The heart. It's all there. It's just up to us to remember where we left it, buried it, and forgot it. St. Gregory earnestly taught that ordinary people could see the divine light of God, could breathe the breath of God once more, if they will truly give themselves *to prayer, to fasting, to worship, to good works, to humility, to real change*, to becoming the kind of people concerning whom others can truly say, "Here is one in whom God lives, in whom God breathes. Here is one in whom I see God's glory." Are you one of these?



Today's Gospel message carries several important lessons for our journey to salvation. The first is that we must come to Christ to be healed of our spiritual sicknesses. Christ did not just heal the paralytic but He also forgave his sins, which was more important. Secondly, just as the paralytic's friends helped him, we as the Body of Christ need to help one another. The passage stresses that it was not the faith of the paralytic alone that made him well. Only when Jesus saw "their faith" did He forgive his sins and heal him. Thirdly, we can think of prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and obedience as the four friends that help us come before Christ and be healed.

By the hand of Father Luke Dingman <http://www.lukedingman.com>

Resources: <http://steliascathedral.com/2016/03/26/second-sunday-of-great-lent-st-gregory-palamas/>
<http://lent.goarch.org/family/2ndsundayoflent.asp>
<https://craftycontemplative.com/2012/03/13/a-childs-lesson-on-st-gregory-palamas/>
<http://lent.goarch.org/family/2ndsundayoflent.asp>