

THE ORTHODOX WEEKLY BULETIN VESTAL, CLIFFWOOD, NEW JERSEY

ST. GREGORY THE ILLUMINATOR

The person who brought the light of Christianity to the Armenian People

THE ILLUMINATOR OF THE ARMENIANS

The history of Christianity in Armenia can be traced back to Apostolic times. Holy Tradition tells us that the Apostles Thaddeus and Bartholomew first preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ there. The man largely credited with establishing the church in this pagan nation, however, is depicted on today's Cover: **ST. GREGORY THE ILLUMINATOR.** Gregory was born into a noble family, but received his formal education far from the palaces of Armenia. He studies in Caesarea in the region of Cappadocia, where he embraced Christianity.

After the death of his wife, Gregory returned to Armenia with his two sons. While serving the government of the pagan King Tiridates, Gregory actively served Christ as well, winning scores of converts for his Saviour. Upon discovering the missionary labors of Gregory, the enraged king had him thrown into a deep pit, filled with poisonous reptiles. Miraculously, Gregory was protected by God in this deadly environment for 14 years! Realizing the wickedness of his ways, King Tiridates released Gregory. The repentant ruler was baptized by his former prisoner and arranged for him to return to Caesarea to be consecrated at "*Bishop of Armenia.*"

Upon returning to his homeland, St. Gregory, with the assistance of the king, set about the task of converting the entire country to Christianity. Through his untiring efforts, Armenia became the first nation to proclaim the Christian faith as the official religion of the people. After enlightening an entire land about Jesus Christ, St. Gregory died in 332 A. D.

