

THE ORTHODOX WEEKLY BULETIN VESTAL, CLIFFWOOD, NEW JERSEY

STRIVE TO UNITE YOURSELF WITH CHRIST

On the Second Sunday of the Geat Fast, the Church provides us with a great teacher on PRAYER. Honored this day is ST. GREGORY OF PALAMAS, famed Byzantine monk and theologian of the 14th century. He was rasied in Constantinople, then became an ascetic on Mount Athos. From there he came to Thessalonica, Greece, and became its Archbishop. Born in 1296, Gregory fell asleep in Christ in 1359.

Over the centuries, the ascetics of the East developed a system of mystical contemplation of God which had as its aim the union of the person with the Lord. This has been called “deification in Christ.” The method involved physical exercise, bodlly posture, silence proper breating, and the Jesus Prayer:

“Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.”

The height of this spiritual experience was said to be a vision of the Divine Light, the radiance which Jesus showed at His transfiguration. It is termed “Hesychasm,” which means tranquility or quietness.

Here is what St. Gregory had to say about praying withou ceasing: *Let no one think 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 Christians to remain always in prayer . . .*” Bear in mind the method of prayer . . . namely by prayer in mind. And this we can always do if we wish. For when we sit down to work with our hands, when we walk, when we eat . . . We can always pray mentally – the true prayer pleasing to God. Let us work with the body and pray with the soul . . .