



March 11, 2009

REFLECTIONS OF HIS EMINENCE METROPOLITAN ALEXIOS ON THE SUNDAY OF ST. GREGORY PALAMAS

"When we strive with diligent sobriety to keep watch over our rational faculties, to control and correct them, how else can we succeed in this task except by collecting our mind, which is dispersed abroad through the senses, and bringing it back into the world within, into the heart itself, which is the storehouse of all our thoughts?" St. Gregory Palamas

This Sunday is dedicated to St Gregory Palamas who affirmed that we carry within ourselves two spirits or tendencies, one for good, the other for evil. The tendency for good can only be developed in us by acquiring the grace of God, which can only come to us if we repent, if we accept the process of fasting and prayer, and dedicate ourselves to it. St. Gregory was not talking about some theory or abstract idea, but about the hard reality of sin and the bright hope of God's grace which he had experienced himself.

From the great teachers and ascetics of our Church, we also learn that the devil hates goodness and does everything he can to push us away from God. The further away we get from God the more disturbed and distorted our lives become. Sometimes even to the point that we let our shame and our knowledge of our sin keep us away from the healing medicine of the Sacrament of Confession and the blessed sweet relief of a clean and peaceful heart.

That's why at this time of year, we must realize that we are going to have to work hard, to struggle, to strive to overcome the obstacles that the devil places in our path. We must struggle to

resist evil and temptation, to do what is against our conscience. Our Church offers us the tools of prayer, fasting, and increased opportunities for worship and charity in order to "fight the good fight." To these, we can also add reading the Bible, and the Fathers, or spiritually uplifting books such as "The Ladder," by St. John Climacus, which gives us a beautiful picture of how to elevate ourselves step by step.

With these thoughts, I pray that this period will be a time of reflection, a time of renewal and time that will allow us to be spiritually transformed in our hearts and lives. With my paternal blessings and love, I prayerfully wish you a blessed Great Lent, as together we seek forgiveness and salvation.