

Last week, I explained that I would be starting a series of homilies on the Meaning of the Beatitudes (Matt 5:3-10). These will be based on the commentary given to us by Saint Gregory of Nyssa.

*And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:*

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted.*

*Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.*

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.*

*Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.*

*Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.*

*Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.*

*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

First a brief comment about Saint Gregory. He is the younger brother of Basil the Great and became the standard bearer for the teachings of Basil after Basil died. Many believe his most important work was his contribution to the Second Ecumenical Council where he was instrumental in crafting and gaining agreement on the final addition made to the Creed. Here is what is written in part in The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church:

"Saint Gregory delivered the inaugural address at the synod... Before the closing of the synod, by a decree of the emperor, issued at Herakleia, Saint Gregory was nominated as one of the bishops who were to be esteemed as chief authorities on the Orthodox Faith... Also, through the God-inspired endeavors of Saint Gregory of Nyssa, the Symbol of the Faith (Creed) was enlarged by the addition of the article concerning the Holy Spirit, and four other clauses were also added to the Creed. The additional clause "of Whose kingdom there shall be no end" was supplied, due to the heresy of Apollinarios the millenarian. Article 8, in reference to the Holy Spirit, was also provided: "...the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, Who proceeds from the Father, Who with the Father and the Son is equally worshipped and glorified, Who spoke by the prophets." In his treatise On The Holy Spirit, written against the followers of Makedonios, he affirms that "we confess that the Holy Spirit is of the same rank as the Father and the Son, that, while not to be confounded with the Father in being never originated, nor with the Son in being the Only-begotten."...

In the year 383, St Gregory of Nyssa participated in a Council at Constantinople, where he preached a sermon on the divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit. In 386, he was again at Constantinople, and he was asked to speak the funeral oration in memory of the empress Placilla. Again in 394 St Gregory was present in Constantinople at a local Council, convened to resolve church matters in Arabia. St Gregory of Nyssa died soon after the Council of Constantinople.

## St. Alexis of Wilkes-Barre Orthodox Christian Church

108 East Main Street

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### Scripture Readings

Romans 5: 1-10

Matthew 6:22-33

### Commemorations

All Saints of Britain and Ireland.  
Virgin Martyr Febronia of Nisibis (ca. 304). Ss. Peter and Fevronia (tonsured David and Euphrosyne), Wonderworkers of Múrom (1228). Ven. Dionysius the Hagiorite (1375). Ven. Dometius of Dionysiou (1405). Monk Martyr Procopius of Iveron.

### Information

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## Welcome to our Guests

We welcome all visitors to our Divine Liturgy and services. While Holy Communion may only be received by prepared Orthodox Christians, our non-Orthodox guests are welcome to participate in our prayers and hymns and to join us in venerating the Cross and receiving blessed bread at the conclusion of the Liturgy. Please sign our guest card and join us for refreshments and fellowship after the services.

Feel free to ask questions before or after the services. Any member of our Council or Congregation are glad to assist you. Literature about the Orthodox faith and this parish can be found in the narthex (back of the Church).

Our Parish Council Representatives are:

President - Susan Hayes  
Vice President - Deborah Bray  
Secretary - SubDeacon Joseph Brubaker  
Treasurer - Susan Egan  
Member at Large - James Pepitone  
Member at Large - Demetra Tolis



## Please continue to pray for...

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Deborah, Robert, Olga, Daria, Daria, Dori, John, Evelyn, June, Nina, Joan, John, Alex, Alan, Luke, Kathryn, Veronica, Darlyne, Irene, Nancy, Dionysian, Elena, Jevon, Ivan and Joscean. And for...John, Jennifer, Nicholas, Isabel, Elizabeth, John, Jordan, Michael, Lee, Eva, Neil, Gina, Joey, Michael, Madelyn, Sofie, Katrina, Olena, and Valeriy.

## This week we celebrate:

For Olga Kucharski on the occasion of her birthday.

## *This week's services and events*

Tuesday, June 27, 2017

8:30a - Daily Matins

9:00a - *Adult Study*

Wednesday, June 28, 2017 - Feast of Sts Peter & Paul

4:30p - Open Doors

6:30p - Great Vespers with Litya

Thursday, June 29, 2017

8:30a - Akathist to Sts Peter and Paul

7:00p - Adult Study - *The Sacraments*

Saturday, July 1, 2017

5:30p - Great Vespers

Sunday, July 2, 2017

9:30a - Divine Liturgy

Meeting with the Choir

## *Announcements*

We come to the end of the Apostles' Fast with the celebration of Great Vespers on Wednesday. Please arrange your schedule accordingly and plan to attend.

On Thursday, we will hold the second session of our study of the Sacraments of the Church. Talk with some of those who have attended thus far; I think it's safe to say that it hasn't been what they've expected!

## Why Study the Beatitudes?

If Jesus were to give a power point presentation the Beatitudes would be his bullet points on the screen.

They are important because they represent a summary of all of Jesus' teaching.

We do not know historically exactly when or where Jesus spoke these important words. We do know it was on a "mountain. Possibly Mount Tabor. His disciples followed Him there and he instructed them.

Saint Gregory writes,

Who among those present is a disciple of the Word, and sufficiently so to ascend with Him from the low ground—from superficial and ignoble thoughts to the spiritual mountain of sublime contemplation? This mountain leaves behind all shadows cast by the rising hills of wickedness; on the contrary, it is lit up on all sides by the rays of the true light, and from its summit all things that remain invisible to those imprisoned in the cave may be seen in the pure air of truth. Now the Word of God Himself, who calls blessed those who have ascended with Him, specifies the nature and number of the things that are contemplated from this height. He points them out, as it were, with His finger; here the Kingdom of Heaven, there the inheritance of the earth that is above, then mercy, justice, consolation, kinship with the God of all creation, and the fruit of persecution, that is, to become a friend of God. And whatever other things there may be visible, the Word points them out with His finger from the summit of the mountain, so that hope may contemplate them from the height of the peak.

See how Saint Gregory uplifts us! He is planning on taking us on a journey to a high spiritual place, "the spiritual mountain of sublime contemplation." As we will see later he views the Beatitudes as a series of steps leading us to union with God, and when we reach the summit we will find the Lord in all His glory.

Saint Gregory invites us as sinners to make the journey up the mountain. He wants us to clearly understand what Jesus is saying so we can "follow Him to the heights," to the "summit of hope."

Saint Gregory continues,

Since, then, the Lord ascends the mountain, let us listen to Isaias who cries: Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord. If we are weak through sin, let our feeble hands and weak knees be strengthened, as the Prophet instructs us. For when we have reached the summit, we shall find Him who heals all illness and languor, who takes up our infirmities and bears our diseases. Let us therefore ascend quickly, so that we may be established with Isaias on the summit of hope and see from this vantage point the good things that the Word shows to those who follow Him to the heights. May God the Word open His mouth also for us, and teach us those things which to hear is bliss. May the beginning of the teaching He pronounces become to us the beginning of contemplation.

As we meditate on these eight points, we too will grow in the virtues.