

reputation as an orator and a theologian. His works fall under three headings, namely his poems, his epistles, and his orations. Much of his work has been preserved and published. The *editio princeps* of the poems being the Aldine (1504), while the first edition of his collected works appeared in Paris in 1609-11.

The poetical compositions comprise autobiographical verses, epigrams, and epistles. The greater part of this work was written in advanced years, and perhaps rather as a relaxation from the cares and troubles of life than as a serious pursuit.

The prose epistles, by common consent, belong to the finest literary production of Gregory's age. All that are extant are finished compositions; and that the writer excelled in this kind of composition is shown from one of them (Ep. Ccix, to Nicobulus) in which he enlarges on the rules by which all letter-writers should be guided.

Gregory is recognized as one of the most foremost orators in the history of the Christian Church. One reading his orations are struck by the noble phraseology, perfect command of the purest Greek, high imaginative powers, lucidity and incisiveness of thought, fiery zeal and transport sincerity of intention, by which they are distinguished.

No summary can give any adequate idea of the combined subtlety and lucidity of thought of his discourses. A French critic observes, Gregory has summed up and closed the controversy of a whole century. The best evidence of their value and power lies in the fact that for 14 centuries they have been a mine whence the greatest theologians of Christendom have drawn treasures of wisdom to illustrate and support their teaching on the deepest mysteries of the Catholic Faith.

* (excerpted from: www.newadvent.org; www.cin.org)

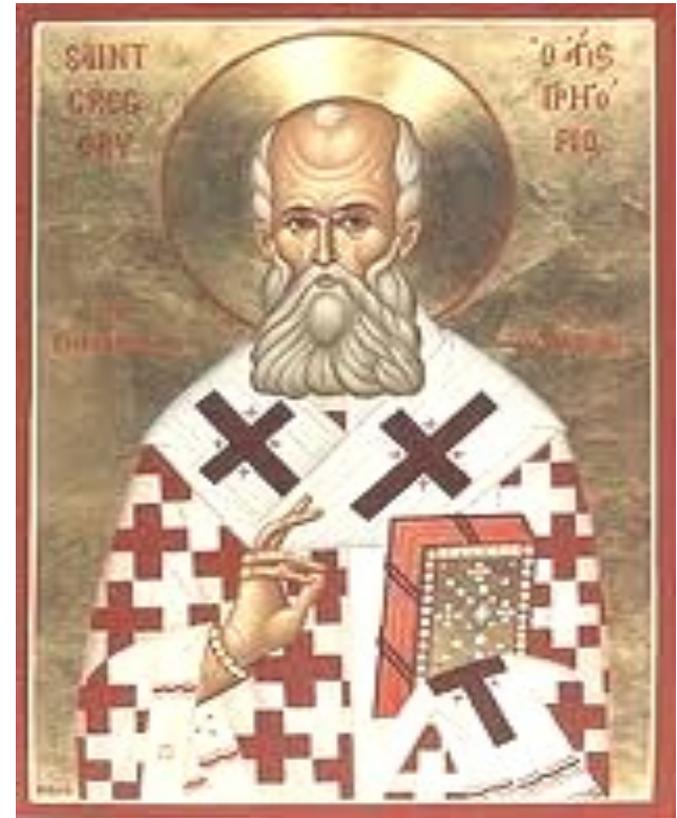
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Saint Gregory Nazianzen

Archbishop of Constantinople

Doctor of the Church

Feast Day May 9



REFLECTION

"We must overcome our enemies,"
said Saint Gregory, "by forbearance.

Let them be punished by their own conscience,
not by our wrath.

Let us not at once fell the fig tree,
from which a more skillful gardener may yet entice fruit."

Saint Gregory Nazianzen

*Saint Gregory was born at Arianzus, in Asia Minor, c. 325; died at the same place, 389. His father was a bishop of Nazianzus—in that place and time a married clergy was the normal rule. He was educated in Cappadocia, in Palestine, at Alexandria, and then went on to spend some ten years studying in Athens.

Saint Gregory was by nature a gentle man, and by genius and training, a scholar, but throughout his life he was involved in controversies, disputes and misunderstandings in which his sensitive and essentially reasonable temperament suffered much, and not only from his ostensible 'enemies.' Nevertheless, he has been declared a doctor of the Church, and he won for himself the title 'the Theologian'; he is an outstanding example of those saints whose lives, as far as immediate results go, seem a series of disappointments and ill-success, yet who with the passage of time are seen increasingly to be great both in themselves and in their work.

It was during his trime in Athens, that he became a close friend of Saint Basil. When he was thirty years old, Gregory left Athens and joined Saint Basil in a life of retreat, prayer, and study, which foreshadowed the pattern of monastic life both in the east and in the west. Gregory then went home to help his ageing father, who in a manner not uncommon at the time almost forcibly ordained him. Shocked deeply at the task that had been forced on his profound sense of unworthiness, Gregory fled to Basil, but soon returned, and wrote a treatise, an apology for his flight. Gregory was one of those who could touch nothing without leaving on it the seal of a mind of exceptional power and fineness: this treatise is a study of the priesthood which has been a source of inspiration to such as Saint

Gregory the Great, and is still to all who deeply consider the subject today.

During the next few years, Gregory's life at Nazianzus was saddened by the deaths of his brother and sister. About this time Basil was made bishop of Caesarea and Metropolitan of Cappadocia, and soon afterwards the Emperor Valens, who was jealous of Basil's influence, divided Cappadocia into two provinces. Basil continued to claim ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the whole province, and to strengthen his position Basil founded a new see at Sasima, and resolved to have Gregory as its first bishop.

After a period of troubled work during which time his friendship with St. Basil was marred by his own inability to be belligerent where the things of the church were concerned, he spent five peaceful years in retirement from the affairs of church government. He was then invited to go to Constantinople, where most of the churches were given over to the Arian heresy. Here the popular method of solving religious disputes was by fighting in the streets or by what was even more distasteful to such a person—intrigue. Gregory went with many misgivings. His lack of pomp made him personally unpopular, the Arian rabble set out to annoy him, and friends whom he trusted betrayed him. He was made bishop of Constantinople, but the opposition was so noisy that Gregory insisted on resigning. As soon as he could he went into retirement, spending his last years contently in study, writing and mortification.

Gregory's fame as one of the greatest lights of the Eastern Church, rests on his voluminous writings, and of his