

and his brother Basil learned much of what was currently said about the Wonderworker from their grandmother, Saint Macrina, who was born in Neo-Caesarea about the time of Gregory's death. Saint Basil says that the whole tenor of his life expressed the height of evangelical fervor. In his devotion he showed the greatest reverence and recollection and never covered his head in prayer, and he loved simplicity and modesty of speech: "yea" and "nay" were the measure of his ordinary conversation. He abhorred lies and falsehood; no anger or bitterness ever appeared in his words or behavior.

The persecution of Decius breaking out in 250, Saint Gregory advised his flock to hide rather than to expose themselves to the danger of losing their faith; he himself withdrew into the desert, accompanied only by a pagan priest whom he had converted and who was then his deacon. The persecutors were informed that he was concealed upon a certain mountain and sent soldiers to apprehend him. They returned, saying they had seen nothing but two trees; upon which the informer went to the place and finding the bishop and his deacon at their prayers, whom the soldiers had mistaken for two trees, judged their escape to have been miraculous and became a Christian. The persecution was followed by a plague, and the plague by an irruption of Goths into Asia Minor, so that it is not surprising to find that, with these added to the ordinary cares and duties of the episcopate, Saint Gregory was not a voluminous writer. What these cares and duties were he sets out in his "Canonical Letter", occasioned by problems arising from the barbarian raids. It is stated that Saint Gregory organized secular amusements in connection with the annual commemorations of the martyrs, which attracted pagans as well as popularizing the religious gatherings among Christians... He is the sole missionary we know of, during these first three centuries, who employed such methods; and he was a highly-educated Greek.

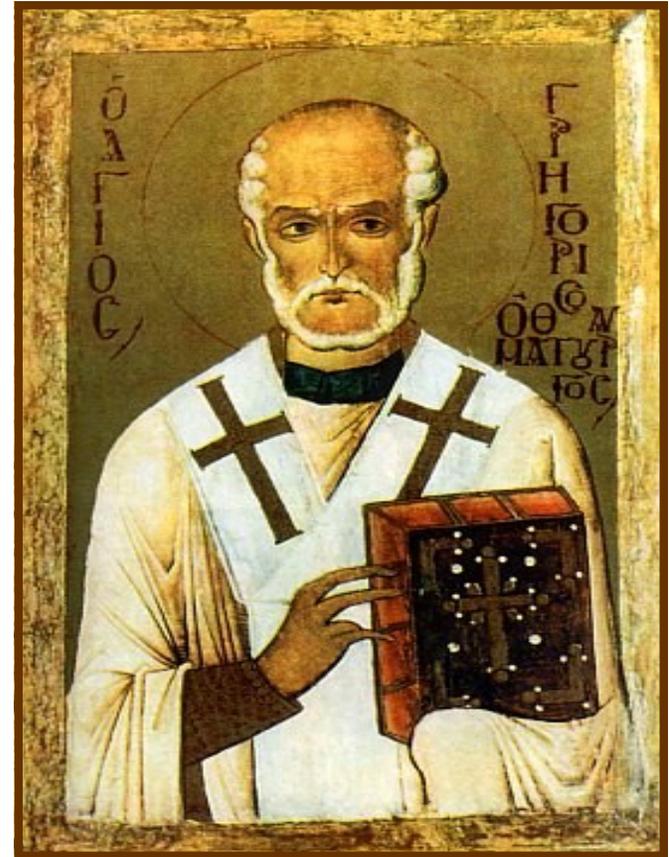
A little before his death, Saint Gregory Thaumaturgus inquired how many infidels yet remained in the city, and being told that there were seventeen, he thankfully acknowledged as a great mercy that, having found but seventeen Christian at his coming thither, he left but seventeen idolaters. Having then prayed for their conversion, and the confirmation and sanctification of those that believed in the true God, he enjoined his friends not to procure him any special place of burial but that, as he lived as a pilgrim in the world claiming nothing for himself, so after death he might enjoy the common lot. His body is said to have been ultimately transferred to a Byzantine monastery in Calabria, and there is a considerable local cultus of Saint Gregory in southern Italy and Sicily, where he is invoked in times of earthquake and, on account of stopping the flooding of the River Lycus, against inundations.

* (excerpted from: www.awakentoprayer.org; [//en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org))

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Saint Gregory The Wonderworker

Feast Day: November 17th



**Saint Gregory of Nyssa reports
that Gregory the Wonderworker
received the first known apparition of Mary.**

Saint Gregory the Wonderworker

*Originally known as Theodore ("gift of God"), afterwards called Gregory, and from his miracles surnamed Thaumaturgus or Worker of Wonders, was born at Neo-Caesarea (the capital of Pontus in Asia Minor) around 213 AD. He was born of parents eminent in rank and pagan in religion. At the age of fourteen years of age, he lost his father, but continued his education, which was directed towards a career in the law. His sister going to join her husband, an official at Caesarea in Palestine, was accompanied by Gregory and his brother Athenodorus, who was afterwards a bishop and suffered much for the faith of Jesus Christ.

Origen had arrived at Caesarea a little before and opened a school there, and at the first meeting with Gregory and his brother discerned in them the capacity for learning and dispositions to virtue which encouraged him to inspire them with a love of truth and an eager desire of attaining the sovereign good of man. Fascinated with his discourse, they entered his school and laid aside all thoughts of going to the law-school of Beirut, as they had originally intended.

Gregory does justice to Origen by assuring us that he excited them to virtue no less by his example than by his words; and tells us that he inculcated that in all things the most valuable knowledge is that of the first cause, and thus he led them on to theology. He opened to their view all that the philosophers and poets had written concerning God, showing what was true and what was erroneous in the doctrines of each and demonstrating the incompetence of human reason alone for attaining to certain knowledge in the most important of all points, that of religion. The conversion of the brothers to Christianity was complete and they continued their studies under the master for some years, going back home about the year 238.

Before he took leave of Origen, Gregory thanked him publicly in an oration before a large audience, in which he extols the method and wisdom by which his great master conducted him through his studies, and gives interesting particulars of the way in which Origen taught. A letter also is extant from the master to the disciple: he calls Gregory his respected son and exhorts him to employ for the service of religion all

the talents which he had received from God and to borrow from the heathen philosophy what might serve that purpose, as the Jews converted the spoils of the Egyptians to the building of the tabernacle of the true God.

On his return to Neo-Caesarea, Saint Gregory intended to practice law, but within a short time, although there were only seventeen Christians in the town, he was appointed to be its bishop; but of his long episcopate few certain particulars have come down to us. Saint Gregory of Nyssa gives a good deal of information in his panegyric of the saint with regard to the deeds which earned him the title of Wonderworker, but there is little doubt that a good deal of it is legendary. However, it is known that Neo-Caesarea was rich and populous, deeply buried in vice and idolatry, that Saint Gregory, animated with zeal and charity, applied himself vigorously to the charge committed to him, and that God was pleased to confer upon him an extraordinary power of working miracles. Saint Basil tells us that "through the cooperation of the Spirit, Gregory had a formidable power over evil spirits; he altered the course of rivers in the name of Christ; he dried up a lake that was a cause of dissension between two brothers; and his foretelling of the future made him equal with the other prophets. Such were his signs and wonders that both friends and enemies of the truth looked on him as another Moses."

When he first took possession of his see, Gregory accepted the invitation of Musonius, a person of importance in the city, and lodged with him. That very day he began to preach and before night had converted a number sufficient to form a little church. Early the next morning, the doors were crowded with sick persons, whom he cured at the same time that he wrought the conversion of their souls. Christians contributed either money or labor. The circumstances in which Saint Gregory caused Alexander the Charcoal-burner to be chosen bishop of Comana have been narrated in the notice of that saint on August 1; and his wisdom and tact caused him to be referred to in civil as well as religious causes, and then his interrupted legal studies came in useful. Gregory of Nyssa