

PO Box 271227 + Flower Mound, TX + 75027 + 1-800-803-0118 + www.dritaly.com

Let us Imitate God's Generosity

by *Saint Gregory Nazianzen*

Early Church Father and Doctor of the Church



This excellent reflection on one of the three pillars of Lenten penance, almsgiving or generosity, is an excerpt from a sermon on the love of poverty by Saint Gregory of Nazianzen (Oratio 14, De Pauperum amore, 23-25: PG 35, 887-890). It is used in the Roman Office of Readings for Monday of the First week in Lent along with the accompanying biblical reading about the vocation of Moses as found in Exodus 6:2-13.

Recognize to whom you owe the fact that you exist, that you breathe, that you understand, that you are wise, and, above all, that you know God and hope for the kingdom of heaven and the vision of glory, now darkly as in a mirror but then with greater fullness and purity. You have been made a son of God, co-heir with Christ. Where did you get all this, and from whom?

Let me turn to what is of less importance: the visible world around us. What benefactor has enabled you to look out upon the beauty of the sky, the sun in its course, the circle of the moon, the countless number of stars, with the harmony and order that are theirs, like the music of a harp? Who has blessed you with rain, with the art of husbandry, with different kinds of food, with the arts, with houses, with laws, with states, with a life of humanity and culture, with friendship and the easy familiarity of kinship?

Who has given you dominion over animals, those that are tame and those that provide you with food? Who has made you lord and master of everything on earth? In short, who has endowed you with all that makes man superior to all other living creatures?

Is it not God who asks you now in your turn to show yourself generous above all other creatures and for the sake of all other creatures? Because we have received from him so many wonderful gifts, will we not be ashamed to refuse him

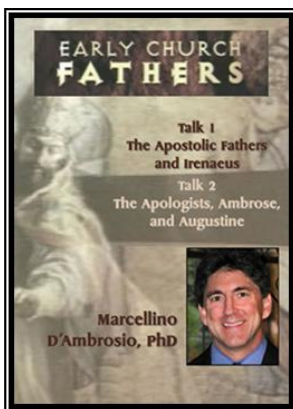
PO Box 271227 + Flower Mound, TX + 75027 + 1-800-803-0118 + www.dritaly.com

this one thing only, our generosity? Though he is God and Lord he is not afraid to be known as our Father. Shall we for our part repudiate those who are our kith and kin?

Brethren and friends, let us never allow ourselves to misuse what has been given us by God's gift. If we do, we shall hear Saint Peter say: *Be ashamed of yourselves for holding on to what belongs to someone else. Resolve to imitate God's justice, and no one will be poor.* Let us not labour to heap up and hoard riches while others remain in need. If we do, the prophet Amos will speak out against us with sharp and threatening words: *Come now, you that say: When will the new moon be over, so that we may start selling? When will the sabbath be over, so that we may start opening our treasures?*

Let us put into practice the supreme and primary law of God. He sends down rain on just and sinful alike, and causes the sun to rise on all without distinction. To all earth's creatures he has given the broad earth, the springs, the rivers and the forests. He has given the air to the birds, and the waters to those who live in the water. He has given abundantly to all the basic needs of life, not as a private possession, not restricted by law, not divided by boundaries, but as common to all, amply and in rich measure. His gifts are not deficient in any way, because he wanted to give equality of blessing to equality of worth, and to show the abundance of his generosity.

Gregory of Nazianzen was patriarch archbishop of Constantinople (now Istanbul) at the time of the First Council of Constantinople which in 381 revised the Nicene Creed which we use in Sunday in the liturgy. He is one of the greatest of the Early Church Fathers.



The Early Church Fathers

A society characterized by the loss of respect for life, violence, exotic religious cults, sexual promiscuity, homosexuality, and even pedophilia. Sound familiar? The Early Church Fathers succeeded in bringing a Pagan society to Christ. If we pay attention to what they taught, we will succeed in doing the same for our own de-Christianized society!

Album 1: The Apostolic Fathers and Irenaeus

Album 2: The Apologists, Ambrose, and Augustine

[Early Church Father VHS Set—\\$44.95](#)

[Early Church Father 2 DVD Set—\\$49.95](#)

[Early Church Fathers 2 CD Set—\\$18.00](#)

[Early Church Fathers 2 Audio Set—\\$18.00](#)