

# ICHC NTKA SAINTS PETER AND PAUL ORTHODOX CHURCH

A Parish of the Orthodox Church in America  
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## O LORD, SAVE YOUR PEOPLE AND BLESS YOUR INHERITANCE!

<b>March 13, 2011</b>		<b>Sunday of the Triumph of Orthodoxy</b>	Divine Liturgy	9:30 am
March 16	Wednesday	Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts		6:00 pm
March 18	Friday	Akathist for the Departed		6:00 pm
March 19	Saturday	Soul Saturday Divine Liturgy		9:30 am
	Saturday	Great Vespers		4:00 pm
<b>March 20</b>		<b>Sunday of Saint Gregory Palamas</b>	Divine Liturgy	9:30 am

### Archpastoral Letter for Great Lent 2011

Beloved Clergy and Faithful of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey:

*Christ is in our midst!*

In the very first sermon Our Lord ever preached and so many other times that He spoke, the theme was the same: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17). Our Church recalls that message throughout the year, but most especially during the season of the Great Fast, when she calls her spiritual children to repentance.

So often we think of repentance in negative terms: the added burdens of more services and longer prayers; the “giving up” of meat and dairy products and the desserts we love; and a call to come to confession, viewed by many as the most difficult of sacraments.

But there is another way, a positive manner, of viewing repentance. The word “repentance” – in Greek, “*metanoia*” – literally means “turning around” our “*nous*” – which the holy fathers interpret as our “heart.” It is turning our hearts back to God, after immersing ourselves in the things of the world; it is coming home to the Father, like the prodigal son did, after squandering our time and talents; it is opening up our heart and once again enthroning God there, where our passions have been ruling.

Rather than looking at Lent as a time of dreaded demands, let us look at it as the saints of our Church have viewed it: a time of renewal, an opportunity for regeneration, another chance for us to regain our inheritance as sons and daughters of our heavenly Father.

During the next several weeks, the Church will provide us with several avenues of coming closer to Christ our Savior, opening ourselves to Him, and enthroning Him in our hearts as “Lord and Master of my life.” I urge you to take them seriously, create a personal discipline that includes as much of these as possible, and thus re-establish as close a relationship as you can with “the author of our salvation.”

**Prayer.** A child will ask, “*Why do we pray?*” We pray because we seek communion with God, and we pray because the Lord Himself gave us that example – before every event in His life recorded in the Gospel of Luke, He is found to be at prayer, privately on a mountain or in a garden, away from everyone, alone in communion with the Father. In His famous Sermon on the Mount, Christ instructs us, “When you pray (not if, but when), go into your room, and when you have shut the door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly” (Matt. 6:6) ... and then after telling us not to pray like the heathen with vain repetitions, He gives us the model for praying, the Lord’s Prayer, for calling upon God and saying: “Our Father who art in heaven ...”

I encourage all of you to increase your prayer life this Lenten Season, drawing closer to God through a more faithful daily conversation with Him from the depth of your soul. Whether you add an extra prayer, an extra repetition of the Jesus Prayer, or an extra canon of repentance, set a rule for yourself that you will follow faithfully every day. If you need guidance, ask your spiritual father. But turn aside from all the excuses of the hustle and bustle of daily pressures, and open your heart through sincere prayer to the Lord who loves us more than we love ourselves.

**Divine Services.** That same young person may ask, “*Why do we need to go to Church?*” We go in order to further our relationship with the Lord – through corporate, liturgical prayer – and because Jesus Himself gave us that example by attending services in the synagogue every Sabbath and in the temple every feast day. Our Church offers us several services to participate in throughout the Great Fast, in addition to Saturday evening Vespers and the Sunday Liturgy: Forgiveness Vespers to open this sacred season, the Great Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete to introduce the theme of repentance during the first week, Memorial Saturdays when we remember our loved ones who have gone to eternal rest, the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy which offers us additional opportunities to receive the precious Body and Blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Bridegroom Matins and the full complement of Holy Week services that make present to us the events of the last week of the life of the Suffering Servant who “was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities ... and by whose stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5).

I urge all of our dedicated clergy to offer as many of the prescribed liturgical services as possible, in order to give your parishioners every opportunity to grow closer to the Lord in this sacred season. And I urge all of our diocesan faithful to seriously strive to attend as many divine services during Lent as they possibly can. Our liturgical worship is patterned after the heavenly worship John the Theologian was privileged to see in the vision of Revelation 4-5. We must truly love these divine services, because they are a taste of the heavenly worship we hope to share in for all eternity.

**Fasting.** *“Why do we fast?”* The obvious answer is that Our Lord Himself fasted forty days and forty nights, eating nothing, after which, the Gospel tells us, He was hungry. Fasting is an ascetical exercise that shows that we have control over our bodies, over food, over drink. Our fasting reverses the failure of Adam and Eve who did not fast from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Jesus tells us, “When you fast (not if, but when), do not be like the hypocrites ...” (Matthew 6:16). The centuries-old calendar of our Church eases us into the prescribed fasting guidelines: on Meat-fare Sunday, we give up meat and meat products, and abstain from them until Pascha; on Cheese-fare Sunday, we give up cheese and other milk products, and abstain from them until the Feast of the Resurrection. This is a small sacrifice when we consider that Our Lord gave up His life on the Cross for us and for our salvation. I urge all our diocesan clergy and laypeople to follow this time-honored tradition of our faith and embrace the guidelines of fasting this Lenten season as faithfully as we are able.

But fasting is more than abstaining from food. It is also, and more importantly, abstaining from sin. Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk instructs us in this area of our spiritual life with these words: “An excellent faster is one who restrains himself from every impurity, who imposes abstinence on his tongue and restrains it from idle talk, foul language, slander, condemnation, flattery, and all manner of evil speaking, who abstains from anger, rage, malice and vengeance, and withdraws from every evil.” I pray that we will all be able to live this Great Fast in the spirit of the wisdom of this great saint of our Church.

**Almsgiving.** *“Why should we do acts of charity?”* Again, because the Lord Himself did works that revealed love. He gave of Himself to make the blind see, the deaf hear, the crippled walk, and the dead rise. He calls upon us to give food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, shelter to the stranger, clothing to the naked, visitation to the sick and imprisoned. And when you have done this, in the Parable of the Last Judgment, He tells us, “you did it to Me.” He wants us not to do charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. “When (not if, but when) you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet ... do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing” (Matthew 6:1,6).

In this Lenten Season, the saints of our Church encourage us to do even more works of charity than we do usually. The holy fathers direct us to use the money we have not spent on the rich foods – from which we are abstaining – to help feed the poor and hungry. Saint Basil guides us to consider that the clothes or shoes in our closets we are not using really belong to those who have none. Saint John Chrysostom says so beautifully in one of his famous sermons: “Almsgiving is giving to Christ Himself, at an altar more holy than that in the sanctuary” (Homily 20 on 2 Corinthians). In this spirit, I urge that all of us seek to do works of almsgiving, from the funds we save by fasting, that will be of assistance to the “least of the brethren” – in the name of the Lord Himself.

**The Mysteries.** *“Why Confession? Why Communion?”* The most intimate expressions of our relationship with Our Lord are the Holy Mysteries. The Lenten Season is the perfect time to “spring clean” our souls of all that has accumulated over the past months – to say with the prodigal son, having distanced ourselves from our real home and having squandered our spiritual inheritance, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee.” The Scripture instructs us, “Confess your sins ...” (James 5:16). If we do confess them, Saint John tells us, “He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). If we do not give them up in confession, they remain ours, they remain within us, polluting and destroying our souls. And “if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8). Thus, Saint Paul warns us: “So let a man examine himself, and then let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body” (1 Corinthians 11:29).

To partake of the precious Body and Blood of our Lord God and Savior is the summit of the sacramental life. To commune in the Eucharist with the Son of God is to become one with Him: “He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in Him ... whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day” (John 6:54,56). What greater way is there to celebrate the great events of Holy Week and Pascha than to join with the apostles and all the saints and all the members of the Orthodox Church throughout the world and throughout all of time in eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Savior in Holy Communion. This is what He asked be done on the night before His saving Passion: “Take eat ... drink of it all of you ... Do this in remembrance of Me” (Luke 22:19). To fail to do this means spiritual death: “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you” (John 6:53). Let us, therefore, join together in the supreme act of thanksgiving and praise to the Lord in His Church by receiving His precious Body and Blood, uniting ourselves to Him in Holy Communion, not just this Lent but always.

**An Appeal.** Dearly beloved in Christ: *“Let us enter the Fast with joy, O faithful.* Let us not be sad. Let us cleanse our faces with the waters of dispassion, blessing and exalting Christ forever. Let us begin the Fast with joy. Let us give ourselves to spiritual efforts. Let us cleanse our souls. Let us cleanse our flesh. Let us fast from the passions as we fast from foods, taking pleasure in the good works of the Spirit and accomplishing them in love that we may all be made worthy to see the Passion of Christ our God and His Holy Pascha, rejoicing with spiritual joy” (Forgiveness Sunday Vespers).

Through prayer and fasting and almsgiving, through divine services and the Holy Mysteries, let us as a bride, prepare to receive the Heavenly Bridegroom, our Lord and Savior. May our motto for this Lenten Season be the words of Saint Paul: “It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me, and the life which I live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

With love,

+ **Bishop Michael**

**God Grant Many Years!** To the Victims of the catastrophic Earthquake and Tsunami in Japan. **Memory eternal** to those who perished in the same natural disaster. We offer our prayers for them today at Liturgy and Moleben and Parastas.

**God Grant Many Years!** Prayers for the health of Archpriest Jason Kappanadze were offered today at Liturgy and Moleben at the request of Father John Udics.

**God Grant Many Years!** Prayers for the health of cousin Don Udics, cousin Pat Medvick, cousin Rich Medvick, Father David Cochran were offered today at Liturgy and Moleben at the request of Father John Udics.

**Memory Eternal.** Prayers for the repose of the soul of Anne Sokerka were offered today at Liturgy and Parastas at the request of Maryanne and Ed Mamrosch.

**Memory Eternal.** Prayers for the repose of the soul of Theodore Litwen were offered today at Liturgy and Parastas at the request of Stephania Litwen.

**Memory Eternal.** Prayers for the repose of the souls of Metropolitan IRENEY, Archimandrite Sebastian and cousin Bill Fox and newly-departed Mary Semon were offered today at Liturgy and Parastas at the request of Father John Udics.

**+Please remember in your prayers:** Mary, Michael, Jadwiga, Michael.

**Please remember in your prayers:** Archpriest Jason, Dan, Ada, Don, Rea, Daniel, Aaron, Mark, Jennifer, Nina, Priest Sergius, Nadine, Thomas, Helen, Anna, Archpriest Vincent, Mother Raphaela, John, Catherine, Ron, Albert, Michael, Gregory, Emma, Cathy, John, Mykola, Wayne, Nina, Isaiah, Robert, Robert, Kevin, Andrew, David, Warren, Michael, Archimandrite Athanasy, Archimandrite Isidore, Archpriest Mark.

**Saints of the Day:** Translation of the relics (846) Saint Nicephorus the Confessor, Patriarch of Constantinople (829). New Hieromartyr Priest Nicolas (1919). New Hieromartyr Priest Gregory (1921). New Hieromartyr Priest Michael (1938). Martyr Sabinus of Egypt (303). Martyrs Africanus, Publius and Terence of Carthage (3 c.). Martyr Alexander of Macedonia (305). Martyr Christina of Persia (4 c.). Venerable Aninas, Presbyter of the Euphrates. Hieromartyr Publius, Bishop of Athens and disciple of Saint Dionysius the Areopagite (2 c.). Saint Leander, Bishop of Seville (596). New Hieromartyr Stephen (Bekh), Bishop of Izhevsk (1933). Saint Gerald of Mayo, Abbot (732). Saint Kevoca, Hermitess and Virgin (7 c.). Abbot Mochoemoc of Leamokevoge (656).

**A word from Saint Anthony the Great.** "Why do we not voluntarily abandon what must be destroyed when this life comes to an end, so that we might gain the kingdom of Heaven? Let Christians care for nothing that they cannot take away with them. We ought rather to seek after that which will lead us to Heaven; namely wisdom, chastity, justice, virtue, an ever watchful mind, care for the poor, firm faith in Christ, a mind that can control anger, hospitality. Striving after these things, we shall prepare for ourselves a dwelling in the land of the peaceful, as it says in the Gospel."

**A word from the desert.** Evil adheres to our nature just as rust does to metal or grime to a body. However, just as a metallurgist did not produce rust nor parents bring about grime on their children, neither did God cause evil. He implanted a conscience and reason into the human being so that he would avoid evil, knowing that it is harmful to him and only leads toward suffering. Be vigilant: in seeing someone successful in power and wealth, do not in any way praise him. But at that moment, imagine death before you and you will never wish for anything bad or earthly. Saint Mark the Ascetic, (5 cent.) commemorated 5 March

#### **REFLECTION** by Saint Nikolai of Zhicha.

Whenever we are outside the Grace of God, we are outside of ourselves and, compared with our Grace-filled nature, we do not find ourselves in a better condition than an insane man in comparison to a so-called healthy man. Only a blessed man is a natural man, i.e., a man of higher and unspoiled nature, in which the Grace of God rules and governs. Saint Simeon the New Theologian says: "A lamp, even if it is filled with oil and possesses a wick, remains totally dark if it is not lighted with fire. So it is with the soul in appearance adorned with all virtues, if it does not have a light and the Grace of the Holy Spirit it, is extinguished and dark." (Homily, Number 59). As the great apostle also says: "But by the Grace of God I am what I am" (1 Corinthians 15:10). However to be without grace means to be alienated from God and alienated from the reality of our own individual being. Our being, our personality, confirms our reality and receives its fullness only in the nearness of God and by God. That is why we must look at sinners as we look upon the sick: as weak shadows, without reality and without a mind.

**A word from an Athonite Gerontikon.** "Anytime there are temptations and troubles, there are also laurels of victory," the pious Elder G would say ... , and then he would add: "If it were possible to find a monastery filled with angels, and they placed you as one of the brothers in it, still you would not be saved, because no one would bother you, and you would be living an easy life and this saying would be suitable to your situations, 'In your lifetime you received your good things.'" (Luke 16:20-25)

**A word from the desert.** A brother asked Abba Cronius, "What should I do to correct the forgetfulness which enslaves my spirit, and prevents me from perceiving anything until I am led into sin?" The old man said, "When the foreign people took possession of the ark because of the evil manner of life of the sons of Israel, they drew it until they brought it into the house of Dagon, their god, and then he fell to the ground," (I Samuel 5). The brother said, "What is the meaning of that?" The old man said, "If the demons attempt to capture a man's spirit through his own impetus, they draw him in this manner until they lead him to an invisible passion. Then, at that point, if the spirit returns and seeks after God and if it remembers the eternal judgment, immediately the passion falls away and disappears. It is written, 'In returning and rest you shall be saved.'" (Isaiah 30:15)

## REMINDERS FOR YOUR CALENDARS:

- The Sisterhood would appreciate **your donation of cookies** for the Bake-Sale/ Bazaar. Please bake your favorite recipe of smaller sized cookies. Please bring them to Church Thursday, April 14 by 7 pm or early Friday morning April 15. Why not bake now and freeze them, then bake again late in the month, and maybe a third bake in early April!

- **April 1 and 2: 2011 Lenten Youth Retreat** entitled "*Baptized into Christ: Galatians 3:2 and Romans 6:3*" sponsored by the Diocese of New York and New Jersey at Holy Resurrection Orthodox Church, Wayne NJ. *Ages: 7th-12th Grades*. Contact Father John for the forms necessary for participation in this year's event: Permission Slip/Release, Participants Agreement, Directions and Packing List. Retreat participants must fill out the Permission Slip/Release and the Participants Agreement. All those forms and your check must be received by March 26th.

The cost for the weekend retreat is \$35 per student. This amount covers all costs associated with the retreat. Retreat participants are required to check-in at 6:30 PM on Friday, April 1st. Pizza dinner will be served Friday evening at 7:30 PM. Parents are invited to conclude the retreat experience with their child by participating in 5:00 PM Vespers at Holy Resurrection Orthodox Church in Wayne, NJ on Saturday evening. Pick-up is *Saturday, April 2nd at 6:00 PM*.

No one will be turned away due to cost. If you find the cost to be prohibitive, simply pay the amount that you find manageable no questions asked. This information will be kept confidential. Finally, Orthodox and non-Orthodox students are encouraged to attend. This is a great opportunity for Orthodox young people to invite a non-Orthodox friend. If you have questions, please phone (718) 767-7292 or e-mail josephwoodill@yahoo.com

- **TODAY: Sunday: Choir and Readers meet with Father John after Liturgy**

- March 18: Friday: Make dough for Perohi, 9:00 am
- March 19: Saturday: Make kraut filling for Perohi after Liturgy
- **March 20: Sunday:** Parish Council Meeting after Liturgy
- March 21: Monday: Perohi pinching 9:00 am
- **March 27: Sunday:** Teenage Church Schoolers meet with Father John after Liturgy
- April 1: Friday: Make dough for Perohi. 9:00 am
- April 2: Saturday: Make Perohi potato filling after Liturgy
- April 4: Monday: Perohi pinching at 9:00 am
- **April 3: Sunday:** Younger Church Schoolers Meet with Father John after Liturgy
- April 9: Saturday Church cleaning for Pascha after Liturgy
- **April 10: Sunday:** Fund-Raisers Meet with Father John after Liturgy
- April 13-15: Wednesday thru Friday: Bread baking, times to be announced
- April 14: Thursday: Deliver Cookies to Church
- April 15: Friday: Assemble Cookie trays, 9:30 am
- April 16: Saturday: Sisterhood Spring Bake-sale/Bazaar, 11:00 am
- **April 17: Palm Sunday:** Pascha Preparation Workers meet with Father after Liturgy
- May 14: Saturday: Set up for Paschal dinner, 9:00 am
- **May 15: Sunday:** Paschal Dinner
- **June 12: Pentecost:** Potluck Lunch after Liturgy, and before going to the Cemetery
- **June 19:** Graduate Sunday

Some parishioners asked whether **Mission Vespers services** for the Sundays of Great Lent could be organized in our locale. Father John telephoned each of the local Orthodox clergymen and left messages. Sadly, only Mother Raphaela of the Holy Myrrhbearers phoned back (saying they were going to Binghamton's services).

**In a 3/11/2011 email concerning the status of the Church in Japan**, Father John Takahashi wrote:... "I received an e-mail letter from Father John Onoh who serves at Holy Resurrection Cathedral in Tokyo.

"According to Father Onoh, His Grace, Bishop SERAPHIM of Sendai talked to him about the situation to him saying that he is very much concerned because many of the churches in his diocese are located close to the shore. After the call, the communication system was shut down because of power shortage. The details were unknown at that time but now CNN Japan is reporting the actual damage around area. The Tsunami is still advancing. I had a chance to visit those churches in the past. There are many fervent Orthodox Church Christians living there since Eastern Japan is the place where Saint Nicholai of Japan began his missionary activities. Since electricity, gas and water lines were shut off, it is extremely cold. As of the reception of this email, however, it appears that the cathedral in Sendai (the seat of the Diocese of Eastern Japan) itself, thank God appears to be still structurally sound. Tsunami warnings remain all over Japan as well as concern from aftershocks. Not much news concerning each individual believer and their homes and family is available. No doubt, death tolls are rising as well as number of reported missing so it goes without saying. There are three dioceses in the Orthodox Church in Japan. The churches and communities in the Archdiocese of Tokyo and Diocese of Western Japan seem safe since Father Onoh did not mention anything about other churches. Father Onoh requested our prayers for all of the victims and their families, but particularly for the clergy and faithful in the Diocese of Eastern Japan. Of greatest concern are the elderly and immobile, sick, children."

**Another source said:** Bishop SERAPHIM "called Tokyo on his cell phone and said that the cathedral in Sendai is safe, but he cannot contact his parishioners or recognize situation and damage of his territory, as telephone service and electricity stopped. There are many small churches and chapels there.... In Tokyo, Father John [Onoh] says in the Cathedral, damage is not so great, some glass lampadi and other items were broken. Aftershock shaking still continues."