



SAINTS PETER AND PAUL ORTHODOX CHURCH

A Parish of the Orthodox Church in America
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LORD JESUS CHRIST, SON OF GOD, HAVE MERCY ON ME, A SINNER

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| March 11 | Sunday of Saint Gregory Palamas | Divine Liturgy | 9:30 am |
| March 14 | Wednesday | Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts | 6:00 pm |
| March 16 | Friday | Akathistos Hymn to Holy Communion | 6:00 pm |
| March 17 | Saturday | Soul Saturday | Divine Liturgy 9:30 am |
| | Saturday | Great Vespers | 4:00 pm |
| March 18 | Sunday of the Veneration of the Holy Cross | Divine Liturgy | 9:30 am |

Saints of the Day: Saint Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem (638). Saint Euthymius, Bishop of Novgorod, Wonderworker (1458). Venerable Alexis of Goloseyevsky Skete, Kiev Caves (1917). Venerable Confessor Patrikius (1933). New Hieromartyr Priest Basil (1937). Venerable Sophronius, Recluse of the Kiev Caves (13th c.). Hieromartyr Pionius of Smyrna and those with him: Asclepiades, Macedonia, Linus and Sabina (250). Martyr Epimachus of Pelusium (250). Saint Sophronius of Vratsa (1815). Venerable George, Abbot of Sinai, brother of Saint John Climacus (7th c.). Venerable John Moskhos (622). Venerable Oengus the Culdee, compiler of first Irish martyrology (824). Venerable George the New, Wonderworker of Constantinople (970). Saint Theodora, Queen of Arta, wife of Despot Michael II of Epirus (1275). Hieromartyr Eulogius, Metropolitan of Cordova (859). Martyrs Trophimus and Thalys of Laodicea (300). Hieromartyr Constantine, in Kintyre. Saint Benedict, Archbishop of Milan (725).

Please remember in your prayers: Richard, Clifford, Connie, Michael, Nettie, Maria, Michael, Mother Raphaela, John, Hilda, James, Ada, Priest Sergius, Louellen, Nancy, Rea, Archpriest Jason, Susan, Daniel, Aaron, Mark, Jennifer, Nina, Nadine, Michael, Anna, Gregory, Jim, Marianna, Mykola, Helen, Isaiah, Archpriest Vincent, Albert, Kevin, Robert, Robert, Andrew, David, Warren, Archimandrites Alexander, Alexander, Athanasy, Isidore, Nectarios, Pachomy.

God Grant Many Years. Prayers for the health of cousin Norma Udics, Clifford West and Bob and Irene Dunn were offered at Liturgy and Moleben today at the request of Father John Udics.

Memory Eternal. Ninth Day Prayers for the repose of Vera Keblish were offered at Liturgy and Litiya today at the request of Nick and Margaret Keblish.

Memory Eternal. Prayers for the repose of Ann Sokerka were offered at Liturgy and Litiya today at the request of Mary Ann Mamrosch.

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

Memory Eternal. Prayers for the repose of Irene Alexander and cousin Donald Udics were offered at Liturgy and Litiya today at the request of Father John Udics.

On "Fasting" -- Seven Questions, Seven Answers

By His Grace, MICHAEL ~ Bishop of New York and the Diocese of New York and New Jersey

Question #1: Why do we fast?

Answer: Just as the children of Israel ate the "bread of affliction" (Deuteronomy 16:3) in preparation for the Passover, so Christians prepare themselves for the celebration of Pascha by observing the fast of Great Lent. Moses fasted on Mount Sinai (Exodus 34:28), and Elijah on Mount Horeb (I Kings 19:8-12). But most importantly Our Lord fasted in the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights (Matthew 4:1-2) and we imitate His example.

Question #2: But, did Jesus really teach fasting?

Answer: Yes, He instructs us, "When the Bridegroom is taken away, My disciples will fast" (Matthew 9:15). And He presumes His followers will fast, in His Sermon on the Mount when He teaches, "When you fast ..." not if you fast. He goes on to say, "Anoint your head and wash your face so that you do not appear to be fasting before men ... your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly." (Matthew 6:16-18).

Question #3: When did fasting on certain days originate?

Answer: As early as the first century, in the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, we read: "He (Christ) commanded us to fast on Wednesday and Friday." The Saints explain, we fast "on Wednesday because on this day Our Lord was betrayed; and on Friday because on this day He suffered death for our salvation."

Question #4: What is the purpose of fasting?

Answer: Although fasting has many health benefits, the primary aim of fasting is to make us conscious of our dependence on God. We voluntarily experience physical hunger in order to become aware of our true spiritual hunger. Another reason we fast is to subdue our passions and self-will. The Saints tell us there is no way we can control our urges for pleasure, money or power, if we cannot control our stomach. Fasting is the first step toward self-control. And our self-will is cut off by being obedient to the Church and her rules.

Question #5: Is fasting only a matter of diet?

Answer: No, it is moral as well as physical. True fasting is to be converted in heart and will; it is to return to

God, to come home like the Prodigal Son to our Father's house. In the words of Saint John Chrysostom it means "abstinence not only from food but from sins." He says, "The fast should be kept not only by the mouth but also by the eye, the ear, the feet, the hands and the other members of the body." The eye must abstain from impure sights; the ear, from malicious gossip; the hands, from acts of injustice. Saint Basil says "it is useless to fast from food and yet indulge in cruel criticism and slander: You do not eat meat but devour your brother." And although we may return to eating meat and cheese after Pascha comes, we should of course strive NOT to return to the sins from which we struggled to abstain during the course of the Fast. We give up rich foods for Lent ... We should give up gossip and laziness and greed, forever.

Question #6: What is the inner significance of fasting?

Answer: The deepest meaning of fasting is best summed up in the triad: prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Fasting is valueless if not combined with prayer. In the Gospel, Our Lord tells us that the devil is cast out by "prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17:21); and Acts of the Apostles records the early Christians "fasted and prayed" (Acts 13: 3). The Great Fast is certainly a time to improve our prayer life, both personally at home, and by our participation in Lenten services at church.

Question #7: And what about almsgiving?

Answer: Prayer and fasting should be accompanied by almsgiving – by love for others expressed in practical form. The second century Shepherd of Hermas insists that the money saved from abstaining from rich foods during the fast should be given to the widow, the orphan, and the poor. Lent is certainly the time to increase our works of mercy for "the least of His brethren," for those who are in need.

So, as we begin Great Lent, let our hearts sing out this hymn of the Church: *"Let us set out with joy upon the season of the Fast, and prepare ourselves for spiritual combat. Let us purify our soul and cleanse our flesh; and as we fast from food, let us abstain also from every passion. Rejoicing in the virtues of the Spirit, may we persevere with love."*

A word from the Pastor. Fasting from food is like fine-tuning a musical instrument. Too tight, and it sounds thin, sharp and too high, and may even break a string. Too loose, and it sounds fat and flat, wobbly and lacking energy. But tuning the instrument is not the same thing as making music – it's only a preparation for making music. And making beautiful music comes only after practice and practice and working together with other musicians to make harmony and joy and glorious music. It also requires inspiration for the musician to really be a virtuoso. Fasting is not meant to endanger your life, but is a way to set its tone. Fasting in all its forms is essential, therefore, but it is still only the first step for renewed spiritual life and harmony with God and man, a first step toward wholeness and holiness, a preliminary action before putting yourself to turning away from evil and starting to do good.

A word from the desert. Many in the church are afraid to lead a better life, but not afraid to continue in the quagmire of their inertia. Because they consider themselves to be sinners, they tremble to approach the way of sanctity, but they are not afraid to persist in their vices. Saint Gregory Dialogos, Pope of Rome 590-604

A word from the Saint Gregory Palamas – Discourse on the Publican and the Pharisee. The unseen patron of evil is full of evil ingenuity. Right at the beginning he can drag away, by means of hopelessness and lack of faith, the foundations of virtue already laid in the soul. Again, by means of indifference and laziness, he can make an attempt on the walls of virtue's house just when they are being built up. Or he can bring down the roof of good works after its construction, by means of pride and madness. But stand firm, do not be alarmed, for a diligent man is even more ingenious in good things, and virtue has superior forces to deploy against evil. It has at its disposal supplies and support in battle from Him Who is all-powerful, Who in His goodness strengthens all lovers of virtue. So not only can virtue remain unshaken by the various wicked devices prepared by the enemy, but it can also lift up and restore those fallen into the depths of evil, and easily lead them to God by repentance and humility.

Here is an example and a clear proof. The Publican, as a publican, dwells in the depths of sin. All he has in common with those who live virtuously is one short utterance, but he finds relief, is lifted up and rises above every evil. He is numbered with the company of the righteous, justified by the impartial Judge Himself. If the Pharisee is condemned by his speech, it is because, as a Pharisee, he thinks himself somebody, although he is not really righteous, and utters many arrogant words which provoke God's anger with their every syllable.

Why does humility lead up to the heights of righteousness, whereas self-conceit leads down to the depths of sin? Because anybody who thinks he is something great, even before God, is rightly abandoned by God, as one who thinks that he does not need His help. Anybody who despises himself, on the other hand, and relies on mercy from above, wins God's sympathy, help and grace. As it says, "The Lord resists the proud: but he gives grace unto the lowly" (Prov. 3:34 LXX).

FOR YOUR CALENDARS:

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| March 24 | Great and Grand Pre-Pascha Church Cleaning 11 am |
| March 25 | After Liturgy, Lenten breakfast |
| week of March 25 | Bread baking – schedule to be determined |
| March 29 | deliver baked goods for Bazaar by 6 pm |
| March 30 | assemble cookie trays 10 am |
| March 31 | Spring Bazaar |