



The **return of spring** is a welcome change from the cold, grey, dormant winter. Spring will soon be here, with buds on the trees, birds singing, and flowers appearing in the garden: *it is a time of new life!*

It's also **the time of Great Lent**.

#### *What is Great Lent?*

The Great Fast, or as it's more commonly known, Great Lent (or just Lent), is a period of 40 days set aside by the Church helping us **reorient our lives** on the teachings and life of **our Savior, Jesus Christ**.

The **preparation we make** during Lent allows us to more fully experience His betrayal, death, and resurrection. By **participating in the services of the Great Fast**, we can **understand the love of God** in a new and meaningful way.

#### *Why do we have Lent?*

Our experience of **Lent is a journey**, taking us from where we are today, to Christ's crucifixion, death, descent to Hades, and ultimately, **His resurrection on Pascha!**

This preparation helps us **go beyond our daily struggles** to lead a new life after Pascha. Great Lent is when we can make an extra effort in **changing our behaviors**, replacing the bad habits separating us from God.

#### *What separates us from God?*

It's not chocolate, it's sin. Sin is found in our daily routines and habits – large and small – getting in the way of **our relationship with God**. Maybe we get angry or jealous, or feel lazy, or skip a church service, eat too much food, don't share with others, or ignore those in need.

These sins, separating us from the **love of God**, can be cast away during confession, **reuniting us to God** with gratitude and an opportunity to be **reborn in Christ**.

#### *Is Lent supposed to be hard?*

If Lent seems difficult, especially at first, it's a sign we're doing something right. Our established habits are comfortable, and the devil wants us to discourage us from learning and doing **the habits of Christian living**: prayer, fasting, and serving others.

The **joy of Great Lent** is that we can **become better Orthodox Christians**, filled with God's love, forgiveness, and joy. This is the time to **make a change**, running to God so **we can journey** from this life to **be with Him in Paradise** for all eternity!

#### *The Prayer of St Ephraim* to be said every day of Great Lent

- O Lord and Master of my life,  
take from me the spirit of  
sloth, despair, lust of power,  
and idle talk.  
*prostration*
- But give rather the spirit of  
chastity, humility, patience,  
and love to Thy servant.  
*prostration*
- Yea, O Lord and King, grant me  
to see my own transgressions,  
and not to judge my brother,  
for blessed art Thou, unto  
ages of ages. Amen.  
*prostration*



St. Ephraim (a 4<sup>th</sup> century monk) lived in Syria and wrote over 400 hymns still used today in our worship services.

# Lenten Trivia



#1. What special rite is celebrated after vespers on Cheesefare Sunday to begin Great Lent?

- a. Rite of Cheesefare
- b. Rite of Silence
- c. Rite of Forgiveness
- d. Rite of Great Lent

#2. Match the saints to the Sundays on which they are honored during Great Lent:

- |                                      |                                       |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday of Great Lent | St. John Climacus (of the ladder)     |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Great Lent | Fathers of the 7th Ecumenical Council |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of Great Lent | St. Mary of Egypt                     |
| 5 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of Great Lent | St. Gregory Palamas                   |

#3. What do we venerate on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent?

#3a. What hymn is sung on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday?

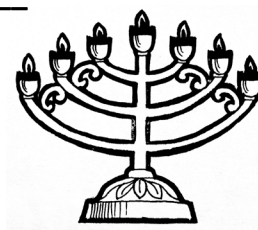
*Bonus:* What do the words of this hymn mean to you as an Orthodox Christian?



#4. What are the three things we should do more of during Great Lent?

#5. During Lent, you can receive the Eucharist (Communion) at special evening services called The **Liturgy of**

-----  
#5A. *Bonus:* Why is this service called by that name?



## Gather as Community

Attend the divine services of the Great Fast

### Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete

*Celebrated the first Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday of Great Lent*

This hour-long service explores the depth of our sins and **desire to repent**. It's a great way to start our journey to Pascha.

### Presanctified Liturgy

*Celebrated on Wednesdays and Fridays*

Slightly different from a Sunday liturgy, this liturgy is celebrated only during Great Lent, and in the evening. We fast from at least noon, so we can receive the Eucharist, giving us spiritual nourishment as we pray more each day!

### Sunday of Orthodoxy Liturgy

Bring your favorite icon to church. Because Jesus became human, we can have images of Him, the Virgin Mary, and our patron saints - reminding us of God's love for us.

### Annunciation Vespers & Liturgy

*March 24<sup>th</sup> & March 25<sup>th</sup>*

It's 9 months before Christmas – and a brief celebration in the midst of our Lenten journey. We sing “Today is the beginning of our salvation...” when the Archangel Gabriel announces that the Virgin Mary will become the Mother of our God!

### Akathist Hymn to the Theotokos

We offer prayers of praise and salutation during this hour-long service **dedicated to the Virgin Mary**, because she stands before the throne of God, offering prayers to God for each of us. *Most Holy Theotokos, save us!*

### Lazarus Saturday Matins & Divine Liturgy

Great Lent is over, and we enter a 2-day semi-festal period before the beginning of Holy Week.

Join the children with palms and branches singing “**Hosannah**” to our Lord!

*and remember...*

### The Sacrament of Confession

Make time to receive the sacrament of reconciliation during Great Lent. It's a beautiful opportunity to cleanse your mind and life of sin, receiving forgiveness from God. Then receive the Eucharist to be reunited to the community of believers praising God for His mercy. *Glory to God for all things!*



# Lenten Word Search



Alms	Confession	Forgiveness	Love	Prayer
Annunciation	Cross	Gregory	Mary	Presanctified
Canon	Egypt	Humility	Palamas	Repentance
Chastity	Eucharist	Icons	Pascha	Resurrection
Climacus	Fasting	John	Patience	Triodion
Compassion	Fellowship	Lent	Penitance	Veneration

## Attend the Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts during the week

*Celebrated on Wednesdays and Friday evenings during Great Lent*

The Church understands that we're praying more, fasting more, and facing more temptations from the devil during Lent. So, the Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts is a special opportunity we have to receive the Eucharist: spiritual nourishment for our spiritual struggles during the week.



To receive the Eucharist at a Presanctified Liturgy, you'll need to **fast from all food and drink from at least the noon meal** (If possible, adults should fast from food and drink all day).

This might be difficult during school, so practice and prepare your mind to remain focused on why you're fasting: to receive the Eucharist!

Consider reading some of the **pre-communion prayers** found in the back of your liturgy book prior to going to church.

This liturgy is similar to the divine liturgy on Sunday: we sing selected Psalms, there's an entrance with the Holy Gifts, we hear readings from Scripture, we give thanks to God for all that He gives to us, and we receive the Eucharist.

## BIG Words

*What do they mean?!?*

### Triodion (Tree-Oh-Dee-Own)

The book of hymns and texts used by the Church during Lent and Holy Week.

### Rite (Pronounced like "Right")

A sacred or holy ceremony or act which is done as part of a divine service. The *rite* of Mutual Forgiveness is celebrated to begin our entry into Great Lent, when we ask everyone we know, for forgiveness for any sin or offense we might have done.

### Forgiveness (I Forgive You)

Allowing God to enter our lives and heal the spiritual wounds caused by the sins of ourselves and others.

### Repentance (I'm Sorry)

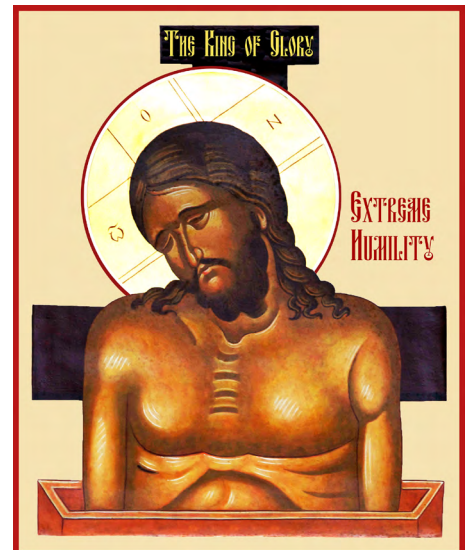
Admitting we sinned, and with the help of God, trying our best to avoid that behavior again.

### Prostration (Praw-stray-shun)

The physical act of making the sign of the cross, then bowing down, and touching our forehead to the floor. Usually done in front of a holy object: an icon, the gospel, or a relic, or after certain prayers (*like the prayer of St. Ephraim found on page 1*).

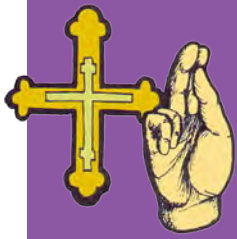
### Bright Sadness (Healthy Self-Reflection)

Great Lent helps us acknowledge the sadness of our sins, while recognizing that God's love gives us joy through forgiveness and hope in the brightness of Christ's resurrection.



### Did You Know?

- The "**Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts**" is named this, because there is no Offering (or Consecration of the bread and wine), since the Holy Gifts were consecrated during the divine liturgy on the previous Sunday.
- This liturgy is ascribed to **St. Gregory Dialogos**, (the 7<sup>th</sup> century Pope of Rome) because he recorded how the service was celebrated in Constantinople (modern day Istanbul, Turkey).
- The readings are from the Old Testament (Genesis and Proverbs)
- We say **St. Ephraim's Prayer** twice during the service (*see page 1 for the text*)



## Pray Without Ceasing?

*Absolutely!*

Did you know monks and nuns pray every day for Orthodox Christians, including you!

We too can offer our own prayers to God at certain times of the day:

- **When we wake up**  
*Asking God to bless the day ahead.*
- **Before meals**  
*Thanking Him for the food and those who prepared or grew it.*
- **Throughout the Day**  
*Have a moment that went well? Say, "Thank you, God!" Have a moment that didn't go so well? Say, "Lord, have mercy."*
- **Before going to bed**  
*Giving thanks for the day, and asking forgiveness of any sins we may have committed.*

Whenever we pray, begin by making the sign of the cross, saying, *"In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen."*

## Should I Fast During Lent?

*Yes!*

Ever played a sport or an instrument? What does the coach or teacher say? Practice and you'll get better and better!

### Great Lent is our spiritual training.

Fast from externals:

- Food
- Entertainment

And internal sinful behaviors:

- Gossip
- Pride
- Laziness
- Anger
- Jealousy
- Greed
- Despair



By fasting, we strive to make the changes to become better Orthodox Christians.

If we tame our bodies during Lent, we may be less likely to revert to sinful behaviors after Pascha, thereby leading a more godly life all year long.

## Who is Your Neighbor?

When we see someone in need, it's our responsibility as Orthodox Christians to help them, **even in some small way.**

The person in need could be:

- Lost
- Lonely
- Sad
- Hungry or Thirsty
- Cold, or
- Something else....

It's not for us to judge whether they deserve our help, or what they'll do with the help we provide.

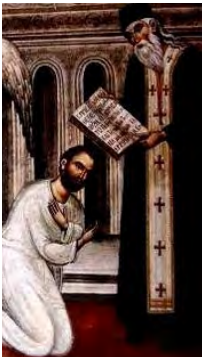
Christ calls us to **be a positive and loving example** of Him in that moment!



## The Best Way to Stay Healthy:

*Visit the doctor...the **spiritual** doctor!*

For Orthodox Christians, visiting the doctor takes the form of confession. We stand before God and our priest, **confessing our sins**, asking for forgiveness from God, and receiving guidance from our priest on how to improve our life.



Will we fall down again? Yup.

But **God is merciful**, and confession is the means to help us get back up, reminding us that **God loves us**, forgives us, and is there to help us get back on track.

*Remember*, after going to Confession, receive the Eucharist. These two sacraments go hand-in-hand, restoring us to the community of the Faithful!

## Fasting Best Practices:

Whether you've fasted or never fasted, Great Lent is the best time to start.

During the year, we don't eat meat on nearly every Wednesday and Friday.

In Lent, we are encouraged to fast from meat and dairy every day between Forgiveness Sunday and Holy Saturday.

"Going vegan" brings us back to a more simple diet, where animals are not killed for us, but instead we live in harmony with God's creation.

It also helps us strive to be more Christ-like in our life.

As the 4<sup>th</sup> century St. John Chrysostom said, *"What does it profit us if we abstain from fish or fowl and yet bite and devour our brothers and sisters?"*

In other words, fasting from food should always be a catalyst for changing bad behavior to good ones.



## How You Can Help Others:

Helping those less fortunate can take many forms. A great opportunity is through **FOCUS North America**.

Support their efforts in person or via their website.

Share from your closet or pantry to make a difference with clothing and food donations to care for those in need.

Learn more at:

<https://focusnorthamerica.org/get-involved/#give>

Or, keep **gift cards** to healthy or nearby restaurants in your family's car to help **those less fortunate** when you encounter someone on the street in need.

