

EXTREME HUMILITY

The Great Fast

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

It's also the time of Great Lent.

Why do we have Great Lent each year?

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 to help us **reorient our lives** on the teachings and life of Jesus Christ through His betrayal, death, and resurrection. We have this opportunity to be reborn, drawing closer to God.

Our experience of **Lent is a journey**, taking us from where we are today, to Holy Week and eventually, the feast of Pascha on Sunday, April 19. This time of preparation is for every Orthodox Christians to make an extra effort in **changing our behaviors**, replacing the bad habits separating us from God.

What keeps us separated from God?

It's not chocolate, it's sin. Our daily routines and habits are filled with sins – large and small – that get 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. Each of these separate us from the **love of God**.

Is Lent supposed to be hard?

It can seem that Lent is difficult, especially at first, because we're changing from established patterns and habits which feel comfortable. But as we learn new and Christian habits, we shouldn't be sad or discouraged. Lent is about **making lasting changes**, becoming even better **Orthodox Christians** who are kind, loving, forgiving, and merciful like God Himself. He wants us to use this time here on earth to journey to be with Him in Paradise for all eternity!

Turn the page to learn how you can be reborn during Great Lent this year.

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.
- But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to Thy servant.
- 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.



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

Lenten Trivia



Gather as Community

Attend the divine services of Lent

#1. What service is celebrated to begin Great Lent?

#2. Name the saints commemorated on the Sundays of Great Lent:
(hint: 1 group of saints, 2 male saints, 1 female saint)

1st Sun. _____

2nd Sun. _____ 4th Sun. _____

5th Sun. _____

#3. What do we venerate on the 3rd Sunday of Lent?

#3a. What hymn is sung on the 3rd Sunday?

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



Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete

Monday, Mar. 2, Tuesday, Mar. 3, Wednesday, Mar. 4, & Thursday, Mar. 5

This 1 hour-long service explores the depth of our sins and **desire to repent**.

Presanctified Liturgy

Slightly different from a Sunday liturgy, this liturgy is celebrated only during Great Lent, and in the evening. The service is intended to provide us with more times to **receive the Eucharist** during Great Lent. Let's take advantage of these opportunities!

Sunday of Orthodoxy Liturgy

Sunday, March 8th

Bring your favorite icon to church. Because Jesus became human, we can have images of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and our saints.

Annunciation Vespers & Liturgy

Tuesday, Mar. 24th & Wednesday, Mar. 25th

It's 9 months before Christmas – and 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

Friday, April 3rd

Offer prayers of praise and salutation during this 1 hour service **dedicated to the Virgin Mary**.

Lazarus Saturday Festal Divine Liturgy

Saturday, April 11th

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....

Confession

Make time to receive the sacrament of confession during Great Lent – it's a beautiful opportunity to cleanse your mind and life of sin, receiving forgiveness from God.



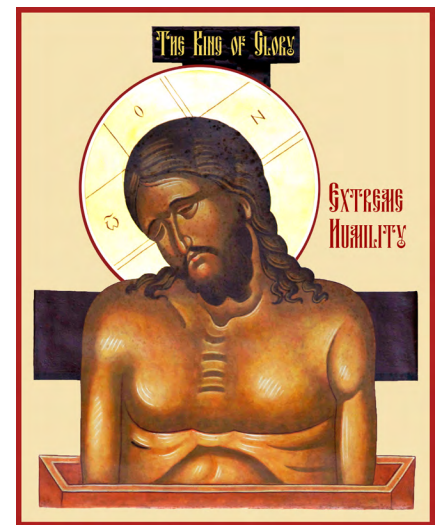
#4. What are the three things we should do more of during Great Lent?

#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?



Lenten Word Search



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

Attend the Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts during the week

Celebrated on Wednesdays and Friday evenings during Great Lent.

To receive the Eucharist, you 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). Consider reading some of the **pre-communion prayers** found in the back of your liturgy book prior to receiving the Eucharist.



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, receive the Eucharist, and give thanks to God for all that He gives to us. The differences include:

- The readings are from the Old Testament (Genesis and Proverbs)
- We say the **prayer of St. Ephraim of Syria** twice (see page 1 for the text)
- There is no Offering (or Consecration of the bread and wine), because this was celebrated during the divine liturgy on the previous Sunday, hence the name, "**Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts.**"

This liturgy is ascribed to **St. Gregory Dialogos**, (the 7th century Pope of Rome) because he recorded how the service was celebrated in Constantinople (modern day Istanbul, Turkey).

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.

Forgiveness (I Forgive You)

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

Akathist Hymn (Ah-Kah-Thiss-t)

A service where we stand, praising God, the Theotokos, or saints for their intercession in our lives.

Repentance (I'm Sorry)

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

Prostration (Prah-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.



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:

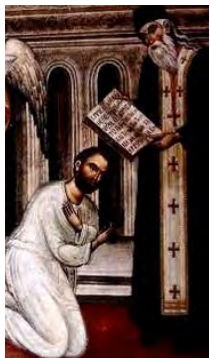
- **When we wake up**
Asking God to bless the day ahead.
- **Before meals**
Thanking Him for the food and those who prepared or grew it.
- **Throughout the Day**
Have a moment that went well? Say, "Thank you, God!" Have a moment that didn't go so well? Say, "Lord, have mercy."
- **Before going to bed**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

The Best Way to Stay Healthy:

Visit the 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!

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
- 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.

Fasting Best Practices:

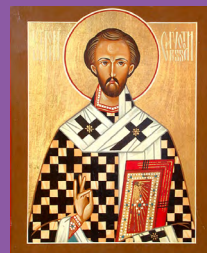
Whether you've fasted or never fasted, Great Lent is the best time to start.

During the year, we don't eat meat on nearly every Wednesdays 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 focus on changes to more Christ-like behaviors. As the 4th century Saint 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.



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.

Only to be a **positive and loving example** of Christ in that moment!



How You Can Help Others:

Helping those less fortunate can take many forms. A great local opportunity is at **FOCUS Minnesota in St. Paul**. Join them on site or by bringing donations of clothing and food to the bins outside the parish library!

Learn more at:

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

Or, if you encounter someone on the street in need, asking for food or money, consider sharing a **gift card** to Subway, Taco Bell or Jimmy John's to help **those less fortunate**.



#1: The Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts
#2: The Gifts (bread and wine) were consecrated during the liturgy on the previous Sunday

#3: The Cross
#4: Before Thy Cross (we bow down...)
#5: Pray, Fast, Give alms (charity)

#6: Fathers of the 7th Ecumenical Council.
St. John Climacus (of the Ladder),
St. Gregory Palamas, St. Mary of Egypt