



## Saints Cyril and Methodius Orthodox Christian Church

*A Parish of the Diocese of New England of the Orthodox Church in America*

Fr. John Hopko, Pastor • Protodeacon Paul Nimchek

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## Sunday, March 2, 2025

**SUNDAY OF FORGIVENESS (“CHEESE-FARE”) — Tone 3. The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise.** Hieromartyr Theodotus, Bishop of Cyrenia (ca. 320). St. Arsenius, Bishop of Tver (1409). Virgin Martyr Euthalia of Sicily (257). Martyr Troadius of Neo-Cæsarea (3rd c.). Ven. Agathon of Egypt (5th c.). 400 Martyrs slain by the Lombards in Sicily (579).

[Lives of the Saints - Orthodox Church in America](#)

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## Services and Events, Upcoming

(This schedule is subject to change, please confirm the schedule at [www.terryvilleorthodoxchurch.org/schedule](http://www.terryvilleorthodoxchurch.org/schedule) before coming to Church.)

**Monday, March 3, 7:00 PM:** Compline, with The Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete

**Tuesday, March 4, 7:00 PM:** Compline, with The Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete

**Wednesday, March 5, 10:30 AM:** Divine Liturgy of the PreSanctified Gifts. (This service is being scheduled earlier in the day than usual so as to allow those who are not able to travel after dark to more easily attend.)

**NOTE: We will NOT have Parish Online Bible Study on Thursday evening, March 6, nor any other Thursday evening in Great Lent. Weekly Bible Study will return after Pascha.**

**Thursday, March 6, 7:00 PM:** Compline, with The Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete

**Friday, March 7, 7:00 PM:** General Memorial Service (“Panikhida”) for All Departed

**Saturday, March 8, 6:00 PM:** Our usual weekly Saturday evening Vigil Service (Great Vespers with elements of Resurrectional Matins).

**Sunday, March 9, First Sunday in Great Lent, The Sunday of Orthodoxy, 9:15 AM:** Our usual Sunday morning celebration of the Lord’s Day Divine Liturgy, followed by a Lenten Coffee Social Hour.

**MERIDEN, CT: Sunday, March 9, Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers, 4:00 PM:** On Sunday afternoon, March 9, at 4:00 PM, Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers will be celebrated at Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church, Meriden, CT.

**Wednesday, March 12, 6:30 PM:** Divine Liturgy of the PreSanctified Gifts, followed by a “Bring-and-Share” Lenten meal.

**Saturday, March 15, 6:00 PM:** Our usual weekly Saturday evening Vigil Service (Great Vespers with elements of Resurrectional Matins).

**Sunday, March 16, Second Sunday in Great Lent, 9:15 AM:** Our usual Sunday morning celebration of the Lord's Day Divine Liturgy, followed by a Lenten Coffee Social Hour.

**CLINTON, CT: Sunday, March 16, Lenten Mission Vespers, 4:00 PM:** On Sunday afternoon, March 16, at 4:00 PM, Lenten Mission Vespers will be celebrated at Saint Alexis Orthodox Church, Clinton, CT.

**Wednesday, March 19, 10:30 AM:** Divine Liturgy of the PreSanctified Gifts. (This service is being scheduled earlier in the day than usual so as to allow those who are not able to travel after dark to more easily attend.)

**Saturday, March 22, 6:00 PM:** Our weekly Saturday evening Vigil Service (Great Vespers with elements of Resurrectional Matins), with Bringing out of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross for Veneration.

**Sunday, March 23, The Third Sunday in Great Lent, The Veneration of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross, 9:15 AM:** Our usual Sunday morning celebration of the Lord's Day Divine Liturgy, followed by a Lenten Coffee Social Hour.

**BRIDGEPORT, CT: Sunday, March 23, Lenten Mission Vespers, 4:00 PM:** On Sunday afternoon, March 23, at 4:00 PM, Lenten Mission Vespers will be celebrated at Holy Ghost (Spirit) Orthodox Church, Bridgeport, CT.

**Tuesday, March 25, The Feast of the Annunciation, 6:30 PM:** Vespers with Divine Liturgy to mark the Feast of the Annunciation.

**Wednesday, March 26, 6:30 PM:** Divine Liturgy of the PreSanctified Gifts, followed by a Bring-and-Share Lenten Supper.

**Saturday, March 29, 6:00 PM:** Our usual weekly Saturday evening Vigil Service (Great Vespers with elements of Resurrectional Matins).

**Sunday, March 30, The Fourth Sunday in Great Lent, 9:15 AM:** Our usual Sunday morning celebration of the Lord's Day Divine Liturgy, followed by a Lenten Coffee Social Hour.

**HERE IN THE TERRYVILLE PARISH: Sunday, March 30, The Fourth Sunday in Great Lent, 4:00 PM:** Connecticut Deanery Lenten Mission Vespers, Saints Cyril and Methodius Orthodox Church, Terryville, CT.

**Wednesday, April 2, 10:30 AM:** Divine Liturgy of the PreSanctified Gifts. (This service is being scheduled earlier in the day than usual so as to allow those who are not able to travel after dark to more easily attend.)

**Thursday, April 3, 9:00 AM:** Lenten Morning Prayers, with The Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete

**Friday, April 4, 7:00 PM:** The Akathist Hymn to the Most Holy Theotokos

**Saturday, April 5, 6:00 PM:** Our usual weekly Saturday evening Vigil Service (Great Vespers with elements of Resurrectional Matins).

**Sunday, April 6, the Fifth Sunday in Great Lent, 9:15 AM:** Our usual Sunday morning celebration of the Lord's Day Divine Liturgy, followed by a Lenten Coffee Social Hour.

**IN ANSONIA: Sunday, April 6, the Fifth Sunday in Great Lent, 4:00 PM:** The annual Connecticut Deanery Holy Unction Service, Three Saints Orthodox Church, Ansonia, CT. His Grace Bishop Benedict, presiding.

**Wednesday, April 9, 6:30 PM:** Divine Liturgy of the PreSanctified Gifts, followed by a Bring-and-Share Lenten Supper

**Friday, April 11, 7:00 PM:** Vespers to conclude Great Lent and to mark the Eve of Lazarus Saturday.

**Saturday, Lazarus Saturday, April 12, 9:15 AM:** Divine Liturgy, Lazarus Saturday, commemorating the occasion when Jesus raised His friend Lazarus from among the dead.

**Saturday, April 12, Eve of Palm Sunday, 6:00 PM:** Great Vespers and Litya, commemorating Palm Sunday, Our Lord's Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem.

**Sunday, April 13, Palm Sunday, 9:15 AM:** Festal Divine Liturgy for Palm Sunday, followed by a Coffee Social Hour.

**IN HARTFORD: Sunday, April 13, Palm Sunday, 4:00 pm:** CT Deanery Bridegroom Matins to begin Holy Week, All Saints Orthodox Church, Hartford, CT.

**Great and Holy Monday, April 14, 7:00 PM:** Bridegroom Matins

**Great and Holy Tuesday, April 15, 3:00 PM:** Bridegroom Matins. (This service is being scheduled earlier in the day than usual to allow those who are not able to travel after dark to more easily attend.)

**Great and Holy Wednesday, April 16, 7:00 PM:** Matins of Great and Holy Thursday, commemorating Our Lord Jesus Christ's Last Supper with His Disciples

**Great and Holy Thursday, April 17, 10:00 AM:** Vespers and Divine Liturgy, Great and Holy Thursday, commemorating Our Lord Jesus Christ's Last Supper with His Disciples

**Great and Holy Thursday, April 17, 7:00 PM:** Matins of Great and Holy Friday, with the Reading of the Twelve Passion Gospels

**Great and Holy Friday, April 18, 3:00 PM:** Vespers commemorating the Death and Burial of Our Lord, with the Bringing out of the Winding Sheet (The "Plashchinitsa/Epitaphion")

**Great and Holy Friday, April 18, 7:00 PM:** Matins of Great and Holy Saturday, with the Lamentations over the Tomb, and the Procession

**Great and Holy Saturday, April 19, 10:00 AM:** Vespers and Divine Liturgy over the Tomb of Christ, with the Many Old Testament Readings, the Changing of the Liturgical Colors from Dark to Bright, and the First Proclamation of the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ's Resurrection from the Dead.

**Great and Holy Saturday, April 19, 11:30 PM, leading into the Sunday of Great and Holy Pascha, Sunday, April 20:** Pascha Midnight Services (Nocturns, Matins, and Divine Liturgy), with the Proclamation of Our Lord Jesus Christ's Resurrection from the Dead – Christ is risen! Indeed, He is risen!

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### **LOOKING AHEAD further into 2025:**

- Sunday afternoon/evening, March 30, our Terryville Parish will host the clergy and faithful of the CT Deanery for a Lenten Mission Vespers Service
- Saturday, April 12, is Lazarus Saturday.
- Sunday, April 13, is Palm Sunday.
- Friday, April 18, is Great and Holy (Good) Friday.
- Saturday, April 19, is Great and Holy Saturday.
- Sunday, April 20, is Holy Pascha.
- Sunday, May 11, is the Feast of Saints Cyril and Methodius, and His Grace, Bishop Benedict will be visiting and presiding.
- Saturday, May 31, is the 45th anniversary of Protodeacon Paul N.'s ordination to the holy diaconate, and the 45th anniversary of the formal Consecration of our Parish Temple.
- Sunday, June 29, is the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul, and the 25th Anniversary of Fr. John's Ordination to the Holy Priesthood. (Fr. John was ordained to the Holy Diaconate in May 1993.)
- Monday, July 14 through Friday, July 18, Fr. John and Parish Lay Delegate Deb W. will be in Phoenix, Arizona, representing our Parish at the triennial (once-every-three-years) All-American Council of the Orthodox Church in America.
- Friday, August 1, is the 25th anniversary of Fr. John's assignment as Pastor of our Terryville Parish.

# PARISH PRAYER LIST

Again we pray for all victims of accident, disease, disaster, difficulty, warfare, and acts of terror and senseless violence throughout the world—both those who have died and those who have suffered and yet still live. We especially pray for those who mourn the loss of loved ones. Lord, hear us and have mercy!

## + THOSE WHO HAVE DEPARTED THIS LIFE: *Memory Eternal!*

### *Newly Departed*

H.B. Archbishop Anastasios of Albania d. 1/25/25  
Emily—acquaintance of the Nimcheks; a victim of cancer d. 2/29/25  
Daniel—relative, through marriage of Cynthia B.  
Michael—newly departed; acquaintance of Helena G.  
Aleksandra—perished in 1/29/25, Wash., DC, air accident, with many others  
child Olivia—perished with her mother Aleksandra (above) and others on 1/29  
Oleg—a friend of Subdeacon John Paul S. d. 1/24/25

### *Anniversaries of Repose – Memory Eternal!*

Symeon Papko 3/2/1944  
Mary Greziuk 3/2/1956  
Lillian Hasko 3/2/2008  
Anton Honcharuk 3/3/1974  
Donna Marie Kriniske 3/3/2014  
Emery Michael Wegh 3/3/2015  
Helen Kowaleski 3/4/1997  
Andrew Tczap 3/6/1946  
Mary Oleshko 3/6/1984  
Amelia Hriceniak 3/6/1998  
Louis Senetcen 3/8/1990  
Mary Hitchcock 3/8/2011

## THOSE IN NEED OF GOD'S MERCY AND HELP

### *Persons captive and suffering for the Faith*

Metropolitan Paul and Archbishop John—hostages in Syria

### *Those who are sick and suffering*

H.E. Archbishop Alexander of the Diocese of the South  
Archpriest Vladimir A—serious illness  
Subdeacon John Paul—ongoing health problems  
Mother Karitina—nun, an acquaintance of Fr. John H.; battling cancer  
Matushka Ann Sh.—at request of Lynn H.  
Bill ("Vasilios") L.—relative of the Sovryda Family; more unwell of late, please pray fervently  
Aaron H. — Fr. Steven H.'s son; recurring and ongoing health issues  
Fyodor (Frank) G.—suffering from Multiple Sclerosis (MS); at home  
JoAnn—acquaintance of Jeanne Moore; ovarian cancer  
Katie and Aubrey—a mother & daughter for whom we have been asked to pray  
Mary Lynn—friend of Donna O.; battling breast cancer  
Barbara—friend of Patty N.; unwell and in need of prayerful support  
Michael "Mike" L.—ongoing health issues  
Paula—friend of Jim L.; struggling with cancer  
Dimitri—brother of Carolyn P.; health issues  
Thomas—Patty N.'s nephew; battling cancer  
Wayne—Donna O.'s father  
Dianna—Jennifer W.'s mother; suffering serious and worrisome health problems  
Yvonne K.—a person we have been asked to pray for; multiple myeloma  
Mark—friend of a parishioner (F.G.); critically ill  
Domenic—friend of a parishioner (F.G.); facing serious illness  
Louis—friend of a parishioner (F.G.); facing serious illness  
Earlene L.—Mike and Jim L.'s mother; health issues  
Natonya L.—Mike and Jim L.'s family member; health issues  
Bach-Loan—a neighbor of Jeanne M.'s; serious health challenges  
Michael "Mike" A.—battling health challenges  
Robert Jos.—dealing with health issues  
Elizabeth—suffered acute and chronic health issues; friend of Helena G.  
Rosemary—member in the New Britain Parish; long-term health challenges  
Jon—friend of Forrest and Elaine H., suffering in illness  
Mark—a man suffering with cancer; friend of Elaine and Forrest H.  
Sonya K.—former W'bury parishioner, health issues  
Jeffrey—at request of John G.; unwell and in need of prayers  
Patrick—at request of John G.; unwell and in need of prayers  
Brittany—relative of Pdn. Paul; young woman facing cancer  
Reader Matthew—friend of Subdeacon John Paul S.; in need of prayers  
Daniel—son of a friend of Subdeacon John Paul S.; struggling  
Joan—grief and chronic illness; req. of Helena G.

Paul S.—health issues  
Holly—an acquaintance of Peter H.; unwell and in need of prayers  
Laura—friend of Lenna M.; battling brain cancer  
Amber—Louine K.'s granddaughter-in-law.  
Larissa—daughter of Fr. Michael and Nadia K.; we have been asked to pray for her  
Elizabeth S.—mother of an acquaintance of Fr. John's; battling cancer  
George—Fr. George Z.'s son; seriously ill  
Timothy—Olena's husband; undergoing treatment for a serious illness  
Michael—at the request of Nina and John D.; unwell and in need of prayers  
Lisa—friend of Helena G.; suffering in illness  
Ksenia—our fellow parishioner; recent surgery and further issues thereafter  
Irina—Ksenia's mother; battling cancer  
Alex—Ksenia's husband; recent illness  
Tatyana—Ksenia's mother-in-law; recent health issues leading to job loss  
Jacob—family member of Lynn H.; some health issues  
Faith—David C.'s cousin; facing health challenges  
Bob B.—friend of Melanie O.; battling cancer  
Nolan—friend of Corey F.; unwell and in need of prayers  
Jacqueline—a woman for whom we have been asked to pray for general well-being  
Amy—a woman for whom we have been asked to pray for general well-being  
Michael N.—facing health challenges; our devoted and beloved Choir Director  
John—Cynthia B.'s uncle—unwell and in need of prayers  
Leo M.—Parishioner Lynn H.'s father; unwell and in need of prayers  
Claudia—Macrina H.'s mother; recovering from broken hip  
Ingrid—battling cancer; friend of Nina and John D.  
Terry—battling cancer; friend of Nina and John D.  
Louine K.—recently unwell; our fellow parishioner  
Fernando—Matthew A.'s grandfather; declining health  
Audrey—A.J.'s mother; unwell and in need of prayers  
Bob P.—Louine K.'s son-in-law; recovering from an injury suffered in a fall  
Matthew A—seriously injured fingers which required surgical care  
child Matthias—an infant who is unwell that we have been asked to pray for  
child Noelle—Bob M.'s granddaughter; recently unwell with some chronic issues child  
Nicholas—at request of Dennis K.; suffering with illness  
Christine—at request of Elaine H.; blindness cause by aneurysms  
Jill—friend of Elaine H.; recovering from surgery  
Timothy—relative of Joan M.; surgery  
Nika D.—John and Nina D.'s daughter; some recent health challenges  
Cheryl—a Food Pantry volunteer who is battling a serious illness  
Nancy B.—our fellow parishioner; preparing to undergo another surgery  
Mary V.—acquaintance of Lucy C. and Peter H.; suffering in illness  
Lubomir—Leo K.'s grandfather; surgery  
Sarah—friend of Nina and John D.; suffering in illness  
Barbara—Cynthia B.'s cousin; mourning loss of stepson  
Joanne—acquaintance of Helena G.; mourning passing of her husband

### *Shut-ins and those resident in long-term Care Facilities*

Tanya B.—suffering long-term and lingering effects of brain hemorrhage  
Claudia A.—Waterbury parishioner; health challenges and now widowed  
Dolores M.—Bob M.'s mother; resident in long-term eldercare  
Roberta K.—a Waterbury parishioner living in long-term care  
Forrest H.—our fellow parishioner, now living in residential care

### *Expectant Mothers and the Children to be born of them*

Alexis and the child to be born of her—Hopko Family member

### *Wedding Anniversaries*

None this week

### *Travelers, Those Soon to be Traveling, and Those Apart from Us*

Ksenia—traveling abroad to see her mother  
John (Jack) K. — away in Florida  
Deborah and Emery W.—traveling

### *Those from among us serving in the Armed Forces*

Joel O.—U.S. Navy; hospital corpsman ("medic")  
Ian—Fr. David and Melanie's son-in-law; U.S. Army reservist called up for training  
Derek—relative of Carolyn P.; U.S. Army soldier  
Ruben—acquaintance of the Hopkos, U.S. Marines Corps pilot  
Zachary W.—Fr. Zachary W.'s son; U.S. Air Force pilot  
John S.—Fr. John's nephew; a U.S. Navy ROTC midshipman

### *Birthdays*

Jayne G.	3/3
Macrina H.	3/4
Irene K.—Melanie and Fr. David K.'s daughter	3/5
James "Jim" W.	3/7
Stefan K.—Laura and Rich K.'s son	3/7

## Notes on Parish Life

**Vacuuming the Church:** We ask that volunteers vacuum the Narthex (entrance area), Nave (main worship space), and Kliros (Choir area) of our Church building each Sunday, *right after the conclusion of the Sunday morning services*. The doing of this uncomplicated, yet needful, task would be a great help. Please consider being this volunteer on at least some occasions. Thank you.

**Please, consider hosting Coffee Hour!** We need Coffee Hour hosts going forward in the calendar. Please, consider hosting Coffee Hour. Thank you!

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### **Some things to do during Great Lent (listed in no particular order):**

- Embrace Silence: Turn off the phone, the computer, the TV, etc., and embrace silence before the face of God. Practice periods of silence and mindfulness. If it is not possible to be completely silent, say to yourself, slowly and carefully, the Publican's Prayer: "O God, be merciful to me a sinner." (Luke 18:13), or the Jesus Prayer, "O Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner."
- Make and keep an appointment for the Sacrament of Confession. Prepare for this appointment carefully, examining your life with honesty and humility.
- Attend as many of the Church services as you possibly can. Do not make excuses for yourself.
- Read the Bible daily: Reading a little bit every day, it is entirely possible to read all four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) during Great Lent. That, along with reading several Psalms from the Book of Psalms every day, is a good place to begin.
- Revitalize your prayer life. Pray for the strength to repent. Pray, too, for others in need of God's mercy and help. Make a list of all the living and departed you wish to commemorate and pray for them daily. Make some bows every day. It is good to pray on our knees before the Lord our God, in an attitude of humility and gratitude.
- Keep the Fast: During Great Lent (and on fasting days throughout the year) Orthodox Christians are expected to keep what is, for the most part, a vegan diet. We give up meat, poultry, fish, and dairy products that derive from animals (that is, eggs, cheese, milk, cream, butter, etc.). So, during Lent, we eat vegetables, and, occasionally, seafood that is not fish, such as shellfish and crustaceans, like shrimp and (even) lobster. (The allowance for seafood is historical: In ancient times, people did not relish seafood, other than fish. They didn't trust animals that had lived most of their lives on the bottom of the sea.) If we, truly, are not able to keep the fullness of Lenten fasting, then we need to do something, and we certainly can't do nothing. Most of us can certainly give up at least meats and poultry, without suffering ill effects.
- Give up trivial pursuits that are not edifying. Our "free" time should be occupied by activities that build us up and truly revitalize us, rather than simply entertain us in some mindless, unworthy, or useless fashion. (No "vegging out" during Lent!) We can relax in ways other than engaging in aimless or apathetic activities. Reading or listening to good and improving book is a form of relaxation that might be more "bless-able."
- Get enough sleep. Don't oversleep. 7 to 8 hours of sleep a day, at night, is appropriate for most adults. Not much more, certainly not less. If we need to nap during the day, it should be for a brief period of time that revitalizes us, rather than rendering us sluggish.
- Reach out to one person with the Good News (the Gospel) of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Is there not at least one person in your life who is open to that Good News at this time? There must be at least one.
- Do concrete acts of charity that cost you something. Don't just give away what is "extra". Rather, endeavor to go "above and beyond."
- Pick one bad habit and break it. (This will likely be very difficult, but "if we fall, we get back up again.")
- Apologize to those whom you have sinned against. Begin by simply saying "I am sorry." This honors the fact that some need to hear an apology first, and are not yet ready to hear a request for forgiveness. Then, make amends, as necessary, to undo the hurt.

## **Lenten Confessions Make your appointment now! Great Lent begins on Monday, March 3.**

Each and every Christian should participate in the saving Sacrament of Holy Confession during the Lenten season, as part of his or her own “Lenten journey.” Please contact Fr. John now to make your Confession appointment, even if you want your appointment to take place later on during Lent. Please make your Lenten confession before the end of Great Lent, that is, by Friday, April 11.

By the time we reach Holy Week and Pascha, every member of the Parish should (must!) have participated in the Sacrament of Confession in the Lenten season.

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## **Preparation for the Reception of Holy Communion at the Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts**

Most correctly described, the Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is a solemn Lenten Vespers (evening) service celebrated at the end of a day of strict Lenten abstinence at which we receive, as the first food of the day, the divine and life-giving food that is the broken Body and spilled Blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ—the food that satisfies our deepest need for meaningful life in communion with God, our Heavenly Father. (NOTE: This year, we will be serving several Divine Liturgies of the Presanctified Gifts in the late morning, in which case we are expected to fast from midnight onwards through the morning, until we receive Holy Communion as the first food of the day. We are serving this service in the morning on several occasions in order to make this service accessible to some who are unable to travel at night.)

The following paragraph is excerpted from the Introduction to the order of the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts as prepared and printed by the Department of Religious Education of the Orthodox Church in America:

“The evening reception of Communion at the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is fulfilled after a day of prayer and fasting, with the total abstinence from food and drink at least from the early morning hours of the day. Some consider the taking of even light, Lenten food on the morning of the Presanctified Liturgy as a “lessening” of the discipline. Those who have fasted a whole working day in preparation for the evening participation in the Holy Sacraments, however, know the great difficulty of the effort, as well as the very special spiritual fruits it brings from God.”

In view of this teaching, each of us needs to make a prayerful and pious decision concerning how we ourselves are going to prepare for the reception of Holy Communion during the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts. The minimum fast for a healthy adult preparing to receive Holy Communion at the evening celebration of the Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts should be complete abstinence from all food and drink (and, if you smoke, from tobacco!) from 12:00 noon. (This parallels the usual practice for receiving Holy Communion on Sunday mornings, which we prepare for by attending Saturday evening Vigil, keeping the rest of the evening free from inappropriate activity, reading our pre-communion prayers, and completely fasting from food and drink from 12:00 midnight until the time we receive Holy Communion in the morning.) Others—children, seniors, those with medical issues, etc.—should fast before the Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts as they are able.

In every case, serious and significant effort must be made in this fasting as we prepare to receive Holy Communion. Whatever the specifics of the manner in which we personally prepare for the reception of Holy Communion, we must not be heedless and simply come forward to receive the Holy Eucharist without forethought or preparation—preparation which includes fasting. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please see Fr. John.

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## ON FASTING DURING GREAT LENT

Fasting, specifically as it affects the issue of what and how much we are to eat, is always a topic that receives much attention when we prepare to begin Great Lent. Fasting is an ancient tradition in the Church and not one that we should easily ignore or dismiss. We all must fast during Great Lent.

What then should we do? We should begin by reminding ourselves of the basics of the Church's traditional discipline of fasting. During Great Lent the strictest levels of fasting are prescribed, with certain exceptions allowed for weekends and feast days.

The traditional norm, as developed and followed over many centuries in the Orthodox Church, is that we would abstain from the following items (listed here in order, beginning with those items which are eliminated first, on down to those items that may be permissible at some times):

- Meat and meat products (must be restricted)
- Milk and Egg Products (often referred to as "dairy." These items are perhaps permissible for some, for example, young children, the elderly or those in poor health.)
- Fish (permissible on certain feasts during Great Lent)
- Olive Oil (permissible on weekends and certain feasts in Lent)
- Wine (this means all alcoholic beverages; they are permissible on weekends and certain feasts during Great Lent)

So then, generally speaking, during Great Lent we are to make do with the following types of food:

- Shellfish and Crustaceans (shrimp, clams, etc.)
- Vegetables
- Vegetable Products
- Fruit, Grains (breads, pasta, rice, etc.), Nuts, etc.
- Non-alcoholic, dairy-free beverages

Having laid out the traditional guidelines for fasting, certain points must be made in reference to them.

First of all, each of us must make an honest, prayerful assessment of how well we can maintain the fasting discipline. If we are unable—due to age, illness, or some other weakness—to follow completely the traditional order of fasting, we must then make a decision about what we are going to do. Over-scrupulosity in this regard will not save us, but neither will any rationalizing away of the need to fast. Each and every person, usually together with the other members of his or her family and, if necessary, in consultation with his or her parish priest, needs to make an honest and prayerful decision about how he or she is going to keep the Fast.

For Church events—such as Sunday morning "Coffee Hours," and "Bring and Share" meals following the Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts—we need to keep strictly to the traditional disciplines of the Fast so that those who are following those norms will not be placed in any sort of awkward situation.

That being said, we must remember that the purpose of fasting (along with its "siblings" among virtuous acts—almsgiving, and prayer) is to make us better able to carry out the two great commandments of our Savior, that is, to love God and to love our neighbor. If we fast from food, but do not increase in love for God and others, our fasting is without purpose. The same is true for both charitable giving (almsgiving) and prayer. Love is the highest rule, above and beyond any other pious disciplines.

Therefore, a consistent teaching of the saints is that, while we are to make every effort to keep the Fast, the law of love teaches us that we are not to make a spectacle of ourselves in our fasting and if we are presented with a situation where love requires us to break the fast, then we must do so, and make up for that break in discipline through our care for one another.

Fasting, of course, does not concern just changes in our diet. When we fast we should be making a concerted effort to change our entire style of life. Just as when we embark on a program of physical fitness we not only adjust our diet, but also other facets of our lifestyle including exercise and rest, so too when we fast we are called to make changes in our entire life.

The point of Great Lent is to restore our life to its proper state through a process of repentance that involves and encompasses our whole person. Therefore, when (not if!) we fast, we must also redouble our efforts in prayer and charity. We must "re-program" ourselves, and consider carefully our use of time. We must consider not only what we are allowing to enter us as food, but also what is entering us through what we read, hear, and watch. We must make and keep a plan of renewal during Great Lent that encompasses our whole person and life. This plan should have as its aim not just to redeem the time of Lent, but also to help us make lasting changes in our lives for the sake of our salvation and the salvation of those around us—positive changes that will persist even after Great Lent is over.

A holy person of our time has pointed out that when we judge other people, we often lose the opportunity to love them. Let us all remember during Great Lent to open ourselves with honesty and humility to God's judgement and leave the judging of others to Him: He is the only just judge and only He knows the true condition of a man or woman, His creature. Let us receive the coming of Great Lent and Lenten fasting with joy, with "bright sadness," grateful for this time of repentance and renewal made possible by God's perfect love for us, His humble and unworthy servants. — Fr. John H.

## **Lenten Mission Vespers, Sunday afternoon, March 30:**

Looking ahead, we will be hosting the Deanery for a Vespers service on Sunday March 30th. The Parish Sisterhood will organize a soup, bread, and dessert Lenten meal for those who attend. A sign up for that is now available.

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### **Scripture Readings, etc.**

Follow this link, to be taken to a section of the official Orthodox Church in America website at which you can access the Daily Scripture Readings, the Lives of the Saints arranged day-to-day throughout the year, catechetical (instructional) material about the Orthodox Faith, and section featuring Questions and Answers about the Orthodox Faith:

<https://www.oca.org/orthodoxy>

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***The End! Glory be to God!***

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