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# SAINT INNOCENT ORTHODOX CHURCH

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## March 2017 Newsletter

### *Why do we fast?*

By Meltios Webber

The Greek word askesis (from which we get the English word “ascetic”) means “exercise.” It generally refers to the practice of prayer, fasting, making prostrations, and in other ways modifying our behavior to bring it in line with the spiritual life.

Askesis is not, and cannot be, an attempt to please God with our pain, or even with our effort. If we do that, we reduce God to the role of manipulative overseer. We always have to guard against projecting onto God human characteristics that belong not to Him, but to us.

Askesis is rather a matter of exercise, in the manner that an athlete exercises in order to prepare for a race. The athlete does not, in the end, resent his hard work, because he knows he is doing it for a good reason. We are all “in training” spiritually, and the rhythm of the feasts and fasts of the Orthodox Church allows us to intersperse rigorous periods of training with other times that are more relaxed. Lent and Holy Week together constitute the training period par excellence of the Church, with its own unique qualities and opportunities. This



period is preceded and followed by weeks when we do not fast at all. However, the opposite of fasting is never self-indulgence, and feasting certainly need never be an occasion of decadence.

But there are other dimensions of askesis, equally important to the element of training. In nature, we can observe that God’s actions are almost always marked by a sense of restraint, and this is what we should seek to emulate. God has a gentleness we rarely find in our own lives. His actions are to do with subtle balances: just enough light, just enough darkness; just enough oxygen, just enough carbon dioxide; just enough acid, just enough alkali; just enough

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regularity to make life somewhat predictable (sunsets, tides), just enough surprises to make life unpredictable (earthquakes, floods). In this way, God makes a unique environment in which each one of us is ideally capable of making the spiritual progress each of us is called to make.

Fasting is like that balance God puts into creation. Restraint and fasting characterize the lives of those who enjoy life to its fullest. How can someone be really contented who has not known hunger? How can someone really experience the joy of Pascha without having fasted during the weeks of Lent?

Fasting is not, and never can be, a punishment. Rather, it is a therapeutic tool by which we are brought closer to where we need to be, both physically

and spiritually. Nor is fasting a matter of self-control or self-discipline. These elements turn spiritual fasting into something ugly—as if some sort of grim determination would make us more pleasing to God.

Nor is fasting a matter of demonstrating to the world that pain and hardship can be borne. Those who refuse to wash their faces or brush their teeth and thus surreptitiously let the world know they are fasting are no better than the people Christ condemns. Fasting, of itself, brings no particular merit. Many are those who fast rigorously, but make everyone around them suffer. That, strictly speaking, is not fasting either, but some sort of self-deception.

The purpose of fasting from midnight before Holy Communion is to heighten our awareness so that from the moment we awaken, the desire to be united with our Lord in Holy Communion should be the uppermost theme in our lives. Nothing is more important than that, including food.

There is another element of fasting that has been growing in people's awareness in the last

few years. As guardians of God's creation, we have fallen down on the job. We have done great damage to our planet and are in danger of doing greater harm in the future unless we change our ways. We have done the damage by being unaware, listening to the demands of our minds, not the desires of our hearts. We have taken more than we need. We have not used resources in moderation. Fasting teaches us that we can actually live happy, fulfilled lives using very few resources. Far from bringing us happiness, the desire to have and own more and more brings us to our own destruction.

Fasting is important in teaching us the value of relying on God. The basic fault in man might be expressed as his desire to take the place of God and set himself up in his own

world as the one controlling factor. This goal is neither salutary nor possible. Fasting helps us to regain the essential awareness that we are creatures in God's world, that we are a part of, not superior to, the rest of creation, and that ultimately, there is only place for one God, and that place has already been taken.

Each one of us in this fallen world has a sense of self (the ego) which is driven by the human mind and the logismoi it contains. In each case, this ego tries to take the place of God to a greater or lesser extent. The spiritual path encourages us to heal precisely in this area. In this respect, the work of salvation is going on all the time, restoring God to His rightful place in the life of each individual. This is "the coming of the Kingdom." Fasting is not the only contributing factor in this process, but it is an important one.

*Webber, M. (2007). Bread & Water, Wine & Oil: An Orthodox Christian Experience of God (pp. 72-74). Ben Lomond, CA: Ancient Faith Publishing.*

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## Announcements

- On the Sunday of Orthodoxy (March 5th) please bring an icon of your patron saint, family saint or favorite saint for the procession after the Divine Liturgy.
- The Parish Council is scheduled to meet on Thursday March 16<sup>th</sup> at 7pm.
- On Saturday, March 18<sup>th</sup>, we will serve Vigil at 6pm for the feast of the Precious Cross.
- Fr. Theophan will be out of town March 20-23<sup>rd</sup>.
- There will be **no Presanctified on Wednesday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>**. Instead we will have Presanctified Liturgy on Friday the 24<sup>th</sup>.
- On Saturday, March 25<sup>th</sup> at 9am we will celebrate the Liturgy for the Great Feast of Annunciation.
- On Wednesday, March 29<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm we will celebrate the service of the Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete. During this service we read the life of St. Mary of Egypt.
- On Thursday, March 30<sup>th</sup> we will serve Presanctified Liturgy for St. Innocent's Feast Day.
- Confessions are heard *every Saturday after Great Vespers* or before Sunday Liturgy between 9:15- 9:40am. There is no need to schedule an appointment unless it is outside of the above times.

## Many Years!

**Birthdays** 1 Molly Croft  
2 Paul Guest  
4 Joshua Cabello  
5 Mark Dorogy  
16 Kimberly Lloyd  
19 Thomas Kehayes  
22 Eliza Buck

## Anniversaries

19 Gary & Dora Cox

## Lenten Class Series



On Sundays during Great Lent at 12:30pm Fr. Theophan will be offering a series of bible-study classes focusing on Genesis 1-3 -Finding Ourselves in the Fall.

## Lenten Retreat April 1<sup>st</sup>

On Saturday, April 1<sup>st</sup> at 10am we are scheduled to have our annual Lenten Retreat. This year the retreat master will be Fr. Herman Majkrzak, a priest-monk from St. Tikhon's Monastery. The Theme of the retreat will be "The Bridal Chamber of the Kingdom of God - The Holy Virgin Mary and St Mary of Egypt as Models of Salvation"

## Lenten Retreat @

## Holy Cross Orthodox Church

Fr. Anthony Salzman will make a presentation on the "Lenten Prayer of St. Ephraim" at Holy Cross on Saturday, March 4<sup>th</sup> from 10am to 3pm. The people of St. Innocent are invited. A luncheon is included. Afterwards, we'll have confessions.

## "Using One's Gifts for the Glory of God."

Fr. John Stefero is offering a workshop on 2 Saturdays in March, the 11<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, at 2-4pm on "Using One's Gifts for the Glory of God." This is based on our personalities and each participant will be required to fill out a short questionnaire to assess their gifts. Please let Fr Theophan know if you are interested and he will send you the questionnaire.



## ***Great Lent and Confession***

*“Enter the Church and wash away your sins. For here there is a hospital and not a court of law. Do not be ashamed to enter the Church; be ashamed when you sin, but not when you repent.”*

*~ St. John Chrysostom*

The Holy Mystery of Confession is an important and vital part of the Christian life. Confession is about healing. The Lord urges us to flee sin and gives us His commandments not to burden us with “rules”, but to free us from that which truly burdens us; sin. Our Lord loves us and knows that sin causes things to break in our lives and causes us needless suffering. We break relationships with others when we sin against them, we separate ourselves from God when we sin and do not repent. Sin leads to a constant burden of shame, guilt and a troubled conscience. Sin builds upon itself, and can lead us into isolation and despair. The enemy always seeks to break those good things in our lives, Our Lord always seeks to heal and restore. In Holy Confession we have the opportunity to honestly and fully tell God our troubles, to cast our burdens on Him, and to bring our spiritual wounds and illnesses to the Great Physician, Who is willing and able to heal us.

In Confession we stand in front of the icon of Christ, signifying His invisible, but very real presence among us. The priest stands as witness, on behalf of the Church, fulfilling a role to which he is ordained. Confession and absolution are not magic, and are only effectual when approached in faith, honesty, and a real desire to be healed.

At St. Innocent Confessions are heard on Saturday’s after Great Vespers, on Sunday mornings before the Liturgy (9:15-9:40am). If these times do not work you can make an appointment during the week. Participation in the Sacrament of Confession is expected for those who desire to be anointed with Holy Unction on Holy Wednesday. Receiving the Eucharist on Pascha assumes that one has confessed their sins recently, that is, during Lent. As you think about making your confession for Lent please make every effort to have your confessions heard before the beginning of Holy Week.



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<https://www.instantchurchdirectory.com/app>. After you download the app they will ask you to sign in using your email and creating your own password. This is an in-house directory which mean only those who Fr. Theophan gives access can use the directory.

## *Lenten Services*



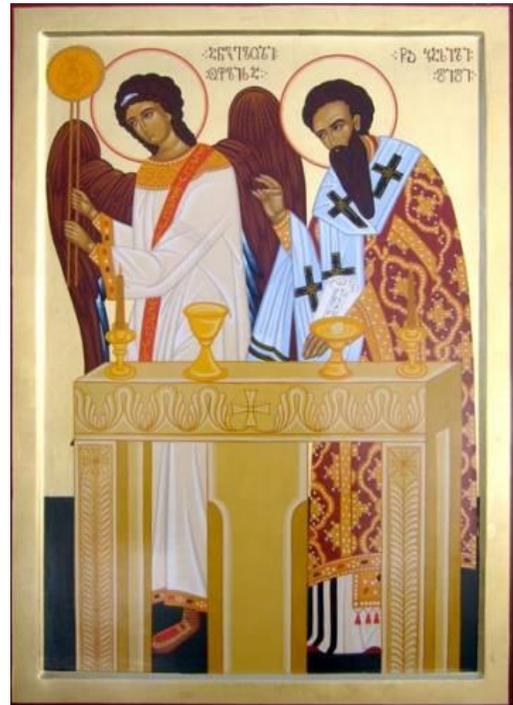
### **Great Compline with the Canon of St. Andrew**

On Monday, Tuesday and Thursday at 6:30pm during the first week of Lent we serve Great Compline with The Canon of St. Andrew. A canon is a structured hymn that consists of nine odes, based on the Biblical canticles. The most apparent features of St. Andrew's Canon are its length and penitential themes. As is fitting for the start of Great Lent, the Canon features many examples of sin and repentance from the Old and New Testaments. The canon of St. Andrew is also repeated at Matins on Thursday (really Wednesday evening March 29<sup>th</sup>) of the fifth week in its entirety.

### **The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts**

On Wednesdays at 6:30pm during Great Lent we serve the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts. This Liturgy is unique expression of the pastoral wisdom of the Byzantine liturgical tradition, the pearl of Lenten devotion. The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is an evening service. It is the solemn Lenten Vespers with the administration of Holy Communion added to it. There is no consecration of the Eucharistic gifts at the Presanctified liturgy. Holy Communion is given from the Eucharistic gifts sanctified on the previous Sunday at the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, hence its name of "presanctified."

The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts comes in the evening after a day of spiritual preparation and total abstinence. The faithful who are unable to make the effort of total fasting because of weakness or work, however, normally eat a light Lenten meal in the early morning.



### **Liturgy of St. Basil the Great**

On Sunday's during Great Lent we serve the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great. This Liturgy is almost exactly the same as the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom except we use the longer anaphoras (prayers of offering), which have been attributed to St. Basil the Great, who was Bishop of Cæsarea in Cappadocia from 370 to 379.

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>Lenten Prayer of St. Ephrem                      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.</p>			1  6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy	2  1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry 6:30pm Compline with the Great Canon	3  6:30pm Molebin to St. Theodore with blessing of Koliva	4  10-3pm Holy Cross Lenten Retreat  6pm Great Vespers 6:45pm Confessions
5 Sunday of Orthodoxy  9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy With Icon Procession 11:45am Agape	6 <i>Fr. Theophan's day off</i>	7  7pm Bolingbroke Community Club	8  6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy	9  1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	10	11  8-2pm Helena Mission 2-4 Holy Cross Class 6pm Great Vespers 6:45pm Confessions
12 St. Gregory Palamas  9:40am 3 & 6 <sup>th</sup> Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape 12:30 Lenten Class	13 <i>Fr. Theophan's day off</i>	14	15  6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy	16  1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry 7pm Parish Council	17	18  6pm Vigil for the Feast of the Cross
19 Precious Cross  9:40am 3 & 6 <sup>th</sup> Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape 12:30 Lenten Class	20 <i>Fr. Theophan out of town</i>	21 <i>Fr. Theophan out of town</i>	22 <i>Fr. Theophan out of town</i>	23  1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	24  6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy	25  9am Annunciation Divine Liturgy 2-4 Holy Cross Class 6pm Great Vespers 6:45pm Confessions
26 St. John Climacus  9:40am 3 & 6 <sup>th</sup> Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape 12:30 Lenten Class	27 <i>Fr. Theophan's day off</i>	28	29  6:30pm Matins with the Great Canon of St. Andrew	30  1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry  6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy- St. Innocent's Feast	31	

## April 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>Now we are in the period of life which we call spiritual spring. If a farmer is late in sowing, then there will be no harvest and, therefore, no bread. Likewise, if a person is late in acquiring sobriety, attention to his inner man, his heart, then he will be left without spiritual nourishment, in spiritual hunger. And if there is some kind of passion in his heart and he realizes it, then he will also understand that no one can drive out this passion except He Who created man. But for this to happen, preparation is needed. And this preparation is fasting and prayer. (Rymarenko, A. <i>The One Thing Needful</i> (pp. 48-49). The St. John of Kronstadt Press)</p>						<p>1 10-3pm Lenten Retreat 6pm Great Vespers 6:45pm Confessions</p>
<p>2 St. Mary of Egypt 9:40am 3 &amp; 6<sup>th</sup> Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape</p>	<p>3 <i>Fr. Theophan's day off</i></p>	<p>4</p>	<p>5 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>7 6:30pm Matins for Lazarus Saturday</p>	<p>8 10am Divine Liturgy for Lazarus Saturday 6pm Vigil for Palm Sunday</p>
<p>9 Palm Sunday 9:40am 3 &amp; 6<sup>th</sup> Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape</p>	<p>10 6:30pm Bridegroom Matins</p>	<p>11 6:30pm Bridegroom Matins</p>	<p>12 6:30pm The Sacrament of Holy Unction</p>	<p>13 10am Vespereal Divine Liturgy 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry 6:30pm Matins with the 12 Passion Gospels</p>	<p>14 10am Royal Hours 3pm Vespers w/ the placing of the Shroud. 4:30 decor the tomb 6:30pm Matins w/ the Lamentations</p>	<p>15 10am Vespereal Divine Liturgy 11:30pm Midnight Office, Paschal Matins &amp; Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom</p>
<p>16 Great and Holy Pascha 1pm Agape Vespers</p>	<p>17</p>	<p>18</p>	<p>19 No Fast 6pm Paschal Vespers</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>21 No Fast</p>	<p>22 6pm Great Vespers 6:45pm Confessions</p>
<p>23 St. Thomas Sunday 9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Radonitza Panikhida</p>	<p>24</p>	<p>25</p>	<p>26 6pm Daily Vespers</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28 6pm Paraklesis (Prayer Group)</p>	<p>29 6pm Great Vespers 6:45pm Confessions</p>
<p>30 9:40am 3 &amp; 6<sup>th</sup> Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape Parish Update</p>						