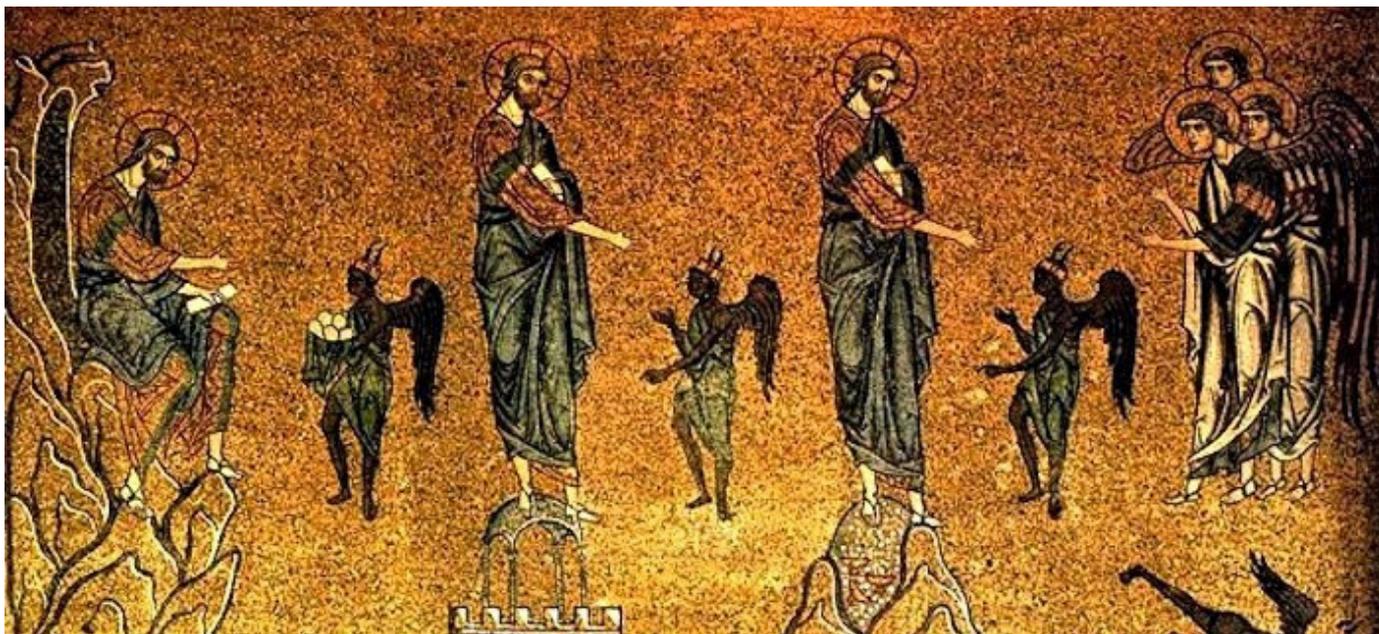

SAINT INNOCENT ORTHODOX CHURCH

FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER AND CALENDAR



Asceticism, the Mother of Sanctification

By Metropolitan Seraphim of Kastoria

The philanthropy of God makes us worthy once again this year to go through the blessed period of the Triodion and with His grace and infinite mercy we will enter in a few days the Holy and Great Lent.

Let me once again remind you, as well as myself, of a counterproposal of the Church in the contemporary world and in the consumer society. And this is asceticism.

It has been called the mother of sanctification, a bridle against those things which bring spiritual death, a discipline towards all the members of the body, as well as the elimination of the vile taste of the tree [the Tree of Knowledge], according to the expression of Saint Gregory the Theologian. (Oration 44)

Full of admiration this sacred father writes: "Come then, dedicate yourselves and, casting off your old nature live now in

newness of life, subjugating everything that gives rise to death, disciplining your whole person, spewing forth as abomination every vile morsel of the tree, yet remembering your old ways for the sole purpose of avoiding them. The fruit that brought me death was lovely to look at and good to eat, but let us turn away from outward allure and direct our gaze to our inner selves. Do not let a desire for beauty get the better of you and make you a slave to your eyes - if possible, not even to the point of a furtive glance - but recall Eve, that exquisitely sweet but poisonous temptation. How can a man consigned to perdition by her who is his own find easy salvation in another? Do not glaze your gullet by swilling everything within reach: a delicacy initially appealing once consumed repels. Has your sense of smell unmanned you? Seek to avoid fragrant odors. Your sense of touch enervated you?

Renounce things soft and dainty. Your ear done you tricks? Close the door to clever and deceptive words. Seek to open your mouth for the word of God that you may draw in the Spirit, not suck in death. Whenever something forbidden beckons you, remember what you were and how you came to be lost. If you deviate in some small way from right reason try to regain your senses before you pass completely beyond the pale and are hurled down to death; and replace the old man with the new and turn to celebrate the dedication of your soul.

Let the serpent be the sole object of your wrath: it was he that caused your fall. Let your every aspiration be devoted to God, not to any sly, insidious end. Let reason preside over all and let not your better part be dragged down by the worse. Hate not your brother, and this without expectation of gain; it was for his sake that Christ died and became your brother, although he is your Lord God. Envy not the righteous, you who yourself have been the victim of envy and been seduced into surrendering to it and for this reason laid low. Be not ashamed to cry, you who endured suffering worthy of many tears and subsequently received mercy. Brush not aside the pauper, you who have received the wealth of divinity; but if not - for even this is asking much of the insatiably greedy - at least grown not rich at his expense. Despise not the stranger; it was for his sake that Christ, whose sojourners and strangers we all are, became a stranger on earth; otherwise you will be estranged from paradise as before. Share your food, your clothing, your shelter with the needy, you who have more than these than you need and wallow in them. Be not enamored of wealth unless it benefits the poor. Forgive; you who have been forgiven. Show pity; it has been shown to you. Secure kindness for yourself by showing it to others while there is time. Let your entire way of life, all your existence, be a dedication for you." (Oration 44)

Saint John Chrysostom expresses the same perspective: "Loose yourself from your slavery first, and then receive, that you may receive no longer as a slave, but as a master. Despise riches, and you shall be

rich. Despise glory and you shall be glorious. Despise the avenging yourself on your enemies, and then shall you attain it. Despise repose, and then you shall receive it that in receiving you may receive not as a prisoner, nor as a slave, but as a freeman. For as in the case of little children, when the child eagerly desires childish playthings, we hide them from him with much care, as a ball, for instance, and such like things, that he may not be hindered from necessary things; but when he thinks little of them, and no longer longs for them, we give them fearlessly, knowing that henceforth no harm can come to him from them, the desire no longer having strength enough to draw him away from things necessary; so God also, when He sees that we no longer eagerly desire the things of this world, thenceforward permits us to use them. For we possess them as freemen and men, not as children." (Homily 25, On Hebrews)

With asceticism we will attain spiritual freedom and, in addition, we will live with the vision of the Kingdom of Heaven. The exhortation of the God-bearing fathers is now timely for all of us and especially for the pastors of the Church: "Give blood, receive the Spirit," which means to struggle in the struggle of asceticism to enjoy the rich grace of God.

Yet how can we speak of asceticism if we despise it? Or how can we speak of gentleness or the spirits of avarice, sloth, vain curiosity, love of power and talkativeness, according to the most beautiful prayer of Saint Ephraim, if we do not comply with the wise teachings of the Church and do not deal with the healing of our wounds and passions?

It is time, therefore, that we deal seriously and consistently with asceticism, to offer it and teach it to our blessed people in order to prepare them for Holy and Great Lent, that they might enjoy the vision of God on the night of the Resurrection.

<http://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2017/03/asceticism-mother-of-sanctification.html>

ANNOUNCEMENTS

See Calendar below for the schedule of services and happenings at St. Innocent Church. You can also find this calendar by signing into Realm, on our Google calendar, and our website.

ANNUAL MEETING UPDATE

At our recent Annual Parish Meeting, the parish unanimously voted to approve the Special Regulations/bylaws for our new cemetery. Our Bishop has also blessed us to pursue this ministry. The standing committee will soon be appointed to prepare the general rules and regulations for the proposed cemetery. If you have any special knowledge of cemeteries and their rules please let Fr. Theophan know. After the rules and regulations are approved by the Parish Council, and after we have all the proper documentation we need, we will begin to sell plots and establish a website featuring St. Innocent Cemetery.

MANY YEARS!

Birthdays

February 2 Loukas Wilcox
11 John Constantine Savage
12 Gary Cox
13 Marianne Savage
18 A. Olivia McMichael
19 Sondra Franceil

Anniversaries

9 Eric & Lee Olson
10--Jerome and Diana Gratigny

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

We are always looking for people to serve by donating their time and talents in the parish. Thank you to all those who have responded!

Here are a few needs we have:

- Calling all ladies! If you can sing and would like to join our fine choir please let Mark know. There is a need for a few more female voices.
- For many years we have tried to organize greeters to welcome visitors in the parish.
- We could use more money counters, those who help count the offering weekly after the Divine Liturgy.
- We always can use people who cook and provide our fellowship meal on Sunday's.
- We always need help cleaning up after the coffee hour or on Church cleanup day.

What about ministry ideas?

- Organizing meals for those in need.
- Visiting those who cannot make it to church.
- Helping our elder people of the parish.

Please take the time to consider what ways you can help our parish. Thank you to all those who serve already. Your sacrifice makes a big difference our small community.





In 2017 the Parish Council decided to investigate Church Management Software. The goal of such software is to have a system that integrates our church communications and finances. This streamlines many administrative tasks.

What is Realm?

Realm is many things. It is a directory where each member can manage their own information. It will be the new church calendar and email system. Realm is our new financial software which makes it so people can donate, set up automatic or even text payments. People can also see their own giving history through Realm. Realm can be used as an online meeting place for various ministries of the church, as well as a tool to increase communication between the members of these groups and ministries.

Why Should I Be Interested?

With Realm, you are able to take possession of your profile that we at St. Innocent use to keep track of your contact information. Once you take possession of it, you can then keep all of your own information up to date, opt-in to an online church directory (viewable only by other church members), and provide other information such as a photograph, birthday, name day information, etc.

The more exciting aspect of Realm, however, is that you can then join various groups representing the ministries of the church. Each group has its own newsboard, group chat, and event calendar. All of this is also available in a convenient app for iOS and Android smartphones. You never have to wonder again when your next group meeting is, you can check right from your phone, RSVP to events, and communicate with other group members!

Realm also provides a handy way for you to keep track of your stewardship and giving. You'll be able to see exactly how much you've donated to the church, and how much you have to go to meet your stewardship goals. You can even safely and securely give right from your phone using the app!

Where can I get it?

Everyone who is currently in our instant church directory will receive an invite to Realm in the first week of January. Any information that you provided for the instant directory has been manually put into your profile. You will be sent a link that you can follow to create your own login information and take possession of your profile. You'll then be able to sign in to the St. Innocent Realm Portal.

After you've created your login information with the link mentioned above, you can then download the Realm Connect app. When you open the app for the first time you'll select "I already have a login" at the bottom of the welcome screen, and sign in using the login information you created. It's that simple!

Search in your app store for "Realm Connect,"



iOS App



Android App

LENTEN FASTING

by Fr. Thomas Hopko

A special word must be said about fasting during Lent. Generally speaking, fasting is an essential element of the Christian life. Christ fasted and taught men to fast. Blessed fasting is done in secret, without ostentation or accusation of others (Mt 6.16; Rom 14). It has as its goal the purification of our lives, the liberation of our souls and bodies from sin, the strengthening of our human powers of love for God and man, the enlightening of our entire being for communion with the Blessed Trinity.

The Orthodox rules for Lenten fasting are the monastic rules. No meat is allowed after Meatfare Sunday, and no eggs or dairy products after Cheesefare Sunday. These rules exist not as a Pharisaic “burden too hard to bear” (Lk 11.46), but as an ideal to be striven for; not as an end in themselves, but as a means to spiritual perfection crowned in love. The Lenten services themselves continually remind us of this.

Let us fast with a fast pleasing to the Lord. This is the true fast: the casting off of evil, the bridling of the tongue, the cutting off of anger, the cessation of lusts, evil talking, lies and cursing. The stopping of these is the fast true and acceptable (Monday Vespers of the First Week).

The Lenten services also make the undeniable point that we should not pride ourselves with external fasting since the devil also never eats!

The ascetic fast of Great Lent continues from Meatfare Sunday to Easter Sunday, and is broken only after the Paschal Divine Liturgy. Knowing the great effort to which they are called, Christians should make every effort to fast as well as they can, in secret, so that God would see and bless them openly with a holy life. Each person must do his best in the light of the given ideal.

In addition to the ascetic fasting of the Lenten season, the Orthodox alone among Christians also practice what is known as eucharistic or liturgical fasting. This fasting does not refer to the normal abstinence in preparation for receiving the Holy Eucharist; it means fasting from the holy Eucharist itself.

During the weekdays of Great Lent, the regular eucharistic Divine Liturgy is not celebrated in Orthodox churches since the Divine Liturgy is always a paschal celebration of communion with the Risen Lord. Because the Lenten season is one of preparation for the Lord’s Resurrection through the remembrance of sin and separation from God, the liturgical order of the Church eliminates the Eucharistic service on the weekdays of Lent. Instead, the non-eucharistic services are extended with additional scripture readings and hymnology of a Lenten character. In order that the faithful would not be entirely deprived of Holy Communion on the Lenten days, however, the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is celebrated on Wednesday and Friday evenings.

Even during Great Lent, Saturday (the Sabbath Day) and Sunday (the Lord’s Day) remain eucharistic days, and the Divine Liturgy is celebrated. On Saturdays, it is the normal Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, usually with prayers for the dead. On Sundays, it is the longer Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great.

The well-known teaching that Saturdays and Sundays are never days of fasting in the Orthodox Church, an issue emphasized centuries ago when controversy arose with the Latin Church, refers only to this eucharistic-liturgical fast. During Great Lent, even though the Eucharistic fast is broken on Saturdays and Sundays, the ascetical fast continues through the weekends since this fasting is an extended effort made from Meatfare Sunday right to Easter itself.

Lenten Service Guide

Forgiveness Vespers

The Period of Great and Holy Lent begins on Monday, February 19, a day called Clean Monday. Vespers is the service that ends one day and begins another, so Lent actually begins with a Vespers service on Sunday following the Divine Liturgy on February 18. This service lasts about an hour and technically marks the beginning of Great Lent, which is announced during one of the hymns mid-way through the service. During this hymn, the priest changes vestments from white to purple, the lights in the church are dimmed and the mood of the service becomes somber. In fact, it is the opposite of the Resurrection Service on Pascha, where everything begins dark and goes to light. The service concludes with a prayer of forgiveness being read over the congregation and the exchange of mutual forgiveness among the members of the congregation. This service is an especially appropriate way to begin the Lenten season, and for those who attended last season, is one of the most moving services of the church year.

Compline with the Canon of St. Andrew of Crete

The Canon of St. Andrew is sung over the course of three days during the first week of Great Lent. It is a canon in the traditional sense of the word, featuring nine odes, each subdivided into multiple troparia. Its most apparent features 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.

Presanctified Liturgy

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 is served on Wednesday and Friday evenings, although some churches may celebrate it only on one of these days. It 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.

Akathist Hymn to the Most Holy Theotokos

The Akathist Hymn is a profound, devotional poem, which sings the praises of the Holy Mother and Ever-Virgin Mary. It is one of the most beloved services in the Orthodox Church. It was composed in the imperial city of Constantinople, "the city of the Virgin," by St. Romanos the Melodist, who reposed in the year 556. The Akathist Hymn has proven so popular in the liturgical life of the Church that many other hymns have been written following its format. These include Akathists to Our Lord Jesus Christ, to the Cross, and to many Saints.

The word "akathistos" means "not sitting," i.e., standing; normally all participants stand while it is being prayed. The hymn is comprised of 24 stanzas, arranged in an acrostic following the Greek alphabet. The stanzas alternate between long and short. Each short stanza is written in prose and ends with the singing of "Alleluia." Each longer stanza ends with the refrain: "Rejoice, O Bride Unwedded."

OUR JOURNEY TO PASCHA! 2018

Created by Fr. Jonathan Bannon (ACROD)

SUNDAYS	THEMES / GOSPEL READING	HOW TO PARTICIPATE:
Fast - Free Week JANUARY 28th	 <i>TRIODION WEEKS</i> Publican and the Pharisee Reading: 2 Timothy 3: 10-15 Gospel: Luke 18: 10-14	Trust in God, not yourself! Ask for His help before every task this week!
Normal Fast Week FEBRUARY 4th	 The Prodigal Son Returns! Reading: 1 Corinthians 6: 12-20 Gospel: Luke 15: 11-32	Schedule a Confession. Use up/freeze meats this week.
Meatfare FEBRUARY 11th FAREWELL TO MEAT TODAY	 The Last Judgment Reading: 1 Corinthians 8: 8-9: 2 Gospel: Matthew 25: 31-46	Pray facing East this week. Christ is returning from the East and we wait for Him! Use up/freeze dairy this week.
Cheesefare FEBRUARY 18th FAREWELL TO CHEESE TODAY	 Adam and Eve are cast from Paradise! <i>FORGIVENESS SUNDAY</i> Reading: Romans 13: 11-14:4 Gospel: Matthew 6: 14-21	Ask each other for forgiveness each evening this week before bed.
1st Sunday of Lent FEBRUARY 25th	 <i>GREAT FAST BEGINS WITH FORGIVENESS VESPERS</i> SUNDAY of ORTHODOXY Reading: Hebrews 11: 24-26, 32-12:2 Gospel: John 1: 43-51	Bring an icon to church for a procession.
2nd Sunday of Lent MARCH 4th	 ST GREGORY PALAMAS Reading: Hebrews 1:10-2:3 Gospel: Mark 2: 1-12	Bring a prayer rope to be blessed today! Use it and pray the Jesus Prayer each day this week.
3rd Sunday of Lent MARCH 11th	 VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS <i>HALF WAY TO PASCHA!</i> Reading: Hebrews 4: 14-5: 6 Gospel: Mark 8:34-9: 1	Wear your cross to church and kiss the cross each morning with a bow!
4th Sunday of Lent MARCH 18th	 ST JOHN of the LADDER Reading: Hebrews: 6:13-20 Gospel: Mark 9: 17-31	Every time you climb stairs this week ask St. John to help you reach Paradise with the sign of the cross!
5th Sunday of Lent MARCH 25th	 ST MARY of EGYPT Reading: Hebrews 9: 11-14 & Heb 2:11-18 Gospel: Mark 10: 32-45 & LK 1:24-38	Ask the Theotokos to offer you and the world pure thoughts and ideas this week.
FLOWERY (PALM) SUNDAY! April 1st GREAT WEEK BEGINS	 <i>GREAT AND HOLY WEEK</i> ENTRY OF OUR LORD INTO JERUSALEM Reading: Philippians 4: 4-9 Gospel: John 12: 1-18	Place your palm branches and pussywillows behind an icon at home and in your car!
GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY APRIL 6th	 GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY <i>JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS</i> CHECK WITH YOUR PARISH FOR ROYAL HOURS AND VESPERS SCHEDULE	Refrain from TV, Internet, & Phones to honor Christ's Death.
FEAST OF FEASTS! APRIL 8th NO FASTING!	 <i>BRIGHT WEEK</i> HOLY PASCHA! (CHRIST IS RISEN!) Epistle: Acts 1:1-8 Gospel: John 1: 1-17	Greet everyone with "CHRIST IS RISEN!" & say it before good morning and goodnight!

February 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>4 Prodigal Son</p> <p>9:40am 3 & 6th Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape</p>	5	6 9am Morning Prayers	7 6pm Daily Vespers 6:45pm Bible Study	8 9am Morning Prayers 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	9 2 Fast Free Week 9am Divine Liturgy Meeting of Christ in the Temple	10 10am Church Cleanup 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers 7pm Orthodoxy 101
<p>11 Last Judgment</p> <p>9:40am 3 & 6th Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape</p>	12 Meat Fast Fr. Theophan @ DOS Pastoral Conference Jackson MS.	13 Meat Fast Fr. Theophan @ DOS Pastoral Conference Jackson MS.	14 Meat Fast Fr. Theophan @ DOS Pastoral Conference Jackson MS. 6pm Readers Vespers	15 Meat Fast 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	16 Meat Fast	17 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers 7pm Orthodoxy 101
<p>18 Forgiveness Sunday</p> <p>9:40am 3 & 6th Hours 10am Divine Liturgy Followed by Forgiveness Vespers 12:45pm Agape</p>	19 Great Lent Begins 6:30pm Compline with the Great Canon	20 9am Morning Prayers 6:30pm Compline with the Great Canon	21 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy	22 9am Morning Prayers 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry 6:30pm Compline with the Great	23 6:30pm Akathist to the Theotokos	24 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers 7pm Orthodoxy 101
25 Sunday of Orthodoxy	26	27 9am Morning Prayers	28 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy			
<p>9:40am 3 & 6th Hours 10am Divine Liturgy With Icon Procession 11:45am Agape</p>						

March 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>4 St. Gregory Palamas 9:40am 3 & 6th Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape</p>		<p>6 9am Morning Prayers</p>	<p>7 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy</p>	<p>8 9am Morning Prayers 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry</p>	<p>9</p>	<p>10 10am Church Cleanup 5pm Confession 6pm Vigil Ven. Cross</p>
<p>11 Ven. Cross 9:40am 3 & 6th Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape</p>		<p>13 9am Morning Prayers</p>	<p>14 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy</p>	<p>15 9am Morning Prayers 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry</p>	<p>16</p>	<p>17 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers 7pm Orthodoxy 101</p>
<p>18 St. John Clinicus 9:40am 3 & 6th Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape</p>		<p>20 9am Morning Prayers</p>	<p>21 6:30pm Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete</p>	<p>22 9am Morning Prayers 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry</p>	<p>23</p>	<p>24 5pm Confession 6pm Vigil Annunciation</p>
<p>25 St. Mary of Egypt 9:40am 3 & 6th Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape</p>		<p>27 9am Morning Prayers</p>	<p>28 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy</p>	<p>29 9am Morning Prayers 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry</p>	<p>30 6:30pm Vigil Lazarus Saturday/ St. Innocent</p>	<p>31 Lazarus Saturday 10am Divine Liturgy 5pm Confession 6pm Vigil Palm Sunday</p>