

ST. INNOCENT ORTHODOX CHURCH

MARCH 2020 NEWSLETTER AND CALENDAR



PREPARING FOR CONFESSION

By Fr. James Kordaris

"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

In the film, *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, Indiana Jones finds himself in a cave, trying to pass three obstacles in order to reach the Holy Grail. To pass the first he is told, "Only a penitent man will pass." As he repeats this phrase to himself, he approaches the place where, only moments before, many had fallen before him.

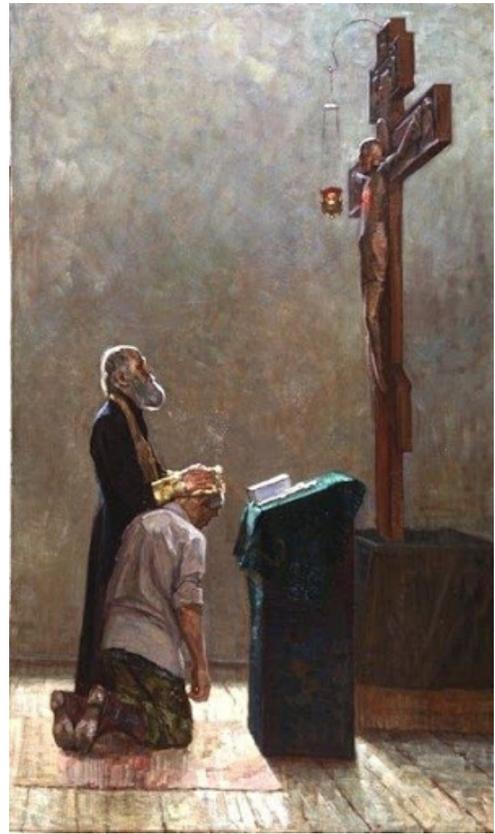
At the last instant, just as blades are falling over his head, he cries out to himself, "a penitent man is humble before God!" Indiana drops to his knees and the blades pass harmlessly over his head.

We, too, are called to drop to our knees before God. But this is only the outward sign of repentance. There must also be a spiritual dropping to the knees in humility before God.

Repentance has its roots in the apostles. In the Book of Acts the Apostle Peter says, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:37-38) When we fall away from God, we have removed ourselves from His communion – communion with Him and with all other Christians. We have excommunicated ourselves. To re-enter communion with God is the ongoing activity of all Christians. We fall away daily in some way or another. No one is exempt. As Father John Chryssavgis writes, “Both prodigal and saint are ‘repenting sinners.’” [1]

Often, when children play in competitive games, one will call out “that’s a do over!” Haven’t we all, at more than one time in our lives, wished for that chance to undo the past and start over? This is the first step in repentance. Repentance offers us this new beginning. 5 We are telling God that we have changed our mind about our past direction and would like to move back into communion with him. The Greek work for repentance is *metanoia*, and translates as a change of mind. This change implies a very deep and fundamental transformation in the way we see ourselves, those around us, our world, and our relationship to God. So it is often a good thing to change our mind. To change our mind in repentance is the starting point in our journey toward the re-centering of our lives in God the Trinity. We leave behind regret as we move toward hope. We turn our focus from our own shortcomings to the power of God’s love. Failings are forgotten and we see before us what we may become by God’s divine grace. [2] Repentance is not a single action but an attitude, a frame of mind.

In his book, *Achieving Your Potential in Christ: Theosis*, Father Anthony Coniaris writes of the Transfiguration of Christ as a transformation of the darkened nature of man into the restored “positive beauty of the image of God that had been



marred by sin....” In striving toward Theosis, union with God, we are led to repentance. As we move toward the light of God, we become more aware of our sin, and develop the attitude of continual repentance. [3] Think back over your life of things which you regret having said or done – hurtful, inconsiderate, selfish, and deceitful. Think also of those things which you have done which may not have directly affected others, but which you know to be wrong according to the teachings of the Church. Bring them to mind as if they were occurring right now. Think of how it would have been if you had acted differently. Take this regret and turn it into repentance. Feel the falsehood, and acknowledge that you have offended another person or the Church, and in doing so you have offended God.

This regret now requires a personal response. Just as God's love for us is personal, so must ours be for Him. In the words of Fr. Theodore Stylianopoulos, "As the baptized Christian grows from child to adult, and participates in the sacramental life of the Church, his personal response to God becomes crucial." The personal response is the act of confession, which is recognized as a sacrament in the Orthodox Church. is an important aspect of our spiritual growth process, and should not be seen as legalistic, nor should it be shrouded in guilt.

Confession is one aspect of a spiritual life in Christ and should be seen as a sort of spiritual check-up with one's spiritual father. Just as we go to the doctor who is able to see our medical history in order to make the appropriate diagnosis and to prescribe the necessary medicine, so it is necessary for us to go to a spiritual father who knows us and is able to prescribe the most appropriate spiritual medicine. In Orthodoxy, confessions are heard in any convenient and open part of the church, quite often in front of the iconostasis. As one stands before the iconostasis, the priest stands beside, serving as a minister and a witness before Christ on behalf of the individual. It is not the priest, but rather God who is the judge.

Confession is not a duty nor requirement to be fulfilled. Repentance and confession have an important place in the development of our Christian life. The sacrament of Holy Confession may be seen as a gift from God for the reception of forgiveness.

It is also an opportunity to receive spiritual guidance from one's spiritual father. With practice, Holy Confession may begin to appear as an opportunity for personal spiritual growth. [5] By keeping ourselves in front of God, we find it easier to remain free from the bonds of sin. In the words of St. Thallassios, "As wax melts before fire, so does an impure thought before the fear of God."

In everyday terms we might call this the Clean Slate Theory. This theory holds that when something is dirty, a little more dirt is barely noticeable. But when that same thing is clean, even the slightest bit of dirt becomes immediately noticeable. So it is with sin in our lives. Without confession, each additional sin appears to stain us very little and we become numb to the difference between right and wrong. But when we receive the gift of a clean slate through confession of our sins, we find our sins more uncomfortable, because they are so very clear to us in our current state of cleanliness. It is important to remember that If we are to be forgiven our sins by God, He requires of us that we also forgive one another. For many of us, this is the most difficult aspect of repentance and confession. Yet we say it each time we pray the Lord's prayer, "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

This is also repeated by Jesus in Matthew 6:14-15, "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." This is what Christianity is. It is right in the middle of everything – even the Lord's Prayer – "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." We are not offered forgiveness on any other terms.

Do you find it hard to forgive? In his book *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis writes, "Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea until we have someone to forgive." [7] How are we able to forgive someone if we don't like that person? Is it realistic to strive to "love one's neighbor"? Do we have to like him or find him an attractive person? It's hard to make yourself like someone. Often, we don't

even like ourselves. But like ourselves or not, we still love ourselves. So it follows that loving our enemies doesn't mean that we have to like them. Christians always say to "hate the sin, but love the sinner." But just how is this done? If you think about it, the one person for whom we have done this all our lives is ourselves. However much we hate some of the things we do, we still love ourselves. In fact it's because we love ourselves that we hate that we're the kind of person that would do some of these things.

So our Christianity doesn't reduce our hate for evil. We ought to hate evil. But we should hate evil in others the way we hate evil in ourselves – being sorry that things were done and hoping that the person doing them will repent and be saved. [8] It is a human tendency to become complacent in the knowledge that though we have sinned, there are many others with much greater sins than ours. It is easy to think that by comparison, "we are not that bad."

But God doesn't call us to be "not that bad." We can always find someone who appears to be more sinful than ourselves. Yet if we look at ourselves, can we be so sure that we have lived a life of penitence and confession which will keep the gates of heaven open to us? Father Anthony Coniaris writes, "One unconfessed, unforsaken sin is enough to keep us out of the Kingdom, I'm not going to tell you what that secret sin is for you. The Holy Spirit no doubt has already told you what it is. Jesus calls on you today to repent and forsake that sin so that you may be in the Kingdom." [9]

Footnotes

1. Chryssavgis, John, Repentance and Confession, Holy Cross Orthodox Press, Brookline, 1990, p 4.
2. Ware, Kallistos, The Orthodox Way, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, 1993, p 152.
3. Coniaris, Anthony M., Achieving Your Potential In Christ: Theosis, Light and Life Publishing, Minneapolis, 1993, p 56.
4. Constantinides, Evagoras, The Priest's Service Book, Published by the Author, Merrillville, 1994, p149.
5. Harakas, Stanley S., The Orthodox Church: 455 Questions and Answers, Light & Life Publishing, Minneapolis, 1988, p 87.
6. Grube, George W., What the Church Fathers Say About..., Light & Life Publishing, Minneapolis, 1996, p89. 8
7. Lewis, C.S., Mere Christianity, Collier Books, New York, 1984, p89.
8. Ibid.
9. Coniaris, Anthony M., Daily Vitamin

News and Announcements

- Please do not bring non-Lenten cakes and sweets during the Great Fast.
- During the first week of Lent we have services every night at 6:30 pm. See schedule below.
- Family Church School is on Saturday the 7th at 4pm.
- On Sunday, March 8th we will have a general blessing of icons along with a Icon procession. Please bring any icons you would like blessed.
- The Parish Council is meeting on Tuesday, March 10th at 7pm.
- The parish council has scheduled the Dave Ramsey financial university for the Sunday after Pascha. We will be sending out a signup in mid to late March.

Many Years! Birthdays in February

- 1 Molly Croft
- 2 Danny Bush
- 2 Paul Guest
- 5 Mark Dorogy
- 10 David Bush
- 11 Hannah Magnusson
- 12 David Marble
- 13 Anne Gordy
- 14 Lana Hough
- 15 Mark Olsen
- 19 Thomas Kehayes
- 22 Eliza Buck
- 24 Josiah Hill

Anniversaries

- 19 Gary & Dora Cox

Lenten Retreat

The Sacrament of Confession

One of the most important aspects of our Lenten journey is partaking of the the Sacrament of Confession. This is the season of repentance and therefore every Orthodox Christian should prepare to make a confession during Great Lent.

Fr. Theophan is available to hear confessions:

- Before or after the weekday Lenten services
- On Sunday mornings between 9:20-9:40 am during the Matins Canon.
- By appointment

Please plan on making your confession before Holy Week. If you struggle with identifying your sins you are welcome to make an appointment during office house with Fr. Theophan for a lengthy discussion.

Prospora Baking Class

On Sunday, March 15th at 1:30 pm Sonda will be teaching a class on how to bake the Eucharistic bread. All are welcome to come and learn.

**CHRIST
IN
ALASKA**
THE LIVES AND LEGACIES OF
ALASKA'S MISSIONARY SAINTS

Fr. Michael Oleksa
Saturday, March 21 @ 3 pm
St. Innocent Orthodox Christian Church, Macon GA

Orthodox writer, speaker, storyteller, and Archpriest, Father Michael Oleksa will be visiting our parish to give our annual Lenten retreat on Saturday, March 21st and Sunday, March 22nd. This year we mark the 50th year Autocephaly in the Orthodox Church of America as well as the 50th anniversary of St. Herman of Alaska's canonization. Fr. Michael will be speaking about the lives of the Alaskan missionary saints.

Schedule:

- 3 pm Lenten Retreat -
- 5:15 pm Confession
- 6 pm Great Vespers
- Followed by Lenten meal
- Fr. Michael will also be with us Sunday and speak during coffee hour.

Lenten Class Series

Fr. Theophan will be teaching Lenten Class series on Prayer starting the Sunday March 8th. The class will be focused on contemplative prayer and Orthodox spirituality in general.

Special Lenten Services

Canon of St. Andrew of Crete

On Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday of the first week of Great Lent we serve Great Compline with the Canon of St. Andrew of Crete. The canon is a dialog between St. Andrew, his soul, and God. The theme is an urgent exhortation to change one's life. St. Andrew always mentions his own sinfulness placed in juxtaposition to God's mercy, and uses literally hundreds of references to good and bad examples from the OT and NT to "convince himself" to repent. The service is beautiful, sobering, and prayerful.

Presanctified Liturgy

Because Great Lent is a season of repentance, fasting, and intensified prayer, the Orthodox Church regards more frequent reception of communion as especially desirable at that time. However, the Divine Liturgy has a festal character not in keeping with the season. Thus, the Presanctified Liturgy is celebrated instead on weekdays. At St. Innocent we generally celebrate this service each Wednesday during Great Lent. The service consists of Daily Vespers combined with additional prayers and communion. The Faithful are asked to fast in preparation for Holy Communion at least 6 hours before.

Annunciation of the Theotokos



The Feast of the Annunciation of Our Most Holy Lady, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary is celebrated on March 25 each year. The Feast commemorates the announcement by the Archangel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Son of God, would become incarnate and enter into this world through her womb.

At St. Innocent we will serve a Vespers Divine Liturgy @ 6:30pm on Wednesday the 25th. Followed by a Fish potluck.

St. Innocent's Lenten Feast day



St. Innocent's Lenten Feast day will be celebrated on Tuesday, March 31st with Presanctified Liturgy @ 6:30pm



OUR JOURNEY TO PASCHA GREAT LENT



Cheesefare

MARCH 1st

FAREWELL TO CHEESE TODAY



Adam and Eve are cast from Paradise!
FORGIVENESS SUNDAY

Epistle: 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

MARCH 8th



GREAT LENT BEGINS WITH FORGIVENESS VESPERS
SUNDAY of ORTHODOXY

Epistle: 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 15th



ST GREGORY PALAMAS

Epistle: 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 22nd



VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS
HALF WAY TO PASCHA!

Epistle: 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 29th



ST JOHN of the LADDER

Epistle: 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

APRIL 5th



ST MARY of EGYPT

Epistle: Hebrews 9:11-14
Gospel: Mark 10:32-45

Ask the Theotokos to offer you and the world pure thoughts and ideas this week.

FLOWERY (PALM) SUNDAY!

APRIL 12th

GREAT WEEK BEGINS



GREAT AND HOLY WEEK
ENTRY OF OUR LORD INTO JERUSALEM

Epistle: 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 17th



GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY

JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS
CHECK WITH YOUR PARISH FOR ROYAL HOURS AND VESPERS SCHEDULE

Refrain from TV, Internet & Phones to honor Christ's Death.

FEAST OF FEASTS!

APRIL 19th

NO FASTING!



BRIGHT WEEK

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!



March 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Forgiveness Sunday 8:45am Matins 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45 am Forgiveness Vespers	2 6:30pm Great Compline with the Great Canon	3 9am Morning Prayers 6:30pm Great Compline with the Great Canon	4 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy	5 9am Morning Prayers 1-4pm Prison Ministry 6:30pm Great Compline with the Great Canon	6 6:30pm Small Compline	7 4pm Family Church School 5pm Confessions 6pm Great Vespers
8 Sunday of Orthodoxy 8:45am Matins 10am Divine Liturgy 12:15am Agape 12:30 Lenten Class Bring Icons for procession	9	10 9am Morning Prayers 7pm Parish Council Meeting	11 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy	12 9am Morning Prayers 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	13 11-12:30pm Burruss Prison Ministry	14 5pm Confessions 6pm Great Vespers
15 St. Gregory Palamas 8:45am Matins 10am Divine Liturgy 12:15am Agape 12:30am Lenten Class 1:30 Prospora Class	16	17 9am Morning Prayers	18 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy	19 9am Morning Prayers 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	20	21 Lenten Retreat 3:00-5:00pm 5pm Confessions 6pm Great Vespers
22 Holy Cross 8:45am Matins 10am Divine Liturgy 12:15am Agape 12:30 Lenten Retreat continued...	23	24 9am Morning Prayers	25 6:30 pm Vesperal Divine Liturgy for Annunciation of the Theotokos	26 9am Morning Prayers 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	27	28 5pm Confessions 6pm Great Vespers
29 St. John Climacus 8:45am Matins 10am Divine Liturgy 12:15am Agape 12:30 am Lenten Class	30	31 9am Morning Prayers 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy St. Innocent's Feastday				



Tentative April 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 6:30pm Great Canon of St. Andrew	2 9am Morning Prayers 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	3	4 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
5 St. Mary of Egypt 8:45am Matins 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape 12:30 am Lenten Class	6	7 9am Morning Prayers	8 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy	9 9am Morning Prayers 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	10 6:30pm Lazarus Saturday Vespers	11 9am Lazarus Saturday Liturgy 11am Family Church School 5pm Confessions 6pm Great Vespers
12 Palm Sunday 8:45am Matins 10am Divine Liturgy With Palm Procession 11:45am Agape	13 6:30pm Bridegroom Matins	14 10am Presanctified Liturgy 6:30pm Bridegroom Matins	15 6:30pm The Mystery of Holy Unction	16 10am Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil 6:30pm Matins with 12 Passion Gospel Readings	17 10am Royal Hours 12pm Decorate the tomb 3pm Vespers with the placing of the shroud 6:30pm Matins with the Lamentations	18 10am Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil 10:30pm Reading of Acts 11:30 pm Great and Holy Pascha!
19 Great and Holy Pascha! 1pm Agape Vespers followed by Pascha Party	20	21 9am Divine Liturgy	22 6pm Daily Vespers	23 9am Divine Liturgy 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	24	25 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
26 St. Thomas Sunday 8:45am Matins 10am Divine Liturgy followed by Panikhida for the Day of Rejoicing	27	28 9am Moring Prayers	29 6pm Daily Vespers	30 9am Divine Liturgy 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	<i>We will be starting the Dave Ramsey Financial Peace University on Sunday the 26th</i>	