



Fasting: An Overview: Chapter 5 Prayer in the Unseen Warfare by Jack N. Sparks

Let's take a short look at what fasting is and is not, why we do it, how to do it, and when.

1. First, what is meant by fasting as seen by the Church?
 - a. Fasting is voluntary abstinence from food or drink for spiritual reasons, although it also tends to benefit health.
 - b. Fasting may involve complete avoidance of food and/or drink for part of a day or a longer period of time
 - c. Fasting may simply be cutting down the amount of food, which is done in all types of fasting; or it may include elimination of some categories of food on certain days of the week, or for a season such as Lent.
 - d. But (as we have noted) not only food and drink are to be abstained from. There are many other things, some of them of positive value in moderation: material pleasures such as entertainment through reading or the arts; daydreaming, fantasies, and lustful thoughts, all of which the Church Fathers considered sinful; idle talk, gossip; looking at things one shouldn't; and going places one ought to avoid.
2. However just because people sometimes have misconceptions about fasting, let us also ask what it is not.
 - a. In the practice of the Church, fasting is not a law we keep to be a valid member of the Church or to gain the favor of God.
 - b. The fasting practice of the Church is not a blanket rule imposed to the same degree on everybody despite circumstances of health, age, spiritual maturity, or heart's desire. Although the Lord expected His disciples to fast, He gave them no commandment to do so.
 - c. Fasting is not an end in itself; it is always done for other reasons: prayer, self-control, and humility in particular.
3. The Church Fathers say gluttony, although not the worst of sins, is the one most often leading to all the other vices.
 - a. St. John Climacus, for example, says it opens the door to fornication and pride, especially, as well as drowsiness.
 - b. As long as one is a little hungry, he is not so likely to be drawn by sexual lust, but when the belly is full, he is more inclined to seek the further gratification of sex.
 - c. With a full stomach one is also the more subject to the most deadly vice of all, pride, described by the Fathers writing in the Philokalia is the one vice that, instead of destroying only one or two virtues, as the other sins do, annihilates the whole lot of them. We see, therefore, that by keeping a tight grip on our appetite for food and drink, both by moderation at all times and by periods of fasting, we avoid much evil and clear away obstacles to knowing the holy God and to receiving eternal life.
4. Along with aiding self-control, the chief reason for fasting, as going beyond moderation alone, is to help us to pray more consistently and intensely, hence more effectively. We have already seen that fasting for its own sake can do more harm than good even leading to spiritual pride, the vice of Satan himself, and the worst of all evils. Only a small fraction of people in the Church keep the weekly and seasonal fasts in their full strictness, but each is encouraged to do only what he has heart, ability, and circumstances to accomplish. The purpose of fasting is not to prove how strong we are, but, if anything, the opposite. We fast to fill our heart and mind with prayer, which cannot be done if we are sated and drowsy with food.
5. Together with self-control and effective prayer a major goal of fasting is humility. As we submit to it under the leadership of God's Holy Spirit, we are reminded of how weak we are. As fasting helps to destroy or prevent pride, it fosters the opposite of this vice: humility. It brings us to our senses to see and keep in mind how limited and mortal we are. Even our attempt to carry out a true fast dispels fantasies about our abilities and strengths—both physical and spiritual. We are reminded of how dependent on God we are. 6. We are to keep in mind, however, that as Christians our major concern, far outweighing bodily health or having a few more years in this fleeting present world, is to be prepared for eternal life with God. This then is the main reason for fasting, self-control, or any other virtuous action.

Parish Life

Meals After Presanctified Liturgy



After Presanctified Liturgy, we would like to have light refreshments and fellowship to break the fast. This is not to be a heavy meal as we have on Sundays - something light. Whatever is brought should not have you leaving Presanctified Liturgy for preparation for food service afterward.

Are you interested? Sign up at:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0948a9aa23a1face9-presanctified#/>.

Some food options could be soup, pasta, sauce, hummus with an accompanying dipping item, or peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

There will be 3 slots for each Presanctified. You do not need to state what you will bring as we all know sometimes, we figure that out the day of. Even if you don't sign up, you can still bring something.

No one is going to be washing lots of dishes afterward, so please remember to take your dish when you leave.

MANY YEARS!

Birthdays in March

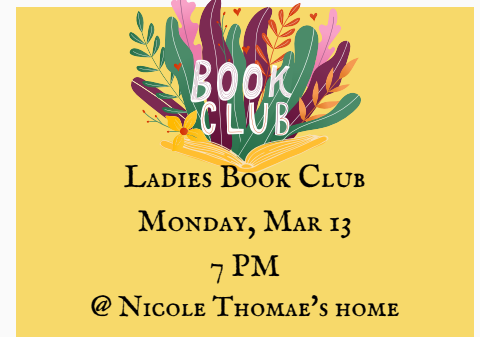
- 1 Molly Croft
 - 1 Link Scouten
 - 2 Paul Guest
 - 5 Mark Dorogy
 - 10 Dena Sue Watts
 - 11 Hannah Magnusson
 - 12 David Marble
 - 14 Lana Hough
 - 15 Mark Olsen
 - 19 Thomas Kehayes
 - 20 Genevieve Deschler
 - 22 Eliza Buck
 - 23 Elias Werner
- ### Anniversaries
- 19 Gary & Dora Cox



NEW ZOOM BOOK STUDY!

MARCH 28, 6:30PM

Way of the Ascetics: The Ancient Tradition of Discipline and Inner Growth
It is suggested that you order on Amazon
Written for laypersons living in the world, this is an excellent resource for daily meditation, spiritual guidance and a revitalized religious life. Succinct yet profound extracts from the Fathers, with commentary.



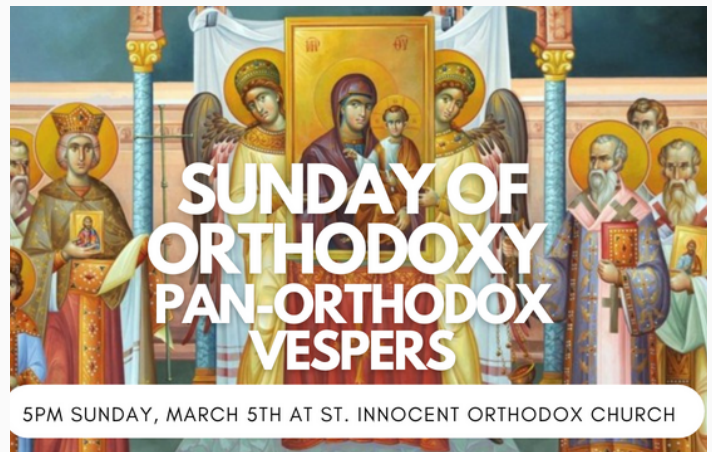
PROSPHORA WORKSHOP

Saturday, March 4

12-3PM, Parish Hall

Fr. Stephen Muse, PhD is a bi-vocational priest, serving the Holy Transfiguration Orthodox Church Community while working as a pastoral psychotherapist and marriage and family therapist at the Pastoral Institute in Columbus Georgia. During our Lenten retreat Fr. Stephen plans on exploring the paradoxes of the Orthodox Christian spiritual life. There will be a presentation, discussion and small group exploration of facing suffering in faith and hope in Christ, touching on trauma and the difference between psychological and spiritual approaches.

Our first session will start at 10am and break for lunch around 12pm. Lunch will be provided. Our second session will start at 1pm. This event will be held in our parish hall and will be in person only. We will be recording audio and video for those who cannot attend. All are welcome.



Special Services During Lent

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.

Sunday of Orthodoxy Pan-Orthodox Vespers

Sunday, March 5 at 5PM

The Great Feast of Annunciation

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 the Festal Vigil at 6:30pm the 24th and the Divine Liturgy @ 9am on Saturday the 25th

St. Innocent's Lenten Feast Day

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



To deny oneself means to give up one's bad habits;
to root out of the heart all that ties us to the world;
not to cherish bad thoughts or desires; to suppress
every evil thought; not to desire to do anything out
of self love, but to do everything out of love for God.

+ St. Innocent of Alaska



ST. INNOCENT ORTHODOX CHURCH
7301 Rivoli Road - Macon, Georgia 31210



| MARCH 2023 | | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|---|--|---|
| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
| Feb 26 Cheese Fare / Forgiveness Sunday 9:40am 3rd and 6th hours 10:00am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Forgiveness Vespers 12:45am Food and Fellowship | Feb 27 6:30pm Compline w/ Canon of St. Andrew | Feb 28 6:30pm Compline w/ Canon of St. Andrew | 1 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy | 2 6:30pm Compline w/ Canon of St. Andrew | 3 6:30pm Akathist to the Theotokos | 4 6:00pm Great Vespers 6:45pm Sacrament of Confession |
| 5 Sunday of Orthodoxy 9:40am 3rd and 6th Hours 10:00am Divine Liturgy with Icon procession 11:45am Food and Fellowship 12:30pm Catechism 5pm Sunday of Orthodox Vespers Hosting Holy Cross | 6 | 7 | 8 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy | 9 | 10 6:30pm Akathist to the Theotokos | 11 10-3pm Lenten Retreat 6:00pm Great Vespers 6:45pm Sacrament of Confession |
| 12 St. Gregory Palamas 9:40am 3rd and 6th Hours 10:00am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Food and Fellowship 12:30pm Catechism | 13 | 14 | 15 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy | 16 | 17 6:30pm Akathist to the Theotokos | 18 6:00pm Vigil for the Cross |
| 19 Ven. Precious Cross 9:40am 3rd and 6th Hours 10:00am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Food and Fellowship 12:30pm Catechism | 20 | 21 | 22 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy | 23 | 24 6:30pm Vigil for Annunciation | 25 Annunciation 9:00am Festal Divine Liturgy for Annunciation 6:00pm Great Vespers 6:45pm Sacrament of Confession |
| 26 St. John Climacus 9:40am 3rd and 6th Hours 10:00am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Food and Fellowship 12:30pm Catechism | 27 | 28 | 29 6:30pm Great Canon of St. Andrew | 30 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy for St. Innocent | 31 Apr 1 6:30pm Akathist to the Theotokos | 6:00pm Great Vespers 6:45pm Sacrament of Confession |

Please consult the Sunday bulletin for changes to the monthly calendar.



APRIL 2023

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Mar 26 St. John Climacus 9:40am 3rd and 6th Hours 10:00am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Food and Fellowship 12:30pm Catechism | Mar 27 | Mar 28 | Mar 29 | Mar 30 | Mar 31 | 1 |
| | | 6:30pm Zoom Book Study | 6:30pm Great Canon of St. Andrew | 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy for St. Innocent | 6:30pm Akathist to the Theotokos | 6:00pm Great Vespers 6:45pm Sacrament of Confession |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| St. Mary of Egypt 9:40am 3rd and 6th Hours 10:00am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Food and Fellowship 12:30pm Catechism | | | 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy | | 6:30pm Lazarus Saturday Matins | 9am Lazarus Saturday Divine Liturgy 6:00pm Palm Sunday Vigil |
| 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| PALM SUNDAY 9:40am 3rd and 6th Hours 10:00am Festal Divine Liturgy 11:45am Food and Fellowship 1:15pm Bridegroom Matins | 6:30pm Bridegroom Matins | 6:30pm Bridegroom Matins | 6:30pm Holy Unction | 10:00am Liturgy of the Last Supper 6:30pm Matins of the Passion | 10:00am Royal Hours 12-3pm Decorating the Tomb 3:00pm Dethronment Vespers 6:30pm Funeral Matins | 10:00am Holy Saturday Divine Liturgy 11:00pm Reading from Acts 11:30pm Pascha Midnight Office |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| PASCHA 12:00am Pascha Matins 1:00am Pascha Divine Liturgy 2:30am Blessing of Pascha baskets 1:00pm Agape Vespers 2:00pm Parish Pascha Picnic | | 6:00pm Pascha Vespers | 9:00am Pascha Divine Liturgy | 6:00pm Pascha Vespers | 9am Pascha Divine Liturgy | 6:00pm Great Vespers 6:45pm Sacrament of Confession |
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| St. Thomas Sunday 9:40am 3rd and 6th Hours 10:00am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Panikhida in the Cemtery 12:45am Food and Fellowship | | | 6:00pm Daily Vespers | | | 6:00pm Great Vespers 6:45pm Sacrament of Confession |
| 30 | May 1 | May 2 | May 3 | May 4 | May 5 | May 6 |
| 9:40am 3rd and 6th Hours 10:00am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Food and Fellowship | | | 6:00pm Daily Vespers | | | 6:00pm Great Vespers 6:45pm Sacrament of Confession |