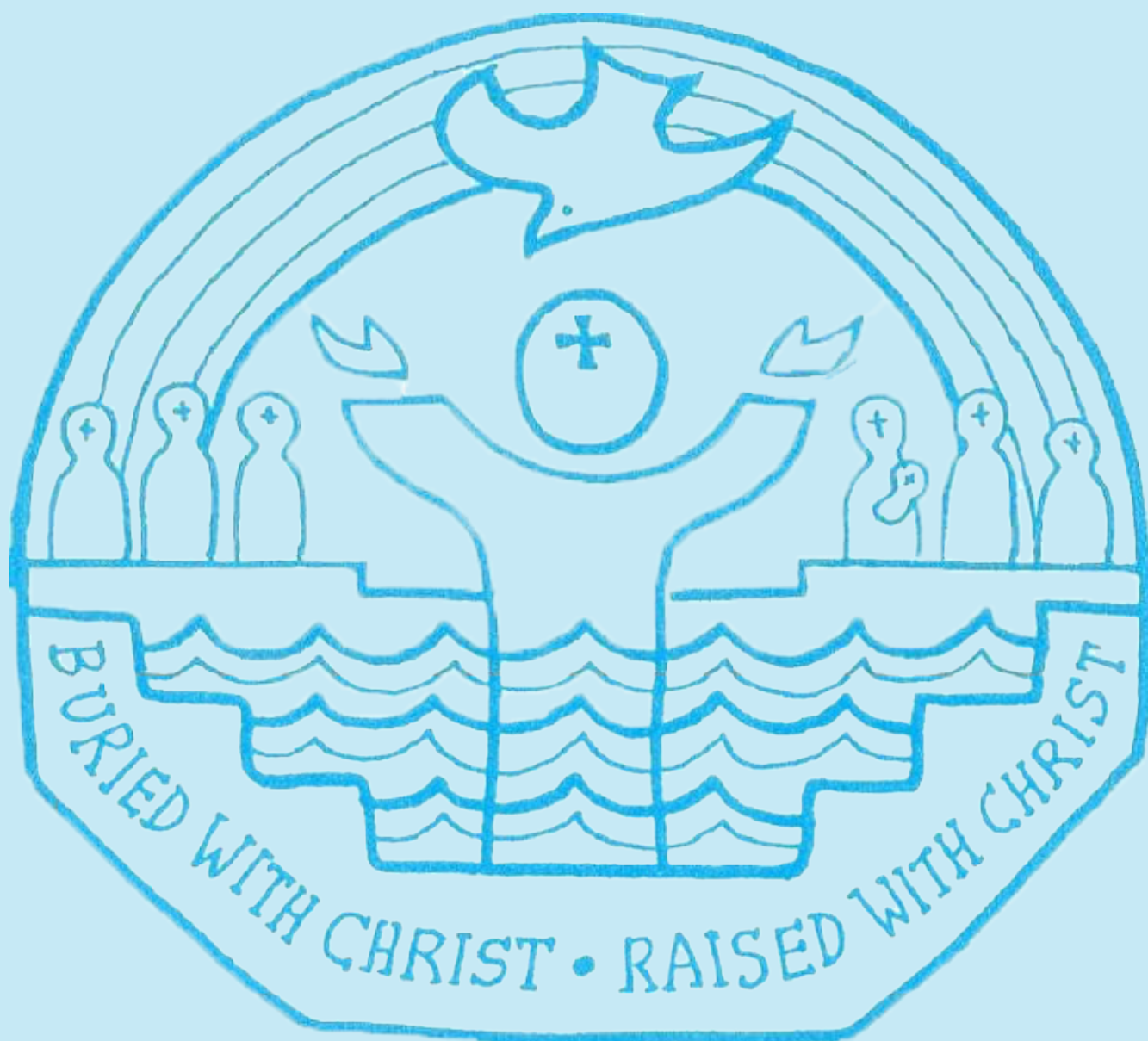


YOUR JOURNEY TO EASTER



PASSPORT

This passport begins a passage, a pilgrimage within your own heart as you pursue God at this special time. We invite you to participate in the day trips, special services, destinations and Lenten liturgies included in this passport.

They are all designed to draw you to the final destination of Lent: Pascha – Christ’s Resurrection.



We hope and pray that your Lenten journey will be joyful, meaningful and blessed.

By signing below, this pilgrim hereby declares a desire to GROW spiritually during Lent and to reach its final destination.

.....



Have you ever gone on a long trip? Another word for a trip is a journey. That is what the Church season of Lent is all about...a journey. A journey is something we go through for a purpose. We have a destination. And on this journey of Lent, we have two specific destinations that we are trying to reach: a **CROSS** and a **TOMB**. The end of the Lenten journey brings us to the most important event in the history of all mankind - Easter Sunday - a celebration of how much God loves us as we learn about the resurrection of Jesus Christ!

First stop: the cross upon which my Lord was crucified upon in order to save us from our sins.

Second stop: the tomb which now lies empty after He rose from the dead on the third day. **And what are we looking for when we get to those two places?**

ST. PAUL SAYS IN PHILIPPIANS 3:10

“ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death. ”



HOW DO WE GET THERE?

It is a time for us to look at the good things we do to honor God and how to change the sins we do in our lives. That is what this journey is all about – complete and total dedication to the things of God. We do not just fast because it is that time of year to fast. We fast as part of a package of supplies that we take with us on our journey towards Pascha.

So, are we willing to give up earthly things in order to attain heavenly ones?

We are excited to be on the Easter journey with you!



THE JOURNEY OF LENT



The Late Hegumen Father Pishoy Kamel

The forty days of fasting is a gift from our Lord Who fasted for us, and a gift from the Church to her children that they may struggle and become liberated from bitter slavery—the slavery of hatred and grudges; the slavery of worldly desires, idleness in prayer and obedience of the commandments. The Great Lent is a time of rejoicing for the children of the Church, to pass over the weakness of the soul, particularly very difficult matters which we cannot solve.

Our Lord, Who is fasting with us, will pass over with the Cross to His children and show them the glory and the power of His Resurrection.

PRAYER OF ST. EPHRAIM



O Lord and Master of my life, a spirit of idleness, curiosity, ambition and idle talk, give me not.

PROSTRATION

But a spirit of chastity, humility, patience and love, bestow upon me, Your servant.

PROSTRATION

O Lord and Master of my life, a spirit of idleness, curiosity, ambition and idle talk, give me not.

PROSTRATION



AMEN

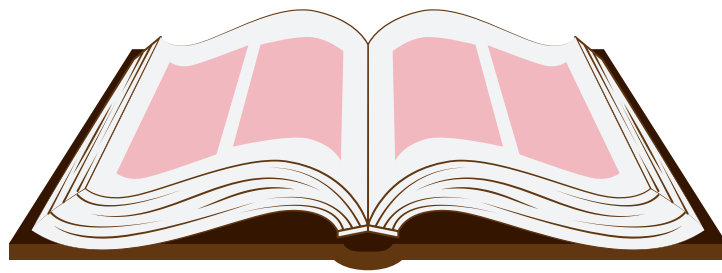
PRAYER is a trip we take inside of ourselves. It helps us to spend time with God quietly and to form a proper attitude about God, our neighbour and our world. Prayer is a daily destination.

FASTING is also a day trip; we fast each day during Lent and Holy Week. Often, we fast from certain foods but we should also fast from certain activities that are sinful, like treating others wrongly or speaking bad things about them. In fasting we get rid of behaviours, thoughts, and actions that are not good for our souls. This makes room within ourselves for healthier things like mercy, kindness, and love. Fasting is a daily destination

ALMSGIVING is a fancy word for loving our neighbour. Our faith teaches us that when we fast from food we do with less, so that we can give to others who do not have as much as we do. This is almsgiving. It is feeling the needs of others and being moved in our heart to serve them. It can also mean giving up our time to help someone else; giving up our time is a valuable gift!

The Holy Bible teaches us that the fasting which is accepted by God is the one in which we do acts of mercy to others.

“Is this not the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from you own flesh?” (Isaiah 58:6-7) Almsgiving is a daily destination.



The Bible is God’s special love letter to each of us. In the Bible we learn about God and hear stories that teach us the right way to live. When He speaks in the Bible, or you hear His word read in the liturgy, God is speaking to you personally. His promises are for you. He expects a response. He expects you to claim each promise. When we read the Scriptures, we should read them personally. We should see ourselves in them. Reading our Bible is a daily destination.

*On the following pages you
will find 40 spaces for you to
log your visits to these daily
destinations.*



May God grant us a blessed fast by which we can grow in a life of prayer, repentance and power over our sin to overcome this life and its trials. May we always increase in doing acts of mercy and living in peace with one another. May we have a deeper intimacy with our Creator and the Savior of our soul; understanding and experiencing the depth of His unconditional and incomprehensible love – a love that allowed Him to accept all that suffering in order to save us from our sins and restore us to state as a “child of God.”

SUNDAYS OF GREAT LENT

There are 7 Sundays of Great Lent. Each of them is a special destination. Not only do we come to receive the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist but also, we come to hear the Good News of the Gospel and its message for us.

THIS IS WHAT WE ARE PREPARING FOR!

Christ here is instructing us to not lay treasures on earth because the greatest of treasures is in fact in heaven, which is where the preparation of Lent begins with. It is in this mindset we understand how to prepare ourselves. Yes, we prepare our body through the physical act of fasting and focus on weakening the flesh, but the greater importance of this act is to strengthen the spirit. Yes, we surrender our love for meat and dairy, but even more so we surrender our attachment to the world. Yes, the abrupt break from the desires of the world is uncomfortable at first, but





“if we experience the cross in our life and taste it with consciousness and joy, this will be the mystical initiation to the knowledge and the glory of His power”

Fr Matthew the Poor - Our Need for Christ

DESTINATION 1

The First Sunday of Lent: Matthew 6:19-33

SPIRITUAL TRAINING

Notice what you spend most of your time thinking and talking about; this is a good sign of where your heart really lies. Make it your goal this week to treasure Christ by focusing on Him in your mind and heart by listening to worship songs and meditating on a verse from your quiet time throughout your day.



What do you worry about?
Write it in your prayer journal and every time you are tempted to worry ask God to give you peace as you surrender all your worries to Him.

	PRAYER	FASTING	ALMSGIVING	BIBLE	EUCHARIST
MONDAY				Mk 9:33-50	
TUESDAY				Lk 12:41-50	
WEDNESDAY				Lk 6:35-38	
THURSDAY				Mk 4:21-29	
FRIDAY				Lk 11:1-10	
SATURDAY				Mt 5:38-48	
SUNDAY				Mt. 6:19-30	

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your heart is there your treasure.”

Matthew 16:19-24

MEDIATION FOR WEEK 1

FASTING

Fasting has been in practice for the people of God since the Old Testament. It was the first law, the only law given to Adam and Eve. In the Scriptures we read about the Israelites fasting and the prophets fasting. In the New Testament we read about the Pharisees fasting, albeit improperly, but it was Jewish custom to fast, St. John the Baptist fasted, even Christ Himself fasted. We read in Matthew 17 that certain demons can only be expelled through prayer and fasting.



We also read in the lives of countless saints the spiritual gifts given to them through their fasting. Fasting poisons sin. We battle our passions through fasting. This is why we fast prior to major feasts, to strengthen our spirit. It's a form of self-discipline and exercise for our souls, like athletes training for a marathon. The typical fast calls for the omission of meat, dairy and seafood. Of course, this can be altered for health or other reasons at the discretion of one's spiritual father.

St. Symeon the New Theologian tells us that, “fasting is the beginning and foundation of every spiritual activity.”

St. Seraphim of Sarov said: “Once there came to him a mother who was concerned about how she might arrange the best possible marriage for her young daughter. When she came to Saint Seraphim for advice, he said to her: ‘Before all else, ensure that he, whom your daughter chooses as her companion for life, keeps the fasts. If he does not, then he is not a Christian, whatever he may consider himself to be.’”

There are several holy fathers that have said we cannot obtain any other virtue if we do not fast because fasting opens the doors to all the other virtues.

There is a story in the book, *My Life in Christ* by St. John of Kronstadt, about fasting that always makes me smile. Once, when St. John was very ill, his doctor kept insisting that he break his fast and eat but St. John refused. The doctor continued to insist that he would die unless he ate. Finally, St. John told him to call his mother and if his mother said it was okay, he would. So, the doctor called. And what did his mother say? She said it was better that he died than to break the fast!

DO WE SEE THE IMPORTANCE OF FASTING

Fasting is one of the foundations of an Orthodox Christian life. If we do away with fasting, we are crippling our souls.

There are 3 things that will fight your fasting:

- 1 THE DEVIL 
- 2 YOURSELF (YOUR PASSIONS)
- 3 YOUR COMPANY (THOSE WHO YOU SURROUND YOURSELF WITH)

Fasting is an offering to God, one of the few things we do for Him—a way to deny ourselves and honor Him

At the Ecumenical Councils they discussed the importance of fasting, it is in our holy canons and we repeatedly read about the importance of fasting. It has always been a very serious topic that unfortunately gets deemed irrelevant by some today. People in perfectly good health tell themselves, “It’s okay if I eat dairy or fish because I’m not eating meat. That’s fasting, isn’t it?” Is it? When we read about early Christians that fasted, we’re not talking fasting in the context that we know it today. They ate nothing at all on the days they fasted!

Nowadays, we have so many meatless meats and non-dairy dairy products that it hardly feels like we’re fasting at all. If you are currently not fasting according to the traditional fast, consult your spiritual father about how you could take your fast one step further this Lenten season.

Christ will reward your struggle abundantly!



ST. PAISIOS THE ATHONITE SAYS:



With fasting man reveals his choices. Out of philotimo, a person undertakes an ascetic discipline and God helps. But if a person forces himself and laments, **‘Oh well, it’s Friday; I have to fast,’** he will surely torment himself. If, however, he understands the meaning of fasting and does it out of love for Christ, he will rejoice in it and say to himself, **‘This is the day when Christ was crucified; they didn’t even give Him water to drink; they gave Him vinegar. I, too, will not drink water all day.’** If he does this, then he will experience a far more sublime inner joy than the person who enjoys the best refreshments.

Do you fast? Give me proof of it by your works.

If you see a poor man, take pity on him.

If you see a friend being honored, do not envy him.

Do not let only your mouth fast, but also the eye and the ear and the feet and the hands and all the members of our bodies.

Let the hands fast, by being free of avarice.

Let the feet fast, by ceasing to run after sin.

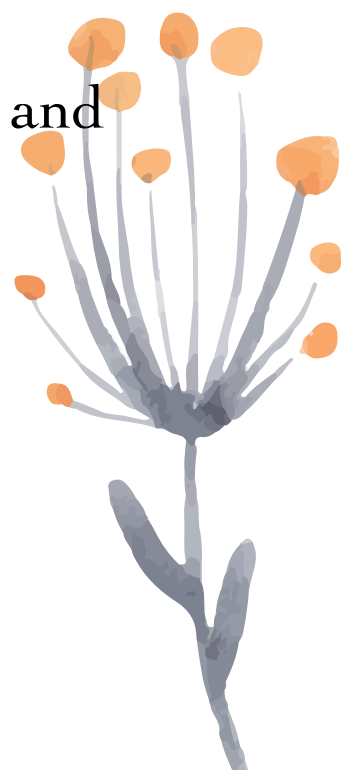
Let the eyes fast, by disciplining them not to glare at that which is sinful.

Let the ear fast, by not listening to evil talk and gossip.

Let the mouth fast from foul words and unjust criticism.

For what good is it if we abstain from birds and fishes, but bite and devour our brothers?

St John Chrysostom



May He who came to the world to save sinners strengthen us to complete the fast with humility, have mercy on us and save us.

The more days of fasting there are, the better the healing is; the longer the period of abstinence, the more abundant the gain of salvation is.

ST AUGUSTINE

Let thy mind fast from vain thoughts; let thy memory fast from remembering evil; let thy will fast from evil desire; let thine eyes fast from bad sights: turn away thine eyes that thou mayest not see vanity; let thine ears fast from vile songs and slanderous whispers; let thy tongue fast from slander, condemnation, blasphemy, falsehood, deception, foul language and every idle and rotten word; let thy hands fast from killing and from stealing another's goods; let thy legs fast from going to evil deeds: Turn away from evil, and do good.

ST. TIKHON OF ZADONSK

“
Give the body as much food as it needs, and thou shalt receive no harm, even if thou shouldst eat three times a day. If a man eats but once a day, but undiscerningly, what benefit is there to him from that. The warfare of fornication follows excess in eating - and after this the enemy weighs down the body with sleep in order to defile it.

~ **Sts. Barsanuphius and John**”

“
By fasting it is possible both to be delivered from future evils and to enjoy the good things to come. We fell into disease through sin; let us receive healing through repentance, which is not fruitful without fasting

~ **St. Basil the Great**”

“
He who prays and fasts is more disposed for almsgiving. He who fasts is light and winged, he prays with wakefulness, and quenches his wicked lusts; he pleases God and humbles his soul when lifted up.

~ **St. John Chrysostom**”

” A brother came to see Abba Poemen in the second week of Lent. He told him his thoughts and obtained peace through his words. He then said to him, “I hesitated to come here today.” The elder asked him why, and the brother said, “I thought that you would not let me in because it is Lent.” Abba Poemen then said, “We have not been taught to close the wooden door, but the door of our tongues

~ Paradise of the Fathers

“ A full stomach shrinks from examining spiritual questions...A mind full of the world cannot approach the investigation of divine service. Just as fire cannot burn fresh wood; the love of God cannot be kindled in a heart that loves comfort.

~ St. Isaac the Syrian

”

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Destination 2

The Second Sunday of Lent: The Temptation on the Mount (Matthew 4:1-11)

Spiritual training

- ❖ When you hear the Devil's voice tempting you, what do you do? Train yourself to cry out the Jesus Prayer this week immediately when you feel tempted.
- ❖ Choose a Bible verse and learn it by heart so when the Devil tries to trick you with His lies you can fight Him with the truth in God's word, like Jesus did!



Week 2	Prayer	Fasting	Almsgiving	Bible	Eucharist
M				Lk. 18:1-8	
T				Mk. 10:17- 27	
W				Mt. 15:32- 38	
Th				Mt. 19:16- 30	
F				Lk. 6:39-49	
Sa				Mt. 7:13-21	
Su				Mt. 4:1-11	

“Then Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.’” Matthew 4:10

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Mediation for Week 2 {Prayer}

This is the exact topic of most of our spiritual books. But what is prayer? How do we pray? When should we pray? We've been told by many of our saints and holy fathers that the most important prayer we could ever practice is the Jesus Prayer. Simply said, Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner. Or even more simply, Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me.

A homily on prayer by St. Theophan the Recluse:

“Not every act of prayer is prayer. Standing at home before your icons, or here in church, and venerating them is not yet prayer, but the "equipment" of prayer. Reading prayers either by heart or from a book, or hearing someone else read them is not yet prayer, but only a tool or method for obtaining and awakening prayer. Prayer itself is the piercing of our hearts by pious feelings towards God, one after another – feelings of humility, submission, gratitude, doxology, forgiveness, heart-felt prostration, brokenness, conformity to the will of God, etc. All of our effort should be directed so that during our prayers, these feelings and feelings

like them should fill our souls, so that the heart would not be empty when the lips are reading the prayers, or when the ears hear and the body bows in prostrations, but that there would be some qualitative feeling, some striving toward God. When these feelings are present, our praying is prayer, and when they are absent, it is not yet prayer. It seems that nothing should be simpler and more natural for us than prayer and our hearts' striving for God. But in fact, it is not always like this for everyone. One must awaken and strengthen a prayerful spirit in oneself, that is one must bring up a prayerful spirit. The first means to this is to read or to hear prayers said. Pray as you should, and you will certainly awaken and strengthen the ascent of your heart to God and you will come into a spirit of prayer.

In our prayer books, there are prayers of the Holy Fathers - Ephraim the Syrian, Makarios the Egyptian, Basil the Great, John Chrysostom, and other great men of prayer. Being filled with the spirit of prayer, they were able to up that living spirit into words, and handed it down to us. When one enters into these prayers with attention and effort, then that great and prayerful spirit will in turn enter into him. He will taste the power of prayer. We must pray so that our mind and heart receive the content of the prayers that we read. In this way the act of praying becomes a font of true prayer in us.

I will give here three very simple instructions:

1. always begin praying with at least a little preparation;
2. do not pray carelessly, but with attention and feeling; and
3. do not go on to ordinary work immediately after prayer.

Even if prayer is common for us, it always demands preparation. What is more common for those who can read and write than reading and writing? However, sitting down to read or write, we do not immediately begin, but we calm ourselves before beginning, at least to the point that we can read or write in a peaceful state. Even more so preparation for the work of prayer is necessary before praying, especially when what we have been doing before praying is of a totally different nature from prayer.

Thus, going to pray, in the morning or in the evening, stand for a moment, or sit, or walk, and strive in this time to focus your thoughts, casting off from them all earthly activities and objects. Then call to mind the One to Whom you are praying, Who He is and who you are, as you begin this prayerful petition to Him. From this, awaken in your soul the feeling of humility and

reverent awe of standing before God in your heart. As you stand piously before God, all of this preparation may seem small and insignificant, but it is not small in meaning. This is the beginning of prayer and a good beginning is half the work. Having stood up in your heart, now stand before your icons, make a few prostrations, and begin with the usual prayers: "Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee. O Heavenly King...", and so on. Do not read hurriedly; pay attention to every word and let the meaning of each word enter into your heart. Accompany your words with prostrations. With this effort, the reading of prayers becomes pleasant to God and fruit-bearing. Pay attention to every word, and let the sense of each word enter into your heart; understand what you are reading and feel what you are understanding. No other rules are necessary. These two – understanding and feeling – have the effect of making prayer fitting, and fruitful. For example, you read: "cleanse us from every stain" - feel your stain, desire cleanliness, and ask it from the Lord with hope. You read: "forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" - forgive all in your soul, and having forgiven everyone everything in your heart, ask for forgiveness for yourself from the Lord. You read: "Thy will be done" - completely give up your own will to the Lord in your heart, and honestly be prepared to meet everything that the Lord is well-pleased to send to you with a good heart. If you read each verse

of your prayers in this way, then you will be truly praying.

In order to facilitate the development of true prayer, take these steps:

1) keep a prayer rule according to the blessing of your spiritual father - not more than you can read unhurriedly on a normal day;

2) before you pray, in your free time become familiar with the prayer in your rule, fully take in each word and feel it, so that you would know in advance what should be in your soul as you read. It will be even better if you learn the prayers by heart. When you do this, then all of your prayers will be easy for you to remember and feel. There is only one final difficulty: your thoughts will always stray to other subjects, therefore:

3) you must struggle to keep your attention focused on the words of your prayer, knowing in advance that your mind will wander.

When your mind does wander during prayer, bring it back. When it wanders again, bring it back again. Each and every time that you read a prayer while your thoughts are wandering (and consequently you read it without attention and feeling,) then do not fail to read it again. Even if your mind wanders several times in the same place, read it again and again until you read it all the way through with understanding and feeling. In this way, you will overcome this difficulty so

that the next time, perhaps, it will not come up again, or if it does return, it will be weaker. This is how one must act when the mind wanders. On the other hand, it may happen that a particular word or phrase might act so strongly on the soul, that the soul no longer wants to continue with the prayer, and even though the lips continue praying, the mind keeps wandering back to that place which first acted on it. In this case:

4) stop, do not read further, but stand with attention and feeling in that place, and use the prayer in that place and the feelings engendered by it to feed your soul. Do not hurry to get yourself out of this state. If time cannot wait, it is better to leave your rule unfinished than to disturb this prayerful state. Maybe this feeling will stay with you all day like your guardian Angel! This sort of grace-filled action on the soul during prayer means that the spirit of prayer is becoming internalized, and consequently, maintaining this state is the most hopeful means of raising up and strengthening a spirit of prayer in your heart.

Finally, when you finish your prayers, do not immediately go off to any sort of work, but remain and think at least a little about what you have just finished and what now lies before you. If some feeling was given to you during prayer, keep it after you pray. If you completed your prayer rule in the true spirit of prayer, then you will not wish to quickly go about other work; this is a property of prayer. Thus, our ancestors

said when they returned from Constantinople: "he who has tasted sweet things does not desire bitter things". So, it is with each person who has prayed well during his prayers. One should recognize that tasting this sweetness of prayer is the very goal of praying, and if praying leads to a prayerful spirit, then it is exactly through such a tasting.

If you will follow these few rules, then you will quickly see the fruit of prayerful labor. And he who fulfills them already without this instruction, of course, is already tasting this fruit. All praying leaves prayer in the soul - continual prayer in this manner gives it root, and patience in this work establishes a prayerful spirit. May God grant this to you by the prayers of our All-pure Lady, the Theotokos!"

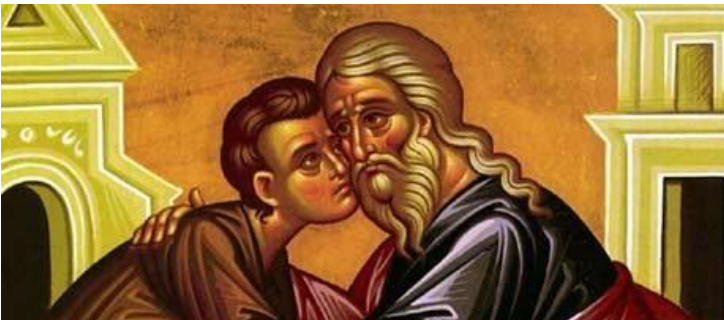
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Destination 3

The Third Sunday of Lent: The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32)

Spiritual training

- ❖ Is there anyone in our life that we judge, like the Older Son, because we do not believe they are worth God's love or forgiveness? Remember God loves all his children without partiality so we should do the same. This week, aim to talk to someone that others say are not worth your time.
- ❖ Do you see God as your loving Father and Lord of all creation, or is He a Genie who should grant you all your wishes? Spend time this week in self-reflection to see if there are any gifts you want more than the Giver Himself.



Week 3	Prayer	Fasting	Almsgiving	Bible	Eucharist
M				Lk. 11:33-36	
T				Jn. 8:31-39	
W				Lk. 4:1-13	
Th				Lk. 4:1-13	
F				Jn. 12:44-50	
Sa				Mt. 18:23-35	
Su				Lk. 15:11-32	

“But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.”

Luke 15:20

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Mediation for Week 3 {Repentance}

Bishop Kallistos Ware wrote in his book *The Orthodox Way*, “Repentance marks the starting-point of our journey...Correctly understood, repentance is not negative but positive. It means not self-pity or remorse but conversion, the re-centering of our whole life upon the Trinity. It is to look not backward with regret but forward with hope-not downwards at our own shortcomings but upwards at God’s love. It is to see, not what we have failed to be, but what by divine grace we can now become;and it is to act upon what we see. To repent is to open our eyes to the light. In this sense, repentance is not just a single act, an initial step, but a continuing state, an attitude of heart and will that needs to be ceaselessly renewed up to the end of life.”

That one paragraph fills my heart with so much hope! Hope that no matter how short I fall, no matter how many times I fall, I can constantly get up and press on with the spirit of repentance. Do we see the blessings God has bestowed upon us? He doesn’t ask that we never fall, he just asks that we get up and continue getting up!

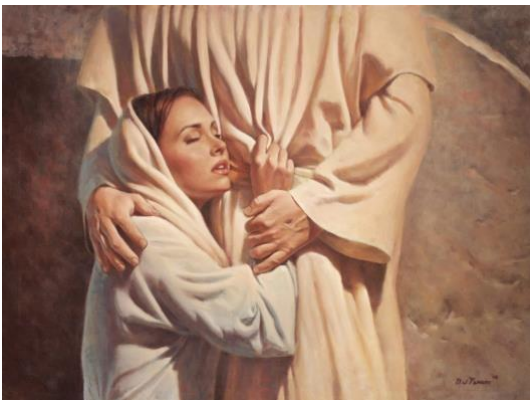
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Destination 4

The Fourth Sunday of Lent: The Samaritan Woman
(John 4:1-42)

Spiritual training

- ❖ What ways have you personally experienced God's love and mercy? Do you share these things with those around you like the Samaritan Woman when she said, "Come and see"? Strive to not only tell others about something great God has done for you but also show them how great He is through your life and actions.
- ❖ Look at how Jesus spoke to the Samaritan Woman with compassion and patience. Attempt to make all your conversations this week seasoned with



kind words and encouragement, so that you can uplift others just like Christ did.

Week 4	Prayer	Fasting	Almsgiving	Bible	Eucharist
M				Lk. 16:1-9	
T				Lk. 9:57-62	
W				Mk. 4:35-41	
Th				Lk. 18:35-43	
F				Mt. 15:21-31	
Sa				Mt. 21:33-45	
Su				Jn. 4:1-42	

“The woman then left her water pot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, “Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?” Then they went out of the city and came to Him.” John 4:28-30

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Mediation for Week 4 {Confession}

It is imperative in the life of an Orthodox Christian to participate in the Mystery of Holy Confession. Many times, the devil will fill us with fear over the idea of confessing our sins out loud at all, let alone to someone else. But the Church tells us it is absolutely necessary in order to cleanse and save our souls.

I remember, very well actually, how I used to feel when I first started making confession a part of my spiritual regimen, so to speak. I would be terrified! I had all these (prideful) thoughts about how my spiritual father was going to think badly of me or how some things happened so long ago and it wasn't like I could recommit them; did they really need to be confessed? Dozens of thoughts crept into my mind to try and make me withhold things or simply not to go at all. As I waited anxiously for my turn to come, I would break out into a cold sweat and seriously contemplate just rescheduling. It may have been embarrassing but it was never as bad as I imagined. My spiritual father counseled me with love, humbly reassuring me that he was in no position to judge another's sins and that we should be embarrassed to commit the sin in the presence of God, not to confess to him, a simple

priest. At the end when I knelt down and he began reading the prayer of Forgiveness over me, my soul soared with joy! Tears came to my eyes and I silently thanked God for His abundant mercy and forgiveness, even on someone like me. Before I knew it, I couldn't wait for my next confession—for that private time to discuss the secrets and depths of my hearts, to receive counsel on how to handle situations I wasn't sure how to handle myself. I finally started to understand what a mystery it is, indeed!

In the book *Repentance & Confession* by St. Nektarios we read, “Since confession had always followed repentance, everyone who came to the Preacher of repentance, the Prophet and Forerunner John the Baptist, would confess their sins prior to baptism. Behold the words of the Evangelist: “Then there went out to him Jerusalem and all Judaea and all the region round about the Jordan. And they were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins” (Matt 3:6). This commandment obtained further validity in the New Testament because Christ specifically gave His Apostles the authority to forgive sins: “Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Matt 18:18). After His resurrection, Christ appeared to His Apostles and re-affirmed: “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you. And having said this He breathed on them and said to them: ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they

are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (John 20:21-23).

This authority given to the Apostles, and by extension to the Church, is likewise witnessed in the book of Acts. While narrating the Ephesians' entrance into Christianity, the Apostle Luke notes that they would come confessing their deeds—even in front of others! Behold the words of the Apostle: “And many who believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds” (Acts 19:18). The Apostle James, the brother of our Lord, also recommends confession: “Confess your trespasses one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.” (James 5:16). John the Evangelist similarly advises: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Do we see how clearly Christ instituted the Mystery of Confession?

St. John Damascene said repentance has four steps.

1. Remorse.
2. Confession of one's sins to a spiritual father.
3. The completion of a penance appointed to him.

4. The loosing of sins. No spiritual father can loose the sins of a person who does not take it upon himself to complete the canon that has been assigned him.

This is so important that Christ instructed His apostles, not once but twice, of this in the Gospel. If this is what Christ instructed and the saints continued to teach than this is what we need to continue doing. Our salvation obviously depends on it!

The words of St. Ephraim in the Lenten Prayer help me to see my own sinfulness, to understand more clearly the depths of my sin, which I sometimes convince myself isn't "all that bad". But that's not all it does because soon I remind myself that the words that I feel are mine, really are not. They are the blessed words written by one of the biggest saints of our Church! A saint! How could a saint possibly understand the way I, a pitiful sinner, feel? Because he was a sinner, too. Only our Lord was sinless. I'm reminded that our saints were not born saints, they had the same trials and temptations that we all do. The difference is that they overcame them and devoted themselves to God. The same way I could. And that, that gives me hope. A deep and real and awe-inspired hope that I could do this, too. Maybe I won't reach sainthood, maybe I'll just make it by the skin of my teeth. But I know I have a real chance, if only I want it badly enough.

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Destination 5

The Fifth Sunday of Lent: The Man at the Pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-18)

Spiritual training

- ❖ Jesus asked the blind man “Do you want to be made well?” Jesus is asking you this question this week. You may not have physical illnesses but

which spiritual diseases do we have? Write about which sins you need to be healed from in your prayer journal and remember to pray daily for Christ to set you free!

- ❖ Jesus tells the man “Rise, take up your bed and walk.” It is as if Jesus tells the man, “Let’s do this together”.

Our will must cooperate

with God’s power. This week see if there are any sources of temptation in your life, then cut them out and run away from them!



Week 5	Prayer	Fasting	Almsgiving	Bible	Eucharist
M				Jn 10:22-38	
T				Jn. 8:12-20	
W				Lk. 13:6-9	
Th				Lk. 13:10-17	
F				Jn. 8:21-27	
Sa				Mt. 23:14-39	
Su				Jn. 5:1-18	

“Jesus said to him, “Rise, take up your bed and walk.” And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked.”

John 5:8,9

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Mediation for Week 5 {How to Scrutinize and Reproach Yourself}

St Ephraim the Syrian

After having gained knowledge of the truth, I have become a brawler and an offender. I argue over trifles; I have become envious and callous toward my neighbor, merciless toward beggars, wrathful, argumentative, obstinate, slothful, irritable. I harbor vile thoughts, I love fancy clothing. And to this day I have many corrupt thoughts and fits of selfishness, gluttony, sensuality, vainglory, arrogance, lust, gossiping, breaking of fasts, despondency, rivalry, and indignation.

I am worthless, but think much of myself. I lie constantly, but get angry with liars. I defile the temple of my body with wanton thoughts, but sternly judge the wanton. I condemn those who fall, but myself fall constantly. I condemn slanderers and thieves, but am myself both a thief and a slanderer. I walk with a bright countenance, although I am altogether impure.

In churches and at banquets I always want to take the place of honor. I see hermits and act

dignified; I see monks and I become pompous. I strive to appear pleasing to women, dignified to strangers, intelligent and reasonable to my neighbors, superior to intellectuals. With the righteous I act as if I possess a vast wisdom; the unintelligent I disdain as illiterates.

If I am offended, I take revenge. If I am honored, I shun those who honor me. If someone demands of me what is rightfully his, I start a suit. And those who tell me the truth I consider enemies. When my error is exposed, I get angry, but I am not dissatisfied when people flatter me.

I do not want to honor those who are worthy but I myself, who am unworthy, demand honor. I do not want to tire myself with work, but if someone fails to serve me I get angry with him. I do not want to walk among laborers, but if someone fails to help me in my work I slander him.

I arrogantly deny my brother when he is in need, but when I have need of something I turn to him. I hate those who are ill, but when I myself am ill I wish that everyone would love me. I do not want to know those who are higher than I, and I scorn those who are lower.

If I abstain from indulging my foolish desires, I praise myself vaingloriously. If I succeed in vigilance, I fall into the snares of conceit and contradiction. If I refrain from eating, I drown in

pride and arrogance. If I am wakeful in prayer, I am vanquished by irritability and wrath. If I see virtue in someone, I studiously ignore him.

I have scorned worldly pleasures, but do not abandon my vain desire for them. If I see a woman, I go into raptures. To all appearances I am wise in humility, but in my soul, I am haughty. I seem not to be acquisitive, but in reality, I suffer from a mania for possessions. And what good is it to dwell on such things? I appear to have forsaken the world, but in fact I still think about worldly things all the time.

During services I always occupy myself with conversations, wandering thoughts, and vain recollections. During meals I indulge in idle chatter. I yearn for gifts. I participate in the sinful falls of others and engage in ruinous rivalry.

Such is my life! With what vileness do I obstruct my own salvation! And my arrogance, my vainglory does not permit me to think about my sores that I might cure myself.

Behold my virtuous feats! See how vast are the regiments of sins which the enemy sends to campaign against me! Yet in the face of all this, I who am wretched endeavor to boast of sanctity. I live in sin, but want others to honor me as a righteous man.

In all this I have but one thing to say in my defense: the devil has ensnared me. But this did

not suffice to absolve Adam of his sin. Cain was of course also prompted by the devil, but he did not escape condemnation either. What shall I do if the Lord comes to me? I have no means to justify my negligence.

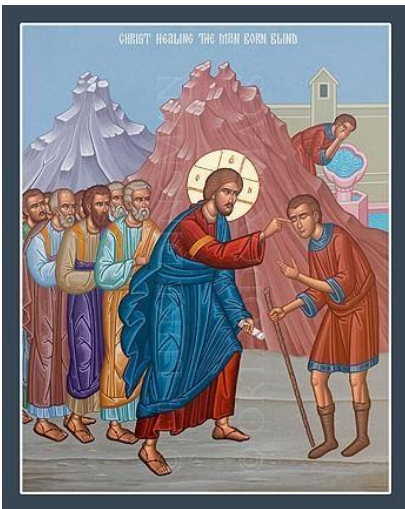
I fear that I shall be numbered among those whom Paul called vessels of wrath, who will share the devil's fate and whom God, because of their contempt for Him, has committed to the passions of degradation. Thus, there is the danger that I will be sentenced to the same fate. If Thou wouldst save me, who am unworthy, O Merciful Lord, vouchsafe me, a sinner, repentance; enliven my soul deadened by sins, O Giver of Life. Drive out the stony hardness that is in my miserable heart and grant me a fountain of contrition, O Thou Who didst pour forth life unto us from Thy life-creating rib.

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Destination 6

The Sixth Sunday of Lent: The Man Born Blind (John 9:1-38)

Spiritual training



❖ The man born blind said “One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see.” He experienced a dramatic change before and after meeting with Jesus. Try to think and make a list of the things that Jesus has really changed in your life and thank Him for each one.

❖ Do you believe in God even when life seems painful? Make a list of God’s attributes so when things happen that do not make sense we can say with the blind man “Lord, I believe!” We may not always know what He is doing but we can always be confident in Who He is; tender, caring, unfailing Love.

Week 6	Prayer	Fasting	Almsgiving	Bible	Eucharist
M				Lk. 13:1-5	
T				Lk. 9:18-22	
W				Lk. 11:45- 52	
Th				Jn. 6:47-71	
F				Jn. 3:1- 13	
Sa				Mk. 10:46- 52	
Su				Jn. 9:1- 41	

“One thing I know: that though I was
blind, now I see.” John 9:25

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Mediation for Week 6 {Forgiveness}

Metropolitan Anthony of Sorozh

Forgive those who trespass against you, forgive, because unless you do forgive you cannot be forgiven. The Kingdom of God is a Kingdom of mutual recognition, of mutual acceptance and of love, which is simultaneously the joy of communion, but also the readiness to carry one another's burdens.

Forgive, but how? Where does forgiveness begin? It would be so easy and so wonderful if forgiveness could begin by such a change of heart that those who are repellent to us should become dear, that things that have hurt us should be forgotten, that we could begin as if nothing had happened before.

But this is not what happens. We feel that pain of the past, we cannot forget, we cannot simply begin as though there had been nothing before. But this is not what forgiveness means.

Forgiving is not forgetting, forgetting leads nowhere. When we forget how, for what reason, in what circumstances, because of what weakness, what frailty someone has done wrong, we leave him unprotected. Someone who has

done wrong must be protected against another fall. What he has done, the reasons and circumstance of his fall should not be forgotten because he needs our thoughtful, loving care not to slip again, not to sin again.

And this is where forgiveness begins: forgiveness begins at the moment when, realizing the frailty of others as I realize mine, the need of others for help, for mercy and for protection, I am prepared together with them to bear the burden of their weakness, their frailty or their sinfulness. Forgiveness begins at the moment when I take upon myself to put up with others, without waiting for them to change, to put up with them as they are in order to make lighter their burden and to make it possible for them eventually to change.

But the condition of forgiveness is in me: my readiness to take up this cross, this burden, that others should be healed or at least protected against evil. And this everyone can do, it takes a moment of understanding and it takes an act of determination and of goodwill. Every one of us, side by side with them, have people who are difficult to bear, who are a cause of suffering, of misery or of anger; we can undo this anger and outgrow this misery if we make our task, the task of our life, our business, to carry their burden together with them, to be the person who, wounded and offended, and rejected will turn to God and say, 'Lord, forgive, because I

bear no grudge, I want to become and to remain solid with this person in his frailty and his sinfulness. I will not stand in judgment against him, and if I am not yet capable of doing this, You do it for me: do not endorse my judgment, do not endorse the condemnation I rashly have pronounced, do not stand by me in my anger. Stand by the person who has done wrong, because he, because she needs help, forgiveness and healing for that very reason.

This is where forgiveness begins and unless it begins there, it will never develop into anything at all. Bear one another's burden, accept solidarity with those who have done and are doing wrong, love them into newness of life and then only will forgiveness become what it is to be: an act of intercession before God that heals, transforms. This beginning of forgiveness we all can make, it is within our power to take up this task. Let us then do what we can, and let us wait for God to do within us, for us, in our midst, more than we can out of goodwill to build gradually a kingdom of mutual love, a kingdom which is truly the Kingdom of God. Amen.

Prayer for Enemies - Nikolai Velimirovich

Bless my enemies, O Lord. Even I bless them and do not curse them. Enemies have driven me into your embrace more than friends have. Friends have bound me to earth, enemies have loosed me from earth and have demolished all my

aspirations in the world. Enemies have made me a stranger in worldly realms and an extraneous inhabitant of the world. Just as a hunted animal finds safer shelter than an unhunted animal does, so have I, persecuted by enemies, found the safest sanctuary, having ensconced myself beneath your tabernacle, where neither friends nor enemies can slay my soul. Bless my enemies, O Lord. Even I bless them and do not curse them. They, rather than I, have confessed my sins before the world. They have punished me, whenever I have hesitated to punish myself. They have tormented me, whenever I have tried to flee torments. They have scolded me, whenever I have flattered myself. They have spat upon me, whenever I have filled myself with arrogance. Bless my enemies, O Lord, Even I bless them and do not curse them. Whenever I have made myself wise, they have called me foolish. Whenever I have made myself mighty, they have mocked me as though I were a dwarf. Whenever I have wanted to lead people, they have shoved me into the background. Whenever I have rushed to enrich myself, they have prevented me with an iron hand. Whenever I thought that I would sleep peacefully, they have wakened me from sleep. Whenever I have tried to build a home for a long and tranquil life, they have demolished it and driven me out. Truly, enemies have cut me loose from the world and have stretched out my hands to the hem of your garment. Bless my enemies, O Lord. Even I bless them and do not curse them. Bless them and

multiply them; multiply them and make them even more bitterly against me: so that my fleeing to You may have no return; so that all hope in men may be scattered like cobwebs; so that absolute serenity may begin to reign in my soul; so that my heart may become the grave of my two evil twins, arrogance and anger; so that I might amass all my treasure in heaven; ah, so that I may for once be freed from self-deception, which has entangled me in the dreadful web of illusory life. Enemies have taught me to know what hardly anyone knows, that a person has no enemies in the world except himself. One hates his enemies only when he fails to realize that they are not enemies, but cruel friends. It is truly difficult for me to say who has done me more good and who has done me more evil in the world: friends or enemies. Therefore bless, O Lord, both my friends and enemies. A slave curses enemies, for he does not understand. But a son blesses them, for he understands. For a son knows that his enemies cannot touch his life. Therefore, he freely steps among them and prays to God for them. Bless my enemies, O Lord. Even I bless them and do not curse them.



Destination 7

The Seventh Sunday of Lent: Palm Sunday (Matthew 21:1-17, Mark 11:1-11, Luke 19:29-48, and John 12:12-19)

Spiritual training

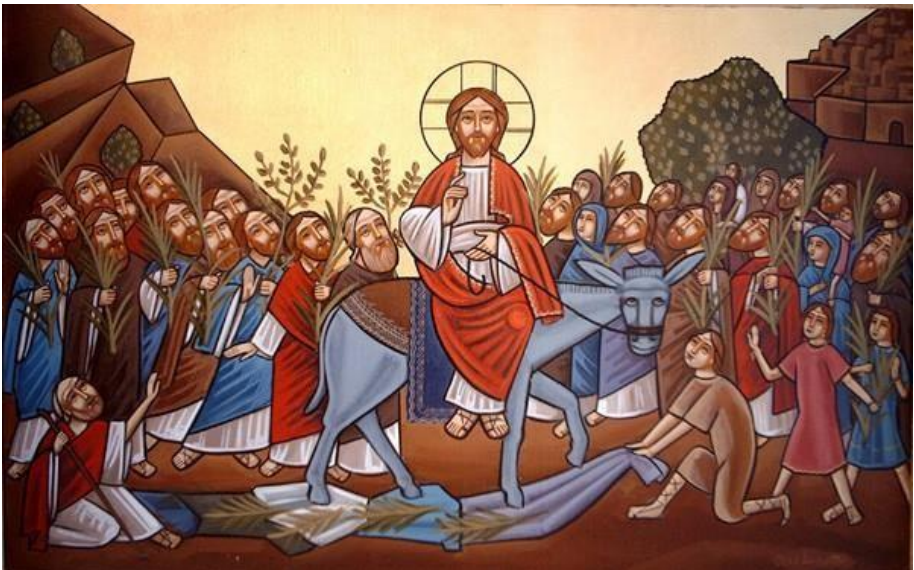
- ❖ The same people who sang “Hosanna” on Sunday where shouting “Crucify Him!” on Friday. How many times do we act like this when we come to church and appear like “good Christians” but live another life that is far from holy during the week? His praise should ever be on our lips by living to honour Him because He is our worthy King.
- ❖ Everyone lay down his or her garments as a carpet for Him to walk on. Think about the things that you could lay down for Jesus. They counted them as rubbish compared to Christ’s glory. The garments represent the material things in our life. Think about what material things you could do without. How does being a Christian effect how you spend your money and the things you value?

Week 7	Prayer	Fasting	Almsgiving	Bible	Eucharist
M				Jn. 5:31-47	
T				Jn. 12:36-43	
W				Jn. 6:35-45	
Th				Mk. 12:18-27	
F				Lk. 13:31-35	
Sa				Jn. 11:1-45 (Lazarus Saturday)	
Su				Mt 21:1-17; Mk 11:1-11; Lk 19:29-48; Jn 12:12-19	

“And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying:

“Hosanna to the Son of David!
‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of
the Lord!’ Hosanna in the highest!””

Mathew 21:8-10





Mediation for Week 7 {Lazarus Saturday}

The miracle of the Raising of Lazarus was performed as an assurance to us, the whole of humanity, of the general resurrection that we will all participate in at the Second Coming.

Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos writes in his book *Feasts of the Lord*, “Of course there is a fundamental difference between the resurrection of Lazarus and the resurrection of the people at the Second Coming of Christ. After his resurrection, Lazarus did not have a spiritual body, but the body which he had had before he died, with all the characteristic features of corruptibility and mortality, and therefore he had need of food and all the things necessary for maintaining the biological body. This is seen from the fact that he also died again later. However, at the Second Coming of Christ, when all the bodies will be raised, they will be spiritual, they will not need nourishment, sleep, food and drink. The raising of Lazarus shows us that Christ, who by His divinity performed this great act, can also raise men on the day which He will determine. He is God mighty and strong.”



A homily from The Art of Salvation by Elder Ephraim of Philotheou and Arizona.

My blessed children,

In this homily, I would like to say a few words about the Resurrection and the joy of Pascha.

Down here on earth, during this great feast day of holy Pascha, every Christian feels a special joy in his soul, which, of course, is insignificant in comparison to the joy of the other world. Nonetheless, Pascha is something that comforts our soul, makes it joyful, fills it with grace, because in some way it draws nearer to Christ during this feast day. Now let us examine the Gospel passage that is read on Holy Saturday and on the day of the Resurrection. The Evangelist states that our Panagia and Mary Magdalene went to the tomb of the Lord early in the morning to attend to the Most-Holy Body of Christ and to carry out what their great love dictated. At that time, a strong earthquake took place; an angel descended from heaven, rolled the stone away from the entrance of the tomb and sat upon it. The angel then turned to the women and declared to them, "I know that you seek Jesus the crucified. He is not here; He is risen, as He said. Come and see the place where the Lord lay.

Then go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you to Galilee; there you will see Him.” (Matt 28:5-7)

Upon hearing these words, the women were overcome by “fear and amazement” (cf. Mark 16:8). They immediately set out with haste to announce this exceedingly joyous event to the Apostles—who were terrified and hiding in their house of residence for “fear of the Jews” (John 20:19)—so they could also rejoice.

As soon as the women started out, Christ met them and greeted them: “Rejoice! Do not be afraid! Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me” (Matt 28:9-10). The moment they beheld Christ—their love and their spiritual eros—they prostrated themselves before Him and worshiped Him. They embraced His feet tightly, unable to utter a single word as if thunderstruck! Who can describe the emotions racing through the souls of these two holy women at that time! They did not doubt at all as the Apostles did when they encountered Him for the first time. When Christ appeared to the Apostles, they also rejoiced when they saw Him; however, they had inner doubts. In contrast, the women did not disbelieve at all, but immediately expressed their love for Christ.

During these days of the Resurrection, this is more or less the type of love and joy that our

Christ grants to souls who, to some degree, have purified their senses from sin: “Let us purify our senses and we shall behold Christ, radiant with inaccessible light of the Resurrection, and we shall hear Him saying, Rejoice.” (Hymn from 1st Ode of the Canon of the Resurrection)

Down here in this world we celebrate holy Pascha for a very short time. This joy ends and is again succeeded by sorrows, distress, temptations, and so many other afflictions. Conversely, up there in the other world Pascha will be eternal, without end, without sunset unto the ages of ages.

When our Christ returns to judge the world, He will sit on a throne of glory. He will separate one group from the other (the righteous from the sinners), and He will issue the final verdict.

The righteous will ascend to Heaven, while the sinners will descend to Hades—definitively and permanently. In following, our Christ will begin an upward procession, followed by the holy angels, all the saints, and all the saved souls. All together, they will be singing the eternal Pascha. As they ascend, they will be chanting the victorious hymns of the Resurrection, “exalting the eternal Pascha.”

The faces and the entire being of all the souls will be just as radiant as our Christ's. Surrounded by this Divine Light of the Resurrection, they will ascend to acquire Paradise, the Heavenly Kingdom, the New Jerusalem.

“It is the Day of Resurrection! Let us be radiant, O people! Pascha! The Lord’s Pascha.” (Hymn from the 1st Ode of the Canon of the Resurrection)
They will chant and thunder victorious hymns according to the manner in which God has ordered and appointed the spiritual choir there in an unconceivable festival. The souls will witness—for the first time— what God has prepared for them who overcame the world, by His grace.

According to the great Church Fathers who have taught and informed us of this event, our Christ will sit on His throne of glory, and each rank of saints will approach to receive its corresponding crown and position in Paradise.

When the holy souls behold this beauty, this splendor, this wealth of God’s wisdom being revealed to them, when they take hold of it as a secured personal possession, and, furthermore, when they realize that, henceforth, they will live eternally and endlessly, they will be so amazed that they will not be able to express with words and thoughts what God has prepared for them. They will wonder, “What did we offer to God? In the world we sinned so much, we gave Him so much bitterness. Now, instead of punishment, He is giving us this Heavenly Paradise!”

The holy Pascha of the divine Resurrection will never end for these souls. They will feel an inexplicable and indescribable joy! No affliction, no distress, no tears, no pain, no strife, absolutely nothing grievous will exist in that blessed life. Salvation will be secured once and for all. Up there, festivals will take place within this heavenly joy. Christ's face will be the Light that will illuminate the entire spiritual world.

The Fathers tell us that a thousand paradises cannot even compare to the mere vision of the Divine face of God—because to see His face is to see the Kingdom of God. This is why every soul in this world who feels the love of God asks for nothing other than to become worthy of beholding the face of Christ.

There once was a certain soul who loved our Christ unimaginably. Moved by this love, he desired to visit the Holy Land in order to venerate the tomb of his Divine Love. When he arrived and saw the tomb of Christ, Whom he loved intensely, he embraced the tomb of our Christ, and there he surrendered his blessed soul into His hands and His love.

Let us try to purify the senses of our soul, using the method of watchfulness. Let us try not to pollute them, so that we become able, with the grace of God, to see within our heart this light of the Divine Resurrection.

We are in the process of leaving this world and going to the other one. The temporary and short-lived afflictions of this world are insignificant in comparison to the reward we will receive in the other world. However, they frequently seem very heavy, unbearable, and unending to us. This reveals our human weakness as well as the craftiness of the devil, who presents things to us in a very different way, in order to lead us securely into despair and hopelessness by suggesting that the present torments will never end. But they do end, often in a single moment. And once we close our eyes, immediately, the vision and the reality of the spiritual world will open before us. Prior to this we had seen people. Now, in an instant, we will see bright or dark spirits; that is, either angels or demons.

As soon as the eyes of the body close, instantly, the eyes of the soul open, and a person sees things he could not see previously with bodily eyes. Death is the bridge that transports us from this world to the next one.

We must begin to struggle correctly! We must face the fact that we are here temporarily and that we are permanently departing toward the other world. Here, we perceive Christ with the feeling of our soul. There, if the mercy of God saves us, we will see Him “face to face” (Ex. 33:11).

During periods of grace, the soul that persistently struggles and wholeheartedly believes in the existence of God and the other life feels armed with the weapons of light, grace, and divine eros. It feels as if it is standing before the Throne of God, ready to wage war against them who oppose Him Whom it worships and champions. Occasionally, it also feels dressed as a bride of the Heavenly Bridegroom, adorned with the beauty of Heaven, overcome with love, and yearning for the moment of eternal union with the Heavenly Bridegroom.

How beautiful it is indeed when a Christian feels that he is a child of God, when he senses that God is his true Father! During such moments the fear of death vanishes. Instead, one feels a wealth of confidence because his Father is the Judge, his Father is the One who will grant him His Kingdom. Abba Pambo would state, "Even if the sky falls to the earth, fear will not enter my soul." This is because he felt the love of God.

For a person to achieve a degree of this love, he must while still here in the world, here in this temporary arena, undertake certain efforts for God. He must continuously humble himself; he must endure temptations, afflictions, and suffering; he must expel evil thoughts as soon as they appear. The person who succumbs to evil thoughts cannot possibly feel good inside and cannot see the light of the sacred Resurrection in

his soul. When, however, someone leads an overall careful life, at an unexpected moment, he will be visited by the grace of God.

This is the primary work of monasticism. It takes a person from the world who is filled with passion and weaknesses, laden with big and small sins, and marvelously refines him over time, until, one day, it yields a spiritual and heavenly being filled with the love of God, and ready for the future life.

One such person was my ever-memorable elder (Joseph the Hesychast). He was blessed in every way! When he was still living in the world, prior to becoming a monk, he did not know God at all. Later, when the grace of God overshadowed him and led him here to the Holy Mountain, to monasticism, to this hospital that is free of charge, the monastic way of life with its skill and science transformed him into a heavenly being. We are the spiritual seed of this man.

In order for us to succeed as he did (as much as possible), we must follow in his footsteps. Therefore, let us struggle with all the strength of our soul while we are still in this world, so that we come to know, with awareness of soul, the other world as well. Our goal in monasticism is this: to be acquainted with and to taste the things of the other world, thereby attaining so much love for our Christ that we long to see His Divine face.

The Fathers teach that in the other world the love of Christ, and the love that one soul feels for another, will be our nourishment. One person will look upon another and will feel a true paradise within himself.

Of course, we also feel this here to a small degree. When the grace of God sets the heart ablaze, a spiritual person feels boundless love for his brothers. Within himself he feels as if he is embracing everyone: brothers, friends, enemies, as well as the entire lifeless creation. No matter what people do to him, he will not be offended; rather, he will only express himself through acts of love. Then it is revealed to him why the infinite God with His infinite love endures sinful people despite their evils!

Let us struggle, my fathers! Let us struggle now that we are still here in order to prepare the essential provisions for Heaven. After death regret will be of no benefit to us. Let us make a new beginning. We should do whatever our conscience—our internal guide—advises us. Let us not ignore it, for it instructs us with pinpoint precision.

With our conscience as an internal guide and the written word of God as our external guide, let us advance toward obedience. If we follow these two guides, we will assuredly be led to our Christ, and we will attain the eternal and never-

ending Holy Pascha of Heaven. Up there an eternal festival will take place. The angels, enriched with all that God has given them, will play heavenly resurrectional anthems to the delight of those souls who succeeded, who won the heavenly “lottery”. Blessed and thrice- blessed will be the monks and nuns who comprise the tenth rank of angels. They who attain this position in Heaven will see the face of Christ unto the ages of ages. These successful monastics will chant together with the angels. They will celebrate, rejoice, and bless Christ Who sacrificed Himself, Who was crucified, Who was resurrected, and Who saved the human race.

Let us pray that we the lowly and insignificant people—of whom I am the first—find ourselves amongst this rank of angels, in the former place of Lucifer, to the glory of God, to the glory of Him Who sacrificed Himself, to the glory of the blameless Lamb. Amen.



Special Destinations

It is always fun to take a special trip to a new place. During Lent there can be many different kinds of special destinations. Some of the most common are: repentance and confession, the Jesus Prayer, a retreat, our own special time of reflection, the Saturday of Lazarus and Palm Sunday

Repentance is a result of divine action; it is the Spirit of God, Who moves the hearts of sinners to repent. Repentance = **change of mind + change of behavior**. It does not mean we will not sin anymore. But it does mean we change our strategy against sin, realizes its deadly effect on our life and that we will fight. It is written in the Holy Bible, **“For it is God who works in you both to will and do for His good pleasure.” (Phil. 2: 13)**. Fasting without repentance and making active and conscious choices to change our life becomes useless.

The Jesus Prayer is a special destination we can pray quietly throughout the days of Lent

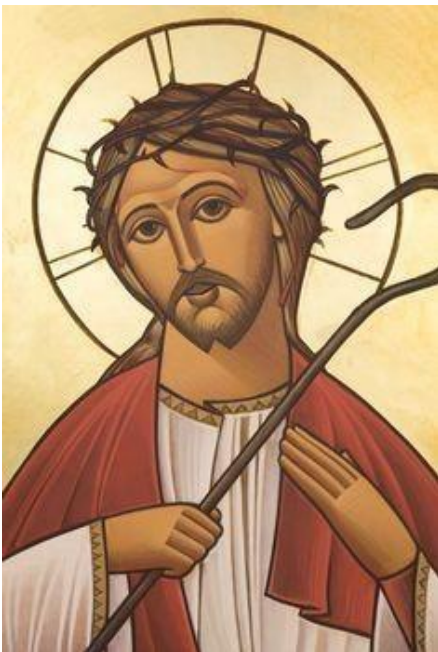
and Holy Week or any time we would like: Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me, a sinner.

Confession is the most important special destination. Jesus Christ established confession in the Church. It is a way to receive a spiritual checkup, to talk about our sins and to receive God's forgiveness with our priest. God longs to embrace each of us, as did the father of the prodigal son.

Retreats and reflections on God are also a special destination in which we make time for ourselves to think about God.

Reconciliation with others. Fasting is an act of worship presented to God, and God does not accept the offering and worship of a person who quarrels with others. Instead, He asks him to go and make peace with his brother before coming to worship and present offerings in front of God's altar. Fasting is an appropriate time to evaluate our relationship with others. As we ask God to forgive us our sins, we must also forgive those who have sinned against us.

Liturgy and Eucharist are a way in which we share personally in the Resurrection of Christ. We must always remember that in the Passover banquet of the Divine Liturgy, we not only celebrate the Presence of the Risen Christ but we also partake of His risen Presence. As we eat and drink of the precious Body and Blood of Christ, we are nourished with resurrection life. We touch and taste the new life. PASCHA (the Resurrection) flows into our bodies and we leave the holy table revived. As we eat and drink of the Body of His resurrection, we become partakers of the self-same Resurrection.



For discussion: what is Lent for you? What do you think God wants you to focus on during this Lent?

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Book Recommendations

Great Lent – Alexander Schmemmann

God and You Person to Person – Anthony
Coniaris

The Paschal Homilies – Saint Paul Brotherhood
Press

The Great Lent – Saint Paul Brotherhood Press

Repentance and Confession – Saint Nektarios

All That I Have is Yours: 100 Meditations with St
Pope Kyrillos VI – Fr Kyrillos Ibrahim

A Spiritual Psalter – St Ephraim the Syrian

The Way of the Heart – Henri Nouwen

In the Heart of the Desert – John Chyrssavgis

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In Holy Baptism, God liberates us
from sin and death by joining us to
the death and resurrection of our
Lord Jesus Christ.

“Easter is our **return** every year to our own
baptism, whereas Lent is our preparation for
that return.”

Alexander Schmemmann

“Let us receive with joy, O faithful, the divinely
inspired announcement of Lent.

Let us wash ourselves with tears for its divine purification.

Let us pray to behold the fulfillment of Pascha, the
true Revelation.

Let us prepare for adoring the Cross and Resurrection
of Christ our God!

Do not deprive us of our expectation, O Lover of
Man!

