

GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE
**PARISH OF ST. PARASKEVI, ST. BARBARA &
ST. JOHN THE MERCIFUL**

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PROGRAMME MARCH 2018



THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE THEOKOS

*“Today is the beginning of our salvation, The revelation of the eternal mystery!
The Son of God becomes the Son of the Virgin, As Gabriel announces the coming
of Grace. Together with him let us cry to the Theotokos:
Rejoice, O Full of Grace, The Lord is with You!”*

The Beginning of the Cross: Saturday of Lazarus

"Having fulfilled Forty Days... we ask to see the Holy Week of Thy Passion." With these words sung at Vespers of Friday, Lent comes to its end and we enter into the annual commemoration of Christ's suffering, death and Resurrection. It begins on the Saturday of Lazarus. The double feast of Lazarus' resurrection and the Entrance of the Lord to Jerusalem (Palm Sunday) is described in liturgical texts as the "beginning of the Cross" and is to be understood therefore, within the context of the Holy Week. The common Troparion of these days explicitly affirms that by raising Lazarus from the dead, Christ confirmed the truth of general resurrection. It is highly significant that we are led into the darkness of the Cross by one of the twelve major feasts of the Church. Light and joy shine not only at the end of Holy Week but also at its beginning; they illumine darkness itself, reveal its ultimate meaning.

All those familiar with Orthodox worship know the peculiar, almost paradoxical character of Lazarus Saturday services. It is a Sunday, i.e., a Resurrection, service on a Saturday, a day usually devoted to the liturgical commemoration of the dead. And the joy which permeates these services stresses one central theme: the forthcoming victory of Christ over Hades. Hades is the Biblical term for Death in its universal power, for that unescapable darkness and destruction that swallows all life and poisons with its shadow the whole world. But now—with Lazarus' resurrection—"death begins to tremble." For there the decisive duel between Life and Death begins, and it gives us the key to the entire liturgical mystery of Pascha. In the early church Lazarus Saturday was called "announcement of Pascha", it announces and anticipates, indeed, the wonderful light and peace of the next Saturday—the Great and Holy Saturday, the day of the Lifegiving Tomb.

Lazarus, the Friend of Jesus

Let us first of all understand that Lazarus, the friend of Jesus, personifies the whole mankind and also each man, and Bethany, the home of Lazarus the Man, is the symbol of the whole world as a home of man. For each man was created friend of God and called to this Divine friendship: the knowledge of God, the communion with Him, the sharing of life with Him. "In Him was life and the life was the light of men." (John 1:4) And yet this Friend whom God loves, whom in love He has created, i.e. called to life, is destroyed and annihilated by a power which God has not created: death. God encounters in His own world a power which destroys His work and annihilates His design. The world is but lamentation and sorrow, tears and

death. How is this possible? How did this happen? These are the questions implied in John's slow and detailed narrative of Jesus' coming to the grave of His friend. And once there, "Jesus wept." (John 11:35) Why does He weep if He knows that in a moment He will call Lazarus back to life? Byzantine hymnographers fail to grasp the true meaning of these tears. They ascribe them to His human nature, whereas the power of resurrection belongs to God in Him. But the Orthodox Church teaches that all actions of Christ are "theandric," i.e., both Divine and human, are actions of the one and same God-Man. But then His very tears are Divine. Jesus weeps because He contemplates the triumph of death and destruction in the world created by God.

Love, the Power of Life

"It stinketh." say the Jews trying to prevent Jesus from approaching the corpse, and this awful warning applies to the whole world, to all life. God is Life and the Giver of Life. He called man into the Divine reality of Life and behold "it stinketh"...The world was created to reflect and proclaim the glory of God and "it stinketh." At the grave of Lazarus God encounters Death, the reality of anti-life, of destruction and despair. He meets His Enemy, who has taken away from Him His World and become its prince. And we who follow Jesus as He approaches the grave, enter with Him into that hour of His, which He announced so often as the climax and the fulfillment of his whole work. The Cross, its necessity and universal meaning are announced in the shortest verse of the Gospel: "and Jesus wept"... We understand now that it is because He wept, i.e., loved His friend Lazarus, that Jesus had the power of calling him back to life. The power of Resurrection is not a divine "power in itself," but power of love, or rather love as power. God is Love and Love is life, Love creates Life...It is Love that weeps at the grave and it is Love that restores life. This is the meaning of the Divine tears of Jesus. In them love is at work again—recreating, redeeming, restoring the darkened life of man: "Lazarus, come forth!..." And this is why Lazarus Saturday is the beginning of both: the Cross, as the Supreme sacrifice of love, the Resurrection, as the ultimate triumph of love.

From The Christian Way, 1961

Archpriest Alexander Schmemmann

4/15/2011

THE GREAT FAST: Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. (2 Cor. 6:2)

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit!

Dear brothers and sisters, we have entered upon the Great and saving Fast of Great Lent, which the Church has established in emulation of the example of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, for He fasted forty days for the sake of our salvation, not eating any food or taking any drink during that time. So also for us, His followers, the Holy Orthodox Church has strictly commanded that we observe holy abstinence, both physical and spiritual, throughout these forty days, beginning with yesterday, called Clean Monday, through Friday of the sixth week, called Palm Sunday week. This is why the current fast is called the Holy and Great Forty Days.

The Holy Church during these great days of repentance, having put on vestments of mourning and special services, prayers, hymns, and sombre bell ringing expresses that during these days it has compunction, laments and weeps over its children, and calls us also to do the same. It is as the Jews when they lost their homeland wept by the waters of Babylon, so are we also called during these holy days to lament the loss of our Heavenly Homeland, which we lost because of our sins and iniquities.

The Church combined weeping over sins with fasting, for fasting gives our repentance wings and bears it upward to God's Throne. The labour of fasting is sacred and quite ancient. "Fasting is an ancient gift that is incorruptible, unaging, but directly self-renewing, blossoming in all of its beauty," says St Basil the Great. Do you think that its ancientness is reckoned from the time of the giving of the Law? Fasting is older than the Law. Fasting is not a new invention, but a precious treasure of the Fathers. Everything that is distinguished by ancientness is venerable. Respect the grey hairs of fasting—it is as old as mankind. Fasting was made law in paradise. The first commandment that Adam received was, But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it (Gen. 2:17). And this thou shall not eat is the establishment as law of fasting and abstinence. If Eve had not eaten of that tree, then we would have no need now for this fast. We, injured by sin, are doctored by repentance, and

repentance without fasting is ineffective. Cursed is the ground for thy sake; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee (Gen. 3:17–18)—it is commanded to be contrite in spirit, and not to indulge in luxuries. Justify yourselves before God through fasting.

All the saints observed fasts as a certain paternal legacy, passed on from father to son and received by inheritance, so that this acquisition has been preserved even for us by order of succession. Moses fasted forty days on Mt. Sinai, and fasting made the holy prophet a lawgiver; he was worthy to be with God and receive from Him the Law for the people of Israel.

But due to lack of abstinence and the Israelites' insatiable stomachs, this Law written on tablets by God Himself was broken in pieces by Moses himself. Because of the insatiability of their stomachs the Israelites were given over to idol worship, and through that they lost God's good will.

"Fasting," says St. Basil the Great, "gives birth to prophets, strengthens the strong; fasting makes the legislators wise." Fasting is the good guardian of souls, the reliable cohabitant of the body, the school of ascetics. It deflects temptations; it is the cohabitant with sobriety and chastity. Fasting sends prayer to heaven, becoming like wings for it in its upward ascent. Fasting is the mother of health, the upbringing of youth, the adornment of elders, the good companion of travellers, the true cohabitant of spouses. A husband will not suspect his wife of infidelity seeing that she has the habit of fasting. A wife will not be eaten by jealousy if she notes that her husband has fallen in love with fasting.

A man of desires, the holy prophet Daniel, who did not take bread for three weeks and drank no water, closed the jaws of lions with his fasting; they could not cause him any harm when he was thrown to them in the pit.

The benefit of fasting is open to every kind of life, every state of body—fasting is proper everywhere and at all times. Fasting protects infants, makes the young chaste, and the elder honourable, for grey hair adorned with fasting is worthy of respect. Fasting is the most appropriate adornment of women, the bridle in the blossom of life, the guardian of marriage, the instructor of virginity. Fasting casts out immodest talk, songs, and laughter.

If fasting were to reign over the whole universe, there would be deep peace throughout the world, there would be no warring of one nation against another, and life would not be so lamentable and filled with sorrows, because by teaching people self-restraint from excesses in food, fasting would also teach perfect resistance to vices: love of money, greed, ambition, and other evil passions; and life would flow along in deep peace and spiritual serenity. But instead people now chase after luxury as the blessedness of life and have thus introduced this great swarm of evils. The luxurious life of the rich man cast him into the fire of Gehenna, and Lazarus through fasting ascended to Heaven where he rested in the bosom of Abraham.

The colour of the faster's face is honourable (it does not change to shameful ruddiness), his gaze is meek, his gait steady, face intelligent, and in his heart is purity. All the Orthodox saints through the ages loved the fast and observed it. The life of St. John the Forerunner was a fast from beginning to end. The holy apostle Paul fasted, and fasting raised him up to the third Heaven. But for us the most important thing is that this fast is sanctified by the Lord Himself, Who fasted forty days.

Our spirit constantly wars against the flesh; they oppose each other, and therefore if you want your spirit to be strong, bridle it with fasting. The apostle Paul says, *But though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day* (2 Cor. 4:16). No one has ever received spiritual gifts through abundant food and constant luxury. If the Ninevites had not fasted they would not have escaped the punishment threatened against them. While the Jews fed on manna and water from the rock they conquered their enemies and were always healthy, but when their hearts longed for meat and remembered the fleshpots of Egypt, they did not see the Promised Land.

Fasting is the weaponry for waging war against demons. But we shouldn't limit the fast to abstinence from food, because true fasting is the avoidance of evil deeds. Forgive your neighbour all insults, refrain from offending your neighbour, refrain from irritation, from senseless sorrow, from fear, anger, and so on.

If you forgive others their offenses, mistakes, vexations, and excess trouble, then you will be forgiven your sins. The Lord will forgive your mistakes, and you

will be made worthy to receive great mercies from Him. You forgive the few sins of your neighbour, and God will forgive your numberless transgressions. You forgive 100 dinaras, and He forgives you a million talents. Thus, let us not obey the devil who teaches us to harbor ill feelings in our soul against our neighbour, but let us in simplicity of heart forgive our neighbour all offenses they have caused—also at the devil’s suggestion.

We should enter into the labour of fasting according to the Lord’s commandment (cf. Matt. 6:16), not with downcast faces but with energetic and joyful faces like true warriors of Christ, entering into battle with sin and our flesh, with the help and cooperation of God’s grace. Anoint thy head with the oil of mercy and your soul with the water of a pure mind, and thy Father, which sees in secret, shall reward thee openly (Matt. 6:17, 18). The Lord also teaches us to remove our hearts from earthly treasures and from earthly attachments, and encourages us to desire and seek treasures in Heaven.

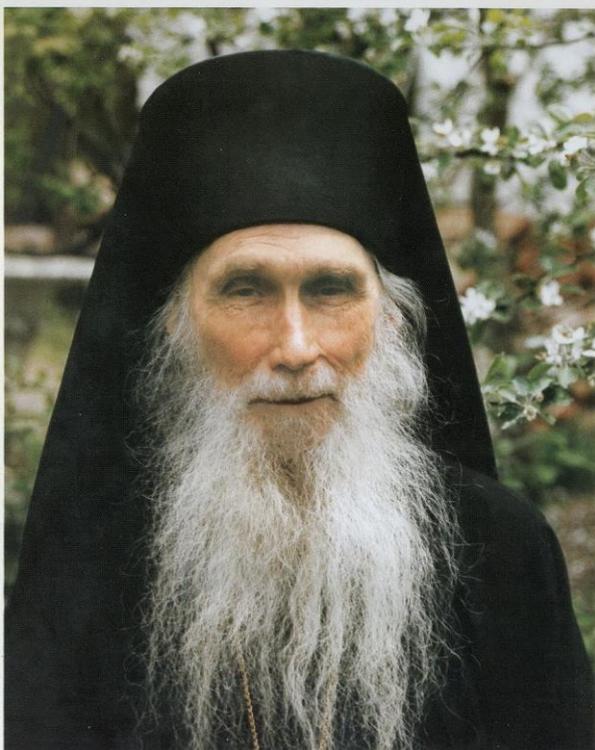
They are of heavenly origin and are therefore immortal, while earthly goods, as coarse, corruptible, and transitory are not worthy of us, who were created in the image and likeness of God and redeemed by the priceless Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ so that we may delight in spiritual and eternal good things. If our hearts cleave to earthly goods, we through them make our hearts earthly, coarse, low, and passionate, and make ourselves incapable of loving God and

neighbour; and love is the main goal and responsibility of our lives.

Amen.

From Archimandrite Kirill (Pavlov),

“A Time for Repentance”, Moscow Podvorye of the Holy Trinity-St. Sergius Lavra, 2014.



PROGRAMME MARCH 2018

Every Thursday Evening during Great Lent the program is as follows:

6pm: The St Ignatius children's group and choir (primary school age and up)

7pm: Great Compline or Presanctified Liturgy (in English)

8.00: Bible study group (for all ages), led by Fr Demosthenes

Every Monday-Thursday the Great Compline is chanted in Greek from 5.00-6.00pm

THURSDAY 1 March: **Evening: Presanctified Liturgy ENGLISH**, 7.30-9.00

FRIDAY, 2 March: **Presanctified Liturgy**, 8.00-10.00am

Evening: Salutations to the Theotokos (week 2), 7.00-8.00pm

SUNDAY, 4 March: **THE SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT (ST GREGORY PALAMAS)**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-11.00am

WEDNESDAY, 7 March: **Evening:** Presanctified Liturgy, 7.00-9.00pm

FRIDAY, 9 March: **Presanctified Liturgy**, 8.00-10.00am

Evening: Salutations to the Theotokos (week 3), 7.00-8.00pm

SUNDAY, 11 March: **THE THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT (VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS)**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-11.00am

WEDNESDAY, 14 March: **Evening:** Presanctified Liturgy, 7.00-9.00pm

FRIDAY 16 March: **Presanctified Liturgy**, 8.00-10.00am

Evening: Salutations to the Theotokos (week 4), 7.00-8.00pm

SUNDAY, 18 March: **THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT (ST JOHN OF THE LADDER)**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-11.00am

WEDNESDAY, 21 March: **Presanctified Liturgy**, 8.00-10.00am

Evening: The Great Canon of St Andrew, 6.00-8.00pm

FRIDAY, 23 March: **Presanctified Liturgy**, 8.00-10.00am

Evening: THE AKATHYST HYMN, 7.00-9.00PM

SAT 24 March: **The Annunciation Eve**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-10.00am

SUNDAY 25 March: **THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE THEOTOKOS (THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT- ST MARY OF EGYPT)**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-11.00am (***EATING FISH PERMITTED***)

WEDNESDAY 28 March: **Evening:** Presanctified Liturgy, 7.00-9.00pm

FRIDAY 30 March: **Presanctified Liturgy**, 8.00-10.00am

SATURDAY, 31 March: **SATURDAY OF LAZARUS**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-10.00am