



Holy Ghost Orthodox Church

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## **GREAT LENT—THE GREAT FAST!**

**ON THE MEND:** Please keep the following parishioners and others in your prayers for recovery from their illnesses and injuries: Father Bob, Archbishop Daniel, Metropolitan Antony, Metropolitan Yuriy, Archbishop Jovan, Metropolitan Savas, Father Paul & Pani Judy Stoll, Father Joseph Kopchak, Father Elias Warnke, Father George Yatsko, Father Paul Bigelow, Father Emilian Balan, Father John & Pani Mary Anne Nakonachny, Father Steve Repa, Archpriest Dionysi Vitali, Protodeacon Joseph Hotrovich, Father Paisius McGrath, Father Michael Smolynec, Father Lawrence & Matushka Sophia Daniels, Father Joe & Protinica Linda Cervo, Father John Harrold [Saint Sylvester], Igumen Patrick, Father Jim Orr, Father Rick Seilier, Panimatka Laryssa Charest, Father Vasyl Sendeha, Father George & Dobrodijka Oksana Bazylevsky, Father Angelo Artemas, Father John Haluszczak, Dr. Christina Nellis, Father Joshua [Anna], Father Justin (Todd) Mokhiber, Pani Cathy Danczak, Protopresbyter Gerald Ozlanski, Father James Norton, Monk Andrew, Father Dan & Matushka Myra Kovalak, Father Joe Uzar, Father Deacon James & Diakonissa Kari Rossetti, Pastor Terry & Lisa Polen, Chaplain Rachelle Zazzu, Joshua Agosto and his family, Eva Malesnick, Nick Behun, Grace Holupka, Gary & Linda Mechtly, Evelyn Misko, Jeanne Boehing, Alex Drobot, Rachelle, Jane Golofski, Doug Diller, Harry Krewsun, Mary Alice Babcock, Dorie Kunkle, Mary Evelyn King, Sam Wadrose, Isabella Olivia Lindgren, Ethel Thomas, Donna, Erin, Michael Miller, Grace & Owen Ostrasky, Patti Sinecki, David Genshi, Sue Segeleon, Mike Gallagher, Liz Stumpf, Theodore Nixon, Michelle Corba Kapeluck, Linda Hippert & family, Margaret Vladimir, Luke Emmerling, Robert McKivitz, Liz Obradovich, Halyna Zelinska [Archbishop Daniel's mother], Charlotte, Andrew Mark Olynyk, Deborah Finley, Claire Senita, Eleanor Kelly, Bryan, Nancy Barylak, Patrick Keenan, Khrystyna Chorniy, Anthony Cormier, Nathan Forbeck, Sarah Doyle, Samuel Peters, Esther Holupka, David Vallor, Henry Faraly, Julie Eiler, Dorothy Lednovich, Bob C., Allie—young girl with leukemia, Heather Kramer, Jane Wartinbee, Matthew—young man with cancer, Nicholas Orlando, Mary Ann Kuznik, Michael Pryhodzenko, Theresa Ditto, Mary Ann Musial, Yvonne Christy, Father Deacon Myron & Barbara Spak, Julia Duda, Lisa Pandle, Kris & Julie Hanczar, John Kennedy, Gaelle Kelly, Irma McDivitt, Robin Young, Mckayla, Rachel, Carl & Margaret Reed,

*Lydia Wilson, Robert Pointon, Walter Cecelia, John Persico, Jeff Miller, Mary Kernick, Glenn Miller, Jean Marie, Donna & Walter McCrackin, Gene Blair [Pani Gina's dad], David Hoenshell, Barbara Macino, Shelley Hill, Linda Cawley, Gerald Cogley, Corey Guich, Robert Vangrin, Pauline Witkowsky, Sera White, Deborah Smith, Nancy & Eric Dunik, Julian Stroz [young lady with cerebral palsy], Dr. Kirsten Ream, Patricia Corey, Michelle, Katie Swarm, Michelle, Patrick, Linda Morris, Chris, David Hiles, Jennifer, Cher Mount, Frank & Janet Horrell, Jim Wandling, Gail, Sirena Sharp, Ron Paulovich, Sandi Anderson, Lina, Shirley, Denny Mader, Ella Campbell, Tom Hyatt, Bill Janiro, Jean Symanko-Andy's sister, William Lemonakis, Alma Wyke, Lindsay Romanczak & family, Susan Lucas, Neil Carter & family, James Paluh, Mickie Weikel, Evelyn Krempasky, Tammy Strunk, Loida Esbry, Darlene Chicka Deskins, Drew, Alice & Keith Philipa, Kateryna Kocelko, Mira Filipović, Lynn, Jacqueline, Sharon, Zan Cheng, Kristy, Elaine Ellenberger, Brandon, Anna Tranchine, Demetra, Blase Urban, Catherine Hogel & children, Jennifer & Dylan, Ron Schwartz, Lydia Wilson, Flora Tomlin, Howell Swarm, Jane Bielewicz Allred, Katie Elizabeth, Mileva, & Michael, Deirdré Straughan, Terri Paluh, Lori & Steve Lucier, Kyranna Cherpas, Pastor Bruce Nordeen, Heather Ried, Carla Perry, Linda Elliot, Dennis McDaniel, Luke Tinsley, Brent, Tricia, Katherine Gorman, Pamela Jaquette, Sherri Walewski, Marika Zeliszczuk, Donna Davis, Jackie Crimbchin, Marta Charron, Mary [Corba], Margie Sekelsky, Gary Howell, Fran Fulton, Gina Catanese, Bill Vizza, Jamie Swarm, Kevin Allen (from Ancient Faith Radio), Kathy Flaherty, Tori Reade-Henry's niece, Derick-Glen Burlack's neighbor, Michael, Nichole & Christopher, Ben Douglas, Dianne Donahue, Zachary, Natasha, Noah Willard, Jodi Hanczar, Gregory Cervo, Lisa Bruce, Martha Nezolyk, Kathy Cvetkovich, Judy, Will, Emma, Ginny, Ye-Jin, Maria, John & JoAnn, Jim & Kitty, Phil Bouse, Ralph & Beverly Stoker, Noah Willard, Nikola, Natalie, Nikola, & Nevenka Jovonovich, Julia Collier, Amy Kemerer, Thomas Smith, Tracy Slaugenhaupt, Louis & Terri Berceli, Tom Nolan, Silvia Martin, Dena & George, Georgia, Lawanda [Evelyn's niece], Maureen Sams, John Kendall, Judi Danser, Darcy, Nancy, Ian Brick, Cecilia Barnhart, Logan Magorien, Pam & Gordon Grant, Debbie & Jerry Novosel, Noah Willard, Sandra Dillard, Danielle McCann, Barry [Father Jim Orr's cousin], Tim Joyce, Joe Samchuck—vocations, Stephen Popichak—Fr. Bob's brother, Brianna Stumpf, Stanley Porembka, David & Terry Coyne Hartnett, Mike C., Jennifer Scheirer [Nick Behun's daughter], Catherine Beecham [Father Bob's cousin], JoAnne & Dave Andrews, Rev. Peg Bowman, Pat & Jan Jennings, Mike Ruzzi, Mary Kay Ludovicy, Pastor Sara Irwin, George Dilendorf, Sharon Torick, Carol Behun, Erv Frye, William Lusherand, Colin Kirton—Stage 4 pancreatic cancer, Clifford, Paul Riley, Tonee & Sydnee Turner, Annette Paluh, Theresa Paluh, Cathy Lotinsky, Jeff*

& Buschra Kerr, Margaret Sekelsky, Robert Sekelsky, Robert Rodriguez, Rita & Joe Mrvos, Alexandra & Bowen, Katherine Kulik, Eleanor Kitt, Stacie & Gary, Maria Warholak, Stacie & Gary, Anna Sekelik, Christy, Mariruth, Rich & Judy Previc, Ben Williams, Tim—surgery, John Wakin, Olivia—girl with a brain tumor, Rick & Sharon Morgan, John Stasko, John, Kris, & Kait, Kristi Wilson, Wendy LaGamba, Melissa Gross [hip replacement], Amy Forbeck, David Salazar, Kitty Mary, Dr. Paul Riley, David Hess, Serena, Wyatt, Makenzie, Jennifer, Alexandra Roberts, Candace, Dave, Jared, & Beth Irvin, Carol Muschick, Grace Love [knee replacement], Stacie Riley, Joseph Paul Cervo, Jr., Elizabeth, Lillian Skowvron, Sue & Greg Heinen, Paul Simpson [Father Bob's cousin], Sharon Curtis Rivas, Kathy Milcic, Lisa Bolan, David G. [cancer], Donna [dementia] & Darla, Adam Snow, the McKenna family, David Gazella, Brian & Michele Cannone, the Rodrigues family, Michael Welsh, Nick Solominsky, Samantha & Lisa Houser, Sarah Stepanovich Clark, Julia Baloga, Brett Crosby, Randy Lapuh, Henry Tkacik, Diane & Arthur Chaklis, Denny Mader, Zoe Oswalt—Fr. Bob's cousin [cancer], Barbette [cancer] & Scott, Kristin [cancer], Erm Hartmann, Barbara Bookser [cancer], Bob Mazzuca [cancer], Marko, Taylor, Terri Crosby-Vega [knee replacement], Christine Mohamed & family, Sue Demko, Tammy Marsico, Terry & David Hartnett, Jamie Ball, Kay Williams, Hannah Stewart, Jim Wyko—Alex's friend, Dan Losego, Lisa Bruce, Yvette, Barry Bender, Scott McDougall, Andrew Zelleznick, Byron & Cecilia Scott, Vespina, Michelle Russo, Julie Tripodi, Alby Oxenreiter, Debbie—HTUCC Jackie May, Barbara Morvay, David Salsar, N&O, Randy & Adrienne Kuny, Vince Berardinelli, Mason Martin [Karns City HS QB] & family, Martin Mrvos, Jeff McCoy, Lauren & Sloane Valentina Persico, Alexis & baby Colton Rosati, Jessica Shirley, Mark [kidney cancer], Steve Milcic, Wilbert Wagner, Bob Wojciechowski, Ashley, Beth & Cindy Skowvron, Sharon Svitek, Laura, Christopher, & Baby Jane Dickson, Luke D, Diane Murphy, Kristin Vaughn [Harry's daughter], George Petronsky, Doug & Darcie Burkholder, Michael, Jeane, and Katie Byerly, Acolyte Photios & family [Joanne, Richard, Heather, Keith, James, Debbie, James, Sophia, Zachary, Tabitha, Arqynios, Barbara, Aristotle, Alexander, Kalev, Nina, Elias, Elijah, Jessica], Richard Scharba [Metropolitan Antony's brother], George Lawrence, Edie McGrath, Samantha Lopez, Bob [cancer], Syble Elliott, Maria Ancevski, Krystyna, John, & Jeffrey, Dottie & family, Bonny Diver & Ashley Smock, Steve, Jill Morocco, Peter Popichak [Father Bob's cousin], Mike Pelino, Maddie Stewart, Hutchinson Family, David Urban, Vicky Moore, Casi [cancer], Ashley & Andy, Nicholas & Marion Mamula, Dominic [cancer], Diane Hughes, and Lauren & Dan... We pray that God will grant them all a speedy recovery.

Should thoughts of self-praise, of self-satisfaction, occur to you, say: I myself am nothing; all that is good in me is accomplished by the grace of God. What hast thou that thou didst not receive? (1 Cor. 4:7) Without Me ye can do nothing. (John 15:5) *Righteous John, Wonderworker of Kronstadt*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ... There is **NOTHING** to keep us from praying...for each other, for our family and friends, and most of all for the first responders—EMTs, nurses, doctors, firefighters, police officers, and members of our military who keep us safe. Be well and be **SAFE!!!** God Bless!

**Please remember ALL American service men and women in your prayers. May God watch over them and ALL service men and women—and bring them all home safely!**

**REMEMBER—PRAYERS ARE ALWAYS FREE!**

Communion Fasting: nothing to eat or drink after midnight, EXCEPT in cases where your doctor tells you to eat or drink something for medical reasons: medication, diabetes, etc. ***If you have a question, please ask Father Bob.***

**AT ANY TIME—if there is an emergency, if you have questions, or if you just need to talk, please CALL FATHER BOB at [412] 956-6626.**

**SERVICES IN SLICKVILLE**

SUNDAY, March 23 OBEDNITZA—SAINT BASIL THE GREAT—UPSTAIRS 10:30 AM  
3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT; ADORATION OF THE MOST HOLY CROSS;  
MARTYRS CODRATUS, CYPRIAN, DIONYSIUS, ANECTUS, PAUL, & OTHERS;  
MARTYRS CODRATUS, SATURNINUS, & RUFINUS OF NICOMEDIA; SAINT  
ANASTASI THE PATRICIAN OF ALEXANDRIA

*Tone 6*

Hebrews 4:14-5:6

Mark 8:34-9:1

SUNDAY, March 30 OBEDNITZA—SAINT BASIL THE GREAT—UPSTAIRS 10:30 AM  
4<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT; SAINT JOHN CLIMACUS—OF THE LADDER OF  
DIVINE ASCENT; SAINT ALEXIS-MAN OF GOD-IN ROME; MARTYR  
MARINUS-SOLDIER-AT CAESAREA IN PALESTINE; SAINT MACARIUS

*Tone 7*

Hebrews 6:13-20; Ephesians 5:8-19

Mark 9:17-31; Matthew 425-5:12

**SUNDAY, April 06      OBEDNITZA—SAINT BASIL THE GREAT—UPSTAIRS      10:30 AM**  
**5<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT; SAINT MARY OF EGYPT & SAINT ZOSIMOS;**  
**FOREFEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION; VENERABLE ZACHARIAS THE**  
**RECLUSE OF EGYPT; SAINT ARTEMON-BISHOP OF SELEUCIA; VENERABLE**  
**JAMES THE CONFESSOR-BISHOP OF CATANIA; VENERABLE ZACHARIAH-**  
**FASTER OF PERCHEVSKY LAVRA**

*Tone 8*

Hebrews 9:11-14; Galatians 3:23-29

Mark 10:32-45; Luke 7:36-50

*Litany in Blessed Memory of Frank Pendlyshok, John Cherepko, Ollie  
Pendlyshok, Stella Peanoske, Rose Lopushanski, Mary Haluszczak,  
Vladimir Hanczar, Michael Brittan, Deacon Dennis Lapushansky, & Lynne  
Giglione—Fr. Bob*

## **BULLETIN INSERT FOR 23 MARCH 2025**

**3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT; ADORATION OF THE MOST HOLY  
CROSS; MARTYRS CODRATUS, CYPRIAN, DIONYSIUS, ANECTUS,  
PAUL, & OTHERS; MARTYRS CODRATUS, SATURNINUS, & RUFINUS  
OF NICOMEDIA; SAINT ANASTASI THE PATRICIAN OF ALEXANDRIA**

### **TROPARION—TONE 1**

O Lord, save Thy people, and bless Thine inheritance.  
Grant victories to the Orthodox Christians, over their adversaries;  
And, by virtue of Thy cross, preserve Thy habitation.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever,  
and unto ages of ages. Amen.

### **KONTAKION—TONE 7**

Now the flaming sword no longer guards the gates of paradise;  
It has been mysteriously quenched by the wood of the Cross!  
The sting of death and the victory of hell have been vanquished;  
For Thou, O my Savior, didst come and cry to those in hell:  
Enter again into Paradise.

### **INSTEAD OF "O HOLY GOD"**

**Before Thy Cross, we bow down in worship, O Master, and Thy holy Resurrection, we glorify Thee.**

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**Before Thy Cross, we bow down in worship, O Master, and Thy holy Resurrection, we glorify Thee.**

**Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.**

**And Thy holy Resurrection, we glorify Thee.**

**Before Thy Cross, we bow down in worship, O Master, and Thy holy Resurrection, we glorify Thee.**

### **PROKEIMENON—TONE 7**

**READER:** Extol the Lord our God; worship at His footstool, for it is Holy!

**PEOPLE:** **Extol the Lord our God; worship at His footstool, for it is Holy!**

**READER:** The Lord reigns; let the peoples tremble!

**PEOPLE:** **Extol the Lord our God; worship at His footstool, for it is Holy!**

**READER:** Extol the Lord our God.

**PEOPLE:** **Worship at His footstool, for it is Holy!**

### **ALLELUIA VERSES**

Remember Thy congregation which Thou hast gotten of old.

God is our King before the ages; He has worked salvation in the middle of the earth.

**Father Joseph Cervo** offers:

The Orthodox Church, begins Great Lent, today (Monday). Forgiveness is a central theme of Lent, during which, we are called by the Church to reconcile with the Lord, that first necessitates reconciling with others.

This is from the 20th Century Serbian Saint, Nikolai Velimirovich, who after surviving the NAZI concentration camp, Dachau, spent the final years of his life at St. Tikhon Monastery/Seminary, in N.E. Pennsylvania. After the horrors that he witnessed and endured, if he could find the means to forgive, what does that say to everyone else?

**Forgiveness**

**(Saint Nikolai Velimirovich)**

**"That God may forgive us, let us forgive men.**

**We are all on this earth as temporary guests.  
Prolonged fasting and prayer is in vain  
Without forgiveness and true mercy.  
God is the true Physician; sins are leprosy.  
Whomever God cleanses, God also glorifies.  
Every merciful act of men, God rewards with mercy.  
He who returns sin with sin perishes without mercy.  
Pus is not cleansed by pus from infected wounds,  
Neither is the darkness of the dungeon dispelled by darkness,  
But pure balm heals the festering wound,  
And light disperses the darkness of the dungeon.  
To the seriously wounded, mercy is like a balm;  
As if seeing a torch dispersing the darkness, everyone rejoices in  
mercy.  
The madman says, "I have no need of mercy!"  
But when he is overcome by misery, he cries out for mercy!  
Men bathe in the mercy of God,  
And that mercy of God wakens us to life!  
That God may forgive us, let us forgive men,  
We are all on this earth as temporary guests."**

**Father Djordje Popović**

### **QUICK NOTES WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT GREAT LENT**

Great Lent is the most significant and spiritually intense period of the Orthodox liturgical year. It is a time of repentance, prayer, fasting, and preparation for the great feast of Pascha—the Resurrection of Christ. The Church, in her wisdom, has structured Great Lent in a way that gradually leads the faithful toward inner transformation, culminating in the celebration of Christ's victory over sin and death. This sacred period is not merely about abstaining from food but about a deep renewal of the soul, calling each Christian to return to God with humility and love.

#### **Historical Origins of Great Lent**

The origins of Great Lent can be traced back to the early Christian Church. Already in the second and third centuries, there was a practice of fasting before Pascha, though the duration and strictness varied. By the fourth century, the forty-day fast became more universally established, modeled after Christ's forty days in the wilderness (Matthew 4:2) and the fasting practices of Moses (Exodus 34:28) and Elijah (1 Kings 19:8). The Council of Nicaea (325 AD) affirmed the importance of Lent, and by the seventh century, the structure we have today—six weeks of Lent followed by Holy Week—was firmly in place in the Byzantine tradition.

## **Theological Meaning of Great Lent**

Great Lent is a journey from the fallen state of Adam to the renewed life in Christ. It mirrors Israel's forty years in the desert, preparing to enter the Promised Land, just as the faithful prepare to enter the joy of Pascha. The Church calls every Orthodox Christian to engage in deeper prayer, almsgiving, and fasting, purifying both body and soul. The hymns and readings of this season emphasize repentance, humility, and the call to return to God. One of the most well-known prayers of Lent is the Prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian, which encapsulates the spirit of the season:

**"O Lord and Master of my life, give me not a spirit of sloth, despondency, lust for power, and idle talk. But grant rather a spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to me, Thy servant."**

Fasting is not simply a dietary restriction but a means of spiritual discipline, reminding us that our true nourishment comes from God. Through fasting, we weaken the passions and learn self-control, making our hearts more receptive to divine grace.

### **The Structure of Great Lent**

Great Lent is divided into six weeks, each with a specific theme that guides the faithful in their spiritual ascent toward Pascha.

#### *1. The Sunday of the Triumph of Orthodoxy*

The first week of Lent is one of intense spiritual struggle, culminating in the Sunday of the Triumph of Orthodoxy. This feast celebrates the victory of the true faith over the heresy of iconoclasm in 843 AD. More broadly, it affirms the victory of Christ over all falsehood and the restoration of His image within us. The procession with icons on this day reminds us that our faith is not merely intellectual but incarnational—God became man so that we might be restored to His likeness.

#### *2. The Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas*

The second Sunday of Lent is dedicated to St. Gregory Palamas, the great 14th-century defender of Hesychasm and the experience of divine grace. He taught that through ascetic effort, prayer, and participation in the sacraments, man can experience the uncreated light of God, just as the apostles saw at the Transfiguration. His teaching reminds us that Lent is a time to seek deeper communion with God through purification of the heart.

#### *3. The Sunday of the Holy Cross*

At the midpoint of Lent, the Church presents the Cross for veneration, strengthening the faithful to continue the struggle. Just as Christ bore the Cross before His Resurrection, we too must carry our cross, dying to sin so that we may rise with Him. The hymn of the day proclaims:

**"Before Thy Cross, we bow down in worship, O Master, and Thy holy Resurrection we glorify!"**



The presence of the Cross at this point in Lent is a reminder of both the suffering and the glory that await us, encouraging perseverance in the spiritual struggle.

#### *4. The Sunday of St. John Climacus*

The fourth Sunday commemorates St. John Climacus, the 6th-century author of *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, which describes the spiritual ascent from sin to holiness. His teaching reminds us that the Christian life is a continual struggle, requiring effort, patience, and humility. The spiritual ladder he describes consists of virtues that lead the soul closer to God, emphasizing detachment from worldly passions and a focus on divine love.

#### *5. The Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt*

The fifth Sunday is dedicated to St. Mary of Egypt, a former sinner who became a great ascetic. Her life exemplifies the power of repentance and God's infinite mercy. She reminds us that no sin is too great to be forgiven and that true transformation is possible through deep repentance and reliance on God's grace.

#### *6. Palm Sunday and the Entry into Holy Week*

The final week of Great Lent leads to Lazarus Saturday and Palm Sunday, which mark Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. These feasts are both joyful and sobering—joyful because they foreshadow Christ's victory over death, but sobering because they lead to His Passion. After Palm Sunday, the Church enters Holy Week, the most sacred time of the year, walking with Christ through His suffering, crucifixion, and ultimately, His glorious Resurrection.

Great Lent is a sacred time of renewal, purification, and preparation. It is not an end in itself but a means of drawing closer to Christ and experiencing the power of His Resurrection. The Church, through its liturgical and ascetical wisdom, provides a structured path to help us move from sin to holiness, from darkness to light, and from death to life.

As we journey through this season, let us embrace its call to repentance, fasting, and prayer, remembering that our goal is not just abstinence but transformation. Through the grace of God, may we emerge from Great Lent renewed in spirit, ready to proclaim with joy:

***"Christ is Risen! Indeed, He is Risen!"***

In Christ,  
Fr. George

#### ***The Sunday of Orthodoxy John 1:43-51***

*The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of*

*Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man...(KJV)*

**The 1st and 2nd Finding of the Honorable Head of St. John the Baptist Mt 11:2-15**

*Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me. And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. (KJV)*

The first week of Great Lent is complete. The journey to Holy Week and Pascha continues for believers. The focus on the condition and care of the soul are important in the Lenten journey.

Today the Church rejoices in the presence and restoration of icons in the Church. Believers rejoice that Jesus Christ took on human flesh. Believers benefit from the presence of icons depicting Jesus, the Mother of God and the Saints.

The Lenten journey is undertaken by believers in the Church. Participation is voluntary and expected. Each person chooses the degree to invest. Each person benefits proportionately to the investment.

The Church encourages increased prayer, fasting and almsgiving during the period of Great Lent. Lenten services focus on repentance and renewal in Jesus Christ. The church services address hunger existing in the believer's soul.

The daily services challenge the believer to honest self-examination. Each believer determines the degree he or she is interested in renewal in Christ. Wise believers welcome Great Lent and embrace prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

Initially Great Lent may seem to be very long. The time will go fast. Each day is an opportunity to invest in the Kingdom of God. Each day is an opportunity to care for the soul.

The Church is celebrating the findings of the Honorable Head of St. John the Baptist today. Believers benefit from considering the special place St. John has in the life of Jesus Christ.

St. John's Gospel for the Sunday of Orthodoxy mentions Philip and Nathaniel. Philip and Nathaniel also both had direct experience with Jesus for believers to carefully consider.

Believers with eyes to see and ears to hear will recognize Jesus Christ's Divine presence in daily life. The world is renewed each Spring. Believers are renewed in the Lenten journey.

The journey to Holy Week and Pascha occurs each year and will continue until Jesus Christ's Great and Glorious Second Coming. Believers need the benefit of renewal in Christ throughout life.

Baptism is the important beginning for believers. The journey to God's Kingdom continues for the remaining days of life. Believers need not journey alone. Jesus, the Mother of God, and the Saints are present to accompany believers.

Rejoice today! Rejoice over the presence of icons in the Church. Rejoice for the opportunity to repent. Rejoice for the love of Jesus Christ. Be grateful for the presence of the Mother of God and the Saints through the centuries.

Increased prayer and fasting help each believer to address the condition of his or her own soul. Holy Confession and Communion unite and reunite believers with Jesus Christ.

Almsgiving is a way to help the needy with whom Jesus Christ identifies. (Mt. 25:31-46)

Joy increases in the Lenten journey as tarnish is removed from the soul and the brightness of Christ shines within repentant believers.

May the remaining days of Great Lent be beneficial for each believer. The Lord Jesus Christ welcomes each person drawing near in faith. Now is the time to repent and draw near to the Lord Jesus Christ.

*The Sunday of Orthodoxy. The 1st and 2nd Finding of the Honorable Head of St. John the Baptist. February 24/March 9, 2025. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic*

*Protoirea Yerema Petriv:*

Repentance is a mystery in which the believer confesses (opens orally) his sins to God in the presence of the priest and receives through the priest forgiveness of sins from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Jesus Christ gave the holy apostles, and because of them and all priests power to let go (forgive) sins:

**"Receive the Holy Spirit. To whom you forgive sins, they will be forgiven; on whom you leave, they will remain" (Jn 20, 22-23).**

Still John the Baptist, preparing people to receive the Savior, preached "baptism of repentance for the remission of sins..."

And all were baptized in the river Jordan from him, confessing their sins" (Mk 1, 4-5).

The apostles, having received power upon this from the Lord, performed the mystery of repentance:

"Many of those who believed came confessing and revealing their deeds." (Diyan. 19, 18).

***To receive forgiveness (forgiveness) of sins from the one who confesses (repents) requires: reconciliation with all your loved ones, sincere regret for your sins and verbal confession of them, a strong intention to correct your life, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and hope in His mercy.***

In special cases, a repented person is imposed "epitimia" (a Greek word for forbidden), or a penance that requires godly actions and some restrictions aimed at overcoming sinful habits.



**“Eat whatever you want during Holy Week, the sacrifice is not in the stomach but in the heart.**

**People abstain from eating meat, but they do not talk to their siblings and/or relatives, they do not visit their parents, and do not take care of their children.**

**They do not share their food with those who need it most, they distance their children from their father/mother and/or grandparents, they criticize the lives of others, mistreat their partner, etc. *Meat does not make you a bad person, just as a fish fillet will not make you a saint.* [emphasis added by Fr. Bob]**

**Better to seek a good relationship with God by doing good to others. Let us be less arrogant and more humble of heart.”**

**\*Pope Francis\***