

THE LADDER

of
Divine
Ascent



Volume 11, Issue 6 The Newsletter of St John of the Ladder Orthodox Church February 2010

An Approach to Great Lent

(adapted from Fr Alexander Schmemmann's book *Great Lent*)

I. Taking Lent Seriously

"The important point is that during this pre-Lenten season we look at Lent as it were from a distance, as something coming to us or even perhaps sent to us by God Himself, as a chance for a change, for renewal, for deepening, and that we take that forthcoming chance seriously, so that on Forgiveness Sunday when we leave our home for Vespers we may be ready to make ours - be it only in a small way - the words of the Great Prokeimenon which will inaugurate Lent: 'Turn not away Your face from Thy servant, for I am afflicted'" (*Great Lent*, p. 91).

1. **Increased participation in Lenten Services** Make a decision to commit to coming to services! First and foremost be present at Forgiveness Vespers. One evening a week commit to attending the Presanctified Liturgy. Attend Saturday evening Great Vespers and Sunday liturgy, confessing seriously and receiving Holy Communion regularly. Make every effort to attend the 'special' services of Lent such as the Canon of St Andrew and the feast of the Annunciation.

2. **A Lenten Life Style: In Home Lenten Atmosphere** "A man who from his childhood can remember good things is saved for his whole life" (Dostoevsky, **Brothers Karamozov**)

A. The use of TV and Radio should be drastically reduced or even *eliminated* during Lent!

One must realize that it is simply impossible to split our life between the "bright sadness" of Great Lent and the 'Late Show' (or, God-forbid, what one might come across on HBO!).

B. Do no visit or engage in outside activities for their own sake. Keep useless talk to a minimum. Do not engage in vain or idle talk, and do not gossip! Do only necessary business, good works, and acts of mercy and charity.

C. Self-Inventory: Question yourself in regard to love, truth, honesty, purity, humility, peace, forgiveness, justice, and mercy. In the name of Christ and for the sake of salvation, forgive all who have offended you and seek to forgive those whom you have offended. If it will not embarrass or be misinterpreted as an act of self-righteousness, express this forgiveness as concretely as possible---visit, make a phone call, make restitution, etc.

D. Pray without ceasing! Pray at home at least at one fixed time each day. Choose *a brief* rule of prayer, but keep it faithfully. Pray the Lord's Prayer or Jesus Prayer frequently throughout the day as time allows. Read the scriptures in the same brief, but regular, way. Follow the lectionary found on the church calendar.

E. Intellectual Effort. Make a reasonable list of books to be read during Lent (I recommend **Bread and Water, Wine and Oil** by Fr Meletios Webber, as a good beginning.).

II. The Meaning of Fasting

Fasting is a spiritual discipline that when combined with prayer and almsgiving (merciful acts) restores within us the "likeness" of God.

1. **It must be part of a larger effort** "... the honor of fasting consists not in the abstinence from food, but in withdrawing from sinful practices...Do you fast? Give me proof of your works! If you see a poor man, take pity on him. If you see an

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Calling all St John of the Ladder Ladies!

Join us for Fellowship and fun at Coffee Underground in Downtown Greenville on Monday, February 22nd 2010 at 6pm. Let's engage a St. John of the Ladder women's group - but we do need you (if you are female and over the age of 18) to have this forum. At this first (of many, God-willing) gathering, we will discuss what our women's group should look like, pray together, have some light guided discussion, and potentially choose a patron Saint of our budding women's group. See you then! Contact Mat. Rachael [864-414-9195 (m)] for info.

St John of the Ladder Orthodox Church
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**Schedule of Services**  
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February 2010

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	01 Prefeast of the Meeting Vigil 6:00 pm	02 Divine Liturgy 7:00 am Meeting of the Lord in the Temple	03 Righteous Symeon & Anna Inquirers' Class Icons and Saints 7:00 pm Vespers 6:00 pm	04 <i>fast</i> OCF Clemson University 7:00 pm Furman University 6:30 pm	05	06 Inquirers' Class Prayer and the Ascetical Life 4:30 pm Choir Rehearsal Great Vespers 6:00 pm
07 'Meatfare' Sunday of the Last Judgment 'Ask the Priest' Divine Liturgy 9:30 am Slavonic Molieben 12:30 pm	08 <i>meat fast</i>	09 <i>meat fast</i>	10 <i>meat fast</i> Lenten Vespers 6:00 pm	11 <i>meat fast</i> OCF Clemson University 7:00 pm Furman University 6:30 pm	12 <i>meat fast</i> Fr Marcus and Barbara's House Blessing 7:00 pm ALL INVITED!	13 <i>meat fast</i> Choir Rehearsal 5:00 pm Great Vespers 6:00 pm
14 'Cheesefare' Sunday of Forgiveness Cheesefare Brunch Divine Liturgy 9:30 am Forgiveness Vespers 12:30 pm	15 Beginning of Great Lent Canon of St Andrew of Crete 6:00 pm	16 Canon of St Andrew of Crete 6:00 pm	17 Confessions 4:30 – 6:00 pm Choir Rehearsal 5:15 – 6:00 pm Presanctified Liturgy 6:00 pm	18 No OCF Clemson University Furman University Canon of St Andrew of Crete 6:00 pm	19 S'burg Area 'Small Group' Fellowship 7:00 pm	20 Inquirers' Class Last Things 4:30 pm Confessions Great Vespers 6:00 pm
21 1 st Sunday of Great Lent Sunday of Orthodoxy Divine Liturgy 9:30 am ***Vespers*** @ St George 5:00 pm	22 St John's Women's Group Coffee Underground 6:00 pm	23	24 Confessions 4:30 – 6:00 pm Choir Rehearsal 5:15 – 6:00 pm Presanctified Liturgy 6:00 pm	25 OCF Clemson University 7:00 pm Furman University 6:30 pm	26 General Panikhida 6:00 pm	27 Divine Liturgy 8:00 am Memorial Saturday Confessions Great Vespers 6:00 pm
28 2 nd Sunday of Great Lent Sunday of St Gregory Palamas Divine Liturgy 9:30 am	<p>A Word from the Desert</p> <p>Before all else, let us list sincere thanksgiving first on the scroll of our prayer. On the second line, we should put confession and heartfelt contrition of soul. Then let us present our petition to the King of all. This is the best way of prayer.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">~~~ Saint John Glimacus (March 30th)</p>					

The Lenten Spring Has Come! Let us begin the Fast with Joy!
Lent Begins with Forgiveness Vespers on the Sunday of Forgiveness, February 14th
 February 14th, 5:00 pm, Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers at St George Greek Orthodox Cathedral
 Fellowship and Coffee Hour: Sundays immediately following Divine Liturgy.
 Church School: Sundays before Divine Liturgy at 9:00 am prompt !!!
 Confessions on Saturdays following Great Vespers (as noted above) and Wednesdays as scheduled
 Fr Marcus is available for House Blessings through Feb 13th!
 Annual Parish Meeting, Sunday, February 21st, following Divine Liturgy and a brief Coffee Fellowship.

enemy, be reconciled to him. If you see a friend gaining honor, envy him not. If you see a handsome women, pass her by. For let not the mouth only fast, but also the eye, and the ear, and the feet, and the hands, and all the members of our bodies." (St. John Chrysostom)

2. **Prayer must accompany our fasting** Strive to keep at least your daily pray rule as part of your Lenten effort.

3. **Fasting reveals the truth about ourselves** "Every Christian should know that unless one lifts his mind and heart towards God through Christian fasting and through prayer, he cannot attain a consciousness of his sinful state and earnestly seek the forgiveness of sins. . . " Prayer and fasting serve as a means of self-study, of discernment of our true moral state, of an accurate estimation of our sins and of a knowledge of their true character. Without fasting and prayer we lack the means of acquiring this knowledge, and we cannot have a true picture of our sins, a perfect awareness of them and contrition of heart, and hence true and fruitful confession.

4. **The aim of fasting is to reveal our dependence on God** "(Fasting) is our entrance and participation in that experience of Christ Himself by which He liberates us from the total dependence on food, matter and the world...Ultimately, to fast means only one thing: to be hungry . . . and being hungry, to discover that . . . hunger itself is first of all a spiritual state and that it is in its last reality hunger for God...This means that without the corresponding spiritual effort, without feeding ourselves with Divine Reality, without discovering our total dependence upon God and God alone, physical fasting would indeed be suicide." (Great Lent, p. 96, 97)

III. The Spiritual Fruits of Fasting

1. **Fasting is essential for preparing for worship** "For us to experience the full power of this Paschal rejoicing, each of us needs to pass through a time of preparation." (Bishop Kallistos Ware)

2. **Fasting as a preparation for a Revelation of God** "When I went up the mountain to receive the tables of stone, the tables of the covenant which the LORD made with you, I remained on the mountain forty days and forty nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water. And the LORD gave me the two tables of stone written with the finger of God; and on them were all the words which the LORD had spoken with you on the mountain out of the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly. And at the end of forty days and forty nights the LORD gave me the two tables of stone, the tables of the covenant. (Dt 9:9-11)

3. **Fasting restores our relationship with the world** "Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with wicked fist. Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high. Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you, the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, Here I am." (Isaiah 58:4-11)

IV. The 'Rules' of Fasting

Guiding Rule of the Fathers: One should never eat to the point of feeling full, but should always rise from the table feeling that he could have taken more and that he is now ready for prayer .

Fast strictly all the time of Lent. Eat no meat, as a basic minimum. Suit your fast to your work and avoid luxury. And again, tell no one. Do not advertise your fasting and DO NOT judge others who may not be fasting the way you are!

Set aside and give a significant portion of your resources to others: the church, the poor, outreach, etc. Tell no one, nor advertise, what you have done.

Who must not fast or at least modify his fasting? Pregnant or nursing women, those with health problems, the elderly and the very young. Anyone for whom fasting might be harmful. Use common sense!

2009 Year End and Current Statistical Data

Members: 70

Ave Attendance	adults	children
Sunday	92	28
Saturday Eve	23	5
Wednesday	14	2

2009 Baptisms: 7; Chrismations: 8; Marriages: 0
Funerals: 3; Catechumens: 13; Inquirers: 2

2009 Year End Financial Snapshot

2009	Income	Expenses
Budgeted	\$133,562	\$140,702
Restricted	\$106,216	\$74,377

Of the restricted income, \$30, 250 was earmarked for the charity fund and \$64,426 was earmarked for building and memorial funds.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

■ **ALMS SUNDAY**

February 14th is our Alms Collection Sunday. Please remember to bring foodstuffs and personal items. Baskets are in the vestibule as you enter the church. These items and money collected support the following (among other occasional) charitable needs: **United Ministries, OCMC Missionaries Floyd and Ancutsa Frantz, two St Vladimir's Seminarians, the Carolinas Deanery fund, a widowed priest's wife and her two children.** Thanks to all who continue to give so generously to our outreach efforts!

■ **MARK YOUR CALENDARS**

Forgiveness Vespers, February 14th, 12:30 pm; **Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers** at St George Orthodox Church, February 21st, 5:00 pm;

■ **SIGN-UP SHEETS FOR LENTEN ACTIVITIES**

Sign-up sheets are posted in the fellowship hall to **provide meals** after Wednesday Presanctified Liturgies and to **offer Easter Lilies and flowers** for other feasts.

Our **annual parish meeting** has been **rescheduled** to take place on **Sunday, February 21st**, following Divine Liturgy and a brief Coffee Hour.

A Reminder and a Hearty 'Thank You'!
February Fellowship and Coffee Hour

- Feb 7th Team 2
- Feb 14th Gheesefare Brunch
- Feb 21st Team 3
- Feb 28th Team 4

Celebrating Birthdays in February

Noah Golburn (1st), Patrick Davis (1st), Peggy Gilmer (5th), Judith Middleton (6th), Ransom Davis (9th), Laura Bucila (9th), Bobby Wood (12th), Judy Alexeff (14th), John Sucin (15th), Viorel & Florina Nicolae (18th), Vincent Pedersen (18th), Lilliana Danila (19th), Elena & Valerii Gonty (19th), Eleanor [June] Goons (22nd), Nick and Adele Evangelista (26th), June Kerestan (27th)

From the Lenten Triodion

**The lenten spring has come!
The flower of repentance!**

**Brethren, let us cleanse ourselves from
all evil, crying out to the Giver of light:
Glory to Thee, O Lover of man!**

(from the Wednesday Vespers of Gheesefare)



Orthodox Church in America

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Rev Fr Nikolay Miletkov, Assistant

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Schedule of Services

Vespers, Wednesday, 6:00 pm
Great Vespers, Saturday, 6:00 pm
Divine Liturgy, Sunday, 9:30 am

Let your prayer be completely simple.
For both the Publican and the Prodigal Son
were reconciled to God by a single phrase.

St John of the Ladder, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent, Step 28*



PLACE
POSTAGE
HERE

February 2010