

THE LADDER

of
Divine
Ascent



Volume 12, Issue 7

The Newsletter of St John of the Ladder Orthodox Church

March 2011

The Lenten Spring Has Come! The Flower of Repentance!

This coming Sunday, Forgiveness Sunday (also called Cheesefare Sunday because it is the last Sunday until Pascha that we partake of dairy products), brings our period of preparation for Great Lent to an end. The Vespers service served in the afternoon will mark the transition of our community and personal life into the time of Great Fast. It marks the beginning of the journey for which we have been preparing. The Rite of Mutual Forgiveness with which this Vespers service concludes is the proper way to step forward on the path of spiritual transformation which is our critical task and goal during the Great Fast in the light of the Resurrection of Christ celebrated at Pascha. I strongly encourage everyone to participate in this service!

Fr Alexander Schmemmann reminds us that ‘there is no Lent without fasting’. Now, therefore, is the time to make decisions about how we will each keep the fast, mindful that the Church suggests both a certain urgency in our approach and the need to make an effort that will take us, even if only a little bit, outside of our comfort zone. While we know fasting is found throughout the scriptures, we perhaps nonetheless often have distorted views of it. One imagines gaunt ascetics mortifying their flesh in order to overcome temptation, to please (or even appease!) God, or to achieve a mystical state. On the other hand we may be tempted to view fasting as some sort of ‘self-punishment’ against the body and its appetites. Those coming from a protestant background might surely be suspicious of fasting as a kind of ‘work’, over and against God’s grace. Nevertheless, the Lord Himself says, ‘when’, NOT if, ‘you fast’.

Of course there can be distortions, but rightly undertaken fasting can yield much fruit. At its basis the fasting of Great Lent provides us with a specific period of time in which we direct ourselves more fully and completely toward God. Much like the Sabbath in the Old Covenant, this period of fasting is a restriction that creates space for God in our lives. Humbled by our hunger and unimpeded by our appetites, like the Israelites in the wilderness or Christ in the desert, we come to realize that we do not depend on food for our physical life, but upon God Himself. More importantly, we can perhaps internalize the Lord’s teaching that our true food and drink is to hear God’s Word and to do His will. [Especially] in the weekday Presanctified liturgies we experience Christ’s flesh as true food and His blood as true drink. For this reason it is imperative to make every effort to participate in these services through the whole of Great Lent by fasting and receiving the Eucharist.

Fasting then is to deny ourselves of food for a time, so that we might come to know Jesus Christ as our true sustenance and life. As one writer has put it, ‘It is to turn from the bread of the pantry to the Bread of Life and in this humbler state to rediscover our deepest hunger and our truest food.’

Practically, this fasting takes two forms during the Great Fast: ascetical and Eucharistic (or total). The ascetical fast is the basis of the entire ‘saving forty days’. For the forty days of Great Lent we are called to adopt basically a vegan diet --- no meat, fish, dairy, or eggs. This ascetical fasting is punctuated with Eucharistic or ‘total’ fasting on days which one receives communion (this involves an almost daylong fast on days in which the presanctified is celebrated), and for instance, on Holy Friday. The first, third, fifth weeks of Great Lent and Holy Week are customarily kept most ‘strictly’ and each weekend provides its own slight respite during the Lenten journey (wine and oil are ‘allowed’ on Saturday and Sunday). In addition, the feasts of the Annunciation and Lazarus Saturday/Palm Sunday are celebrated with fish, wine, and oil. According to our custom we keep our Patronal feastday (the 4th Sunday of Great Lent) as a fish, wine and oil day, as well.

continued on page 3...

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

The Lenten Spring...	page 1
March 2011 Calendar	page 2
Bp Mark’s Visit to SJOTL	page 3
Announcements	page 4

2011 Financial Snapshot



2011	Income	Expenses
YTD (Jan)	\$11,007	\$12,570
YTD	\$11,007	\$12,570
Charity	\$522	\$2,530

Restricted income (for building, icon, vestment funds, etc):
January: \$32,257; Total YTD Balance: \$147, 633

St John of the Ladder Orthodox Church

Schedule of Services

March 2011

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		01 <i>meat fast</i>	02 <i>meat fast</i> Confessions 5:00 – 6:00 pm Adult Study 'The Jesus Question' Lenten Vespers 6:00 pm	03 <i>meat fast</i> OCF Clemson University Furman University 7:00 pm	04 <i>meat fast</i>	05 <i>meat fast</i> Confessions Great Vespers 6:00 pm
06 'Cheesefare' Sunday of Forgiveness Cheesefare Brunch Divine Liturgy 9:30 am Forgiveness Vespers ~12:30 pm	07 Beginning of Great Lent Canon of St Andrew of Crete 6:00 pm	08 Canon of St Andrew of Crete 6:00 pm	09 Canon of St Andrew 12 pm (noon) Confessions Choir Rehearsal 5:15 – 6:00 pm Presanctified Liturgy 6:00 pm	10 No OCF Clemson University Furman University Canon of St Andrew of Crete 6:00 pm	11 Lenten Vespers 6:00 pm	12 <i>wine & oil</i> Panikhida Peggy Gilmer's Mother 5:15 pm Confessions Great Vespers 6:00 pm
13 1 st Sunday of Great Lent Sunday of Orthodoxy @ ***St George Greek Orthodox Cathedral*** Divine Liturgy 10:00 am	14 	15 Lenten Matins 7:00 am	16 Confessions 4:30 – 6:00 pm Choir Rehearsal 5:15 – 6:00 pm Presanctified Liturgy 6:00 pm	17 OCF Clemson University Furman University 7:00 pm	18 Lenten Matins 7:00 am S'burg Area 'Small Group' Fellowship 7:00 pm	19 <i>wine & oil</i> Confessions Great Vespers 6:00 pm
20 2 nd Sunday of Great Lent Sunday of the St Gregory Palamas 'Ask the Priest' Divine Liturgy 9:30 am	21	22 Lenten Matins 7:00 am	23 Confessions 4:30 – 6:00 pm Choir Rehearsal 5:15 – 6:00 pm Presanctified Liturgy 6:00 pm	24 <i>wine & oil</i> Forefeast of Annunciation OCF Clemson University Furman University 7:00 pm	25 <i>fish, wine & oil</i> Festal Matins 7:00 am Annunciation Confessions Vespertal Liturgy 6:00 pm	26 <i>wine & oil</i> Synaxis of the Archangel Gabriel Confessions Vigil of the Cross 6:00 pm
27 3 rd Sunday of Great Lent Sunday of the Cross Divine Liturgy 9:30 am	28	29 Lenten Matins 7:00 am Molieben 6:00 pm	30 <i>wine & oil</i> St John Ladder Confessions 4:30 – 6:00 pm Choir Rehearsal Hierarchical Presanctified Liturgy 6:00 pm	31 <i>wine & oil</i> Repose of St Innocent of Alaska OCF Clemson University Furman University 7:00 pm	<p>A Word from the Desert Do not be always wanting everything to turn out as you think it should, but rather as God pleases, then you will be undisturbed and thankful in your prayer. ~~~ <i>Abba Nilus</i></p>	

Fellowship and Goffee Hour: Sundays immediately following Divine Liturgy.

Church School: Sundays before Divine Liturgy at 9:00 am prompt !!! No Church School on March 13th.

Confessions on Saturdays following Great Vespers, Weds before Presanctified, and other days as scheduled above.
There will be no confessions during Holy Week --- the final opportunity for confession is April 16th.

The arena of the virtues has been opened! Let all who wish to struggle for the prize now enter; the time is now at hand! Let us begin the spiritual contest...!

The Lenten Spring Has Come...

Please remember, though, that ultimately fasting is NOT about the food, and it is by no means Christian 'law'. There are certainly people who should not (or only in a limited way) engage in fasting, especially pregnant and nursing women, the very old or very young, anyone who is infirm (especially with a condition like diabetes), or anyone who has an eating disorder. That being said, if you are otherwise healthy, as noted above, you should engage the fast in a way that pushes you --- even if a little --- outside your comfort zone. Also, pace yourself! In hindsight the fast will have seemed to fly by; still you want to begin at a pace you can sustain until the Great and Holy Pascha of the Lord.

...continued from page 1

Perhaps as important in our society as fasting from food, we might also considering fasting from other activities and substances. In our consumption/consumer-driven world, abstaining from certain things for the period of Great Lent tends to loosen their hold on us, as well as free us for more prayer, spiritual reflection, and personal interaction. This type of fasting can 'recalibrate' our need for the things which we forego. One list I came across included, but was not necessarily limited to, the following: drinking alcohol, buying expensive cups of coffee, purchasing books, watching TV, wearing colorful jewelry or make-up, reading (non-essential) books and magazines (perhaps this now goes for internet blogs as well), listening to popular music or watching movies, shopping, and using Facebook. While perhaps not bad in themselves, a period of abstinence helps us resist these subtle 'idolatries' to which each of us succumbs, and allows us to more clearly focus on Christ and the Gospel.

Finally, so perhaps you won't feel so strange --- it turns out that 'everyone is doing it' --- I have include an interesting article that recently came 'across my desk'. Enjoy!

Many Choices on the Menu of Religious Fasts

By MARK OPPENHEIMER

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — After last Sunday night's service at Celebration Church, where a 10-piece band played Christian rock for 1,600 worshippers, Stovall Weems, the pastor, met me in his "green room" and offered nibbles from a tray of kiwi, pineapple and melon slices. In a showbiz green room, the fruit is for waist-conscious guests. But backstage at Jacksonville's largest church, Mr. Weems — a muscular, friendly guy you desperately want to call "dude" — stocks fruit because it is all some of his staff members are eating right now. For the rest of January, the pastor will not eat even that.

Mr. Weems has fasted periodically over the last 20 years, ever since, as a coke-snorting Theta Xi brother at Louisiana State University, he found Jesus and joined a group that encouraged fasting as a way to draw closer to God. Twelve years ago, believing that God called him to Jacksonville, Mr. Weems founded the evangelical, nondenominational Celebration Church. As it grew to more than 10,000 worshippers a week... [\[The remainder of this article can be found here.\]](#)

Pastoral Visit of Bp Mark to SJOTL and nearby



Tuesday, March 29th, 6:00 pm
Service of Blessing
of the New Property & Reception
(at 213 Roper Mountain Rd, Extension)

Wednesday, March 30th, 6:00 pm
Hierarchical Presanctified Liturgy & Lenten Meal
St John of the Ladder Orthodox Church

Thursday, March 31st, 6:00 pm
Hierarchical Presanctified Liturgy & Lenten Meal
Holy Apostles Orthodox Church, W Gola, SC

Friday, April 1st, 6:00 pm
Hierarchical Presanctified Liturgy & Lenten Meal
St Timothy's Orthodox Church, Toccoa, GA

Great Lent, Fasting and, Repentance/Confession

Throughout the scriptures one finds fasting as a reflection of repentance. One of the most striking examples comes from the Prophet Joel: "*Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments. Return to the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and repents of evil.* (2.12ff)" Starting on Forgiveness Sunday and continuing through the whole Lenten period, the church especially calls us to examine ourselves, to admit to God (and to other people) our patterns of sinfulness, and by His grace to work at changing these. Prepare for confession during Great Lent by making time to examine yourself; not only your external behaviors, but the inner disposition of your mind and heart, remembering that we confess to a loving God who wants salvation for us (*'As I live, says the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways...'* Ezekiel 33:11). Several resources for this inventory are found in the scriptures themselves: the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, the Epistle of James, or the penitential psalms (6, 32, 38, 51, 101, 130, 143).

WARNING: Whatever God reveals, one must act on!
Apologize to the friend whom you have grieved, repay that which you have stolen, refrain from looking at impure images, stop snapping at your irritating coworker, reevaluate your spending and giving habits, stop lying to save yourself embarrassment or to look better, and the list goes on...

ANNOUNCEMENTS

■ **ALMS SUNDAY**

March 6th is our Alms Collection Sunday and Cheesefare Brunch. 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!

■ **SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY DIVINE LITURGY AT ST GEORGE;**

PROCESSION WITH ICONS FOLLOWING LITURGY

We are **all invited**, along with Christ the Saviour Orthodoxy Church, to **Liturgy at St George Orthodox Cathedral** on the **Sunday of Orthodoxy**. This is a momentous occasion for us to come together to show our unity in Christ. While it does interrupt our 'usual' routine at SJOTL, the occasion is an important one. Likewise, the external **manifestation of our oneness in Christ** across jurisdictional lines will be all the more strengthened each time we are able to serve in this way. We *will* have Great Vespers here on March 12, as usual with the other churches invited. **Bring an icon** to process with at the end of the Divine Liturgy.

■ **SIGN-UP SHEETS FOR LENTEN MEALS, FESTAL FLOWERS**

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.

A Reminder and a Hearty 'Thank You'!

March Fellowship and Coffee Hour

- March 6th Cheesefare Brunch
- March 13th (at St George)
- March 20th Team 3
- March 27th Team 4

Celebrating Birthdays in March

Angie O'Shaughnessy & Adele Webb (3rd), Kirsten Small (6th), Jamie & Jaye Levitsky (6th), Alexandra Karter (8th), Christian Evangelista (10th), Elizabeth Simon (12th), Tony & Ana Satcher (13th), George Middleton (15th), Sarah Middleton (16th), Florina Nicolae (18th), Miriam Little (20th), James Freeman (27th), Ken O'Shaughnessy & Kandice Crawford (29th), Jack Levitsky (30th), Andrew Wood (31st)

From the Lenten Triodion

The grace of self-control has shined forth, banishing the darkness of demons. The power of the fast will constrain our minds; Lent will bring the cure for our crippling worldliness! Daniel and the children in Babylon were strengthened by fasting: one stopped the mouths of lions, while the others extinguished the flames of the furnace! As Thou didst save them, save us also, O Christ our God, for Thou art the Lover of mankind!

(from the Thursday Matins of Cheesefare)

St. John of the Ladder



Orthodox Church in America

701 Augusta Arbor Way, Piedmont [Greenville], SC 29673
(864) 299-1140

www.stjohnoftheladder.org

Rev Fr Marcus C Burch, Rector
Rev Fr Thaddaeus Werner, 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

March 2011