

Lenten Devotional: the First Week of Lent

SUNDAY OF CHEESEFARE FORGIVENESS SUNDAY

Adam was banished from Paradise because of the forbidden fruit. He sat before the gate, sighing and lamenting: Alas! Woe is me! What is happening to me? I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and now I am deprived of every blessing. O Paradise, so delightful, you were planted for me; and now you are closed because of Eve. Beseech your creator who has also fashioned me to fill me with the fragrance of your flowers once again. Vespers Apostichon

THE DAY BEFORE THE GREAT FAST BEGINS

1. As I look into the mirror of my soul, what is there within me that I would not want God to see?
2. Even though change is difficult and sometimes hurts, how will I present this part of me to God?
3. How do I plan to fast this year? How will my fasting allow God to work more fully in me?

FIRST DAY OF THE GREAT FAST

Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove all evil of your doings... seek justice; correct oppression... though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as wool. Isaiah 1:16, 17a, 18

QUESTIONS

1. What are my plans for prayer during the Great Fast? Am I setting aside quiet time? Planning to attend more Liturgical Hours as available in my parish?
2. Do I keep the letter of the law with regard to fasting, or the spirit as well? Do I physically and spiritually experience the lack of that from which I have fasted?
3. Do I plan to give alms during this Holy Season? Do I give out of my abundance, or out of my need?

FIRST TUESDAY OF THE GREAT FAST

Be sober, o my soul, and keep watch; pour out your tears and sighs; let the Fast lighten the burden of your sins. By the zeal of repentance, avoid the fire of Hades, and by sorrow—for your failures, tear up the garment of sadness and receive from God the garment of joy. Matins, 2nd Hymn, Ode 2

QUESTIONS

1. Do I often say my prayers without praying?
2. Is prayer a priority in my daily life?
3. Is my service to others an outgrowth of my prayer and fasting?
4. Am I willing to share a gift of God's forgiveness with those who have hurt or offended me?

FIRST WEDNESDAY OF THE GREAT FAST

By fasting let us subdue the passions of our mind, and let us put on the wings of the spirit, so that overcoming the tempest raised by the enemy, we may be worthy to adore the Cross of the Son of God. He willed to be sacrificed for the world, and we now spiritually keep the feast of His Resurrection from the dead. Let us ascend the mountain with the apostles to glorify the Son of the Father who loves all mankind, to whom all power is now given. Matins Aposticha

QUESTIONS

1. Do I thank God for this opportune and most solemn time of fasting?
2. How well do I keep the Fast?
3. In what areas can I grow in order to keep the Fast better?

FIRST THURSDAY OF THE GREAT FAST

Receiving the rays of purity, O my soul, be filled with light and leave the darkness of sin, so that the dawn of forgiveness may rise upon you in the Holy Spirit. Illumine my soul also, for it is clouded by evil. Matins Canon, Ode 4

QUESTIONS

1. Can I willingly admit my shortcomings to myself and to others?
2. Am I willing to make changes in my personal life?
3. Do I see a need to reflect the Image of Christ to others?

FIRST FRIDAY OF THE GREAT FAST

O Light of those who are in darkness, O Christ our Savior, salvation of the hopeless, I keep watch before You, O Prince of peace. Illumine me with your rays; I know no other God but You. Matins Canon, Ode 5

QUESTIONS:

1. Can I find a practical positive way to help me when I find myself in shadow and darkness rather than in the Light of Christ?
2. How can I better reflect his Light in my world?
3. Are there new ways and places that I should seek in which to bring his Light?

FIRST SATURDAY OF THE GREAT FAST

The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. Mark 2:27

QUESTIONS :

1. Do we understand the Great Fast disciplines as helpful for our spiritual health?
2. Does the example of St Theodore motivate us to enter fully into the Great Fast?

Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

As we already have seen, the eucharistic Divine Liturgy is not celebrated in the Orthodox Church on lenten weekdays. In order for the faithful to sustain their lenten effort by participation in Holy Communion, the **Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts** is served. The service is an ancient one in the Orthodox Church. We officially hear about it in the canons of the seventh century, which obviously indicates its development at a much earlier date.

On all days of the holy fast of Lent, except on the Sabbath, the Lord's Day, and the holy day of the Annunciation, the Liturgy of the Presanctified is to be served (Canon 52, Quinisext, 692).

The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is an evening service. It is the solemn lenten Vespers with the administration of Holy Communion added to it. There is no consecration of the eucharistic gifts at the presanctified liturgy. Holy Communion is given from the eucharistic gifts sanctified on the previous Sunday at the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, unless, of course, the feast of the Annunciation should intervene; hence its name of "presanctified."

The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is served on Wednesday and Friday evenings, although some churches may celebrate it only on one of these days. It comes in the evening after a day of spiritual preparation and total abstinence. The faithful who are unable to make the effort of total fasting because of weakness or work, however, normally eat a light lenten meal in the early morning.

During the psalms of Vespers, the presanctified gifts are prepared for communion. They are transferred from the altar table where they have been reserved since the Divine Liturgy, and are placed on the table of oblation. After the evening hymn, the Old Testament scriptures of **Genesis** and **Proverbs** are read, between which the celebrant blesses the kneeling congregation with a lighted candle and the words: "The Light of Christ illumines all," indicating that all wisdom is given by Christ in the Church through the scriptures and sacraments. This blessing was originally directed primarily to the catechumens—those preparing to be baptized on Easter—who attended the service only to the time of the communion of the faithful.

After the readings, the evening Psalm 141 is solemnly sung once again with the offering of incense. Then, after the litanies of intercession and those at which the catechumens were dismissed in former days, the presanctified eucharistic gifts are brought to the altar in a solemn, silent procession. The song of the entrance calls the faithful to communion.

Now the heavenly powers (i.e., the angels) do minister invisibly with us. For behold the King of Glory enters. Behold the mystical sacrifice, all fulfilled, is ushered in.

Let us with faith and love draw near that we may be partakers of everlasting life. Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.

After the litany and prayers, the **Our Father** is sung and the faithful receive Holy Communion to the chanting of the verse from Psalm 34: "O taste and see how good is the Lord. Alleluia." The post-communion hymns are sung and the faithful depart with a prayer to God who "has brought us to these all-holy days for the cleansing of carnal passions," that he will bless us "to fight the good fight, to accomplish the course of the fast, and to attain unto and to adore the holy resurrection" of Christ.

The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is traditionally considered to be the work of the sixth-century pope, Saint Gregory of Rome. The present service, however, is obviously the inspired liturgical creation of Christian Byzantium

THE GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF CHICAGO ANNUAL FAMILY SYNAXIS LENTEN RETREAT

WHEN: Saturday April 2, 2016 from 8:30-5:00pm

WHERE:

St Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church, 12307 S Ridgeland Ave., Palos Heights, IL; www.saint-spyridon.org

Workshops: By Dr Peli Galiti

He is the Program Manager of the International Forgiveness Institute at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Born in Greece, Dr Galiti has post-graduate degrees in both school counselling and educational psychology, and has done research in the area of family therapy. A mother of four; she loves to draw from wisdom of the beloved modern saint Porphyrios.

Workshop 1: Raising a Christian family in a rapidly changing world

Workshop 2: The healing power of forgiveness

A retreat for the whole family! Two workshops, discussions, breakfast, lunch and worship. Classes, activities, and childcare included for children of all ages.

Register @ www.gocfamilysynaxis.org or call 708-250-0034
\$75 per Family by March 23 / \$100 per family after March 23