



Office of the Metropolitan
312 Garfield Street
Johnstown, PA 15906

GREAT LENT 2021

Protocol No. 7/2021

My Beloved Faithful Clergy and Laity of our God-Protected Diocese:

As we begin Holy and Great Lent this year on March 15th, I wanted to share with you a few thoughts so that we may journey through the season and arrive safely at the Great Feast of Feasts, Holy Pascha with the proper frame of mind.

It has been over a year now that we have been dealing with the global Covid-19 pandemic and all of its effects including tragically the loss of over 50 individuals in our Diocese. May their memories be eternal! The pandemic greatly impacted our lives including the practicing of our faith, especially our attendance at church services. Virtual attendance via live-streaming and other measures work in emergency situations, but eventually lose their effectiveness. I believe it is time for all of us to renew our efforts and re-engage the faith in person. Following the Sunday of the Prodigal Son on February 28th, many Priests throughout the Diocese reported that attendance was the best since early in the pandemic. This is wonderful news – the people are returning to church (God’s House) in greater numbers, just like the Prodigal returned to his father’s house. Let us continue this trend during Great Lent and return quickly to the pre-pandemic levels of activities in our parishes. Priests and parish leadership should monitor your local conditions and act accordingly. Let all of us think of ways/reasons to get back into church as opposed to ways/reasons to stay away. Time is short.

Holy and Great Lent is a truly beautiful period of time filled with moments in which we can focus our hearts and our minds on the grace of God. Through daily prayer, fasting, worship, and giving to others, and by the grace of God our lives will continue to be transformed by Him and our souls will be drawn closer and closer to our Lord Jesus Christ.

The primary goal of the Lenten season and all the disciplines of our Orthodox faith is to lead us to Christ. In Holy Scripture we read that prayer, fasting, and service to other people were a part of Jesus’ ministry. Through His example, we are presented with a manner of living that focuses on communion with God and on the Gospel message of truth and life.

Holy and Great Lent leads us to Christ through prayer. This season is an excellent opportunity for prayer. We are called to renew our commitment to daily prayer and to devote more time to it. This directs our hearts and minds to the presence and the power of Christ. Our Lord is in our midst, ready to guide those who seek Him, assure those who are struggling and lead us all to a real life.

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Holy and Great Lent leads us to Christ through worship. Over the coming days and weeks the parishes in our Diocese will have frequent services, opportunities to gather together in praise of God and to renew our strength through prayer and participation in the Holy Eucharist. The services of Lent are beautiful and solemn. Through the hymns, petitions, readings and Holy Sacraments, especially the Sacrament of Repentance and Confession of sins, we are present above all with the One who offers liberation from guilt, pain and sin and brings healing and salvation.

Holy and Great Lent leads us to Christ through fasting. This is a special discipline of our faith that helps diminish our attachment to the material things of this world and deepens our dependence on God. It directs our hearts and our minds toward the spiritual needs of our lives through a reorientation of our will. As children of a heavenly kingdom, the purpose and goal of our lives is not tied to the treasures of this world, but the condition of our souls and to our faith in God. Fasting attributes to an awareness of this.

Holy and Great Lent leads us to Christ through the service to others. Through giving of our time and our resources to others, we imitate Christ, or rather we offer Christ. We experience the joys and the blessings of securing the well-being of other people, and we realize that the true meaning of life is found and fulfilled not only in what we receive from God, but in what we can give back to Him by giving to others.

At the beginning of this blessed time, may we have hearts and minds that are constantly seeking Christ. The way to Him through Holy and Great Lent is the true way of life. It is the journey toward Holy Week and Pascha.

I pray that this Holy and Great Lent season is a spiritually uplifting time for all of us.

Working in His Vineyard with much love for all of you,



+Metropolitan Gregory of Nyssa

This protocol is to be read on Sunday March 14th in the churches of the Diocese and distributed by all means available including emailing parishioners.

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