

SOBORNOST

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

Wednesday: Reader Vespers 6:30 PM

Saturday: Confession 4:30 PM

Great Vespers 5:00 PM

**Sunday: Matins 8:45 AM | Sunday
School 9:30 AM | Divine Liturgy 10 AM**

**February 1, 2026 – Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee
Forefeast of the Reception of the Lord in the Temple**

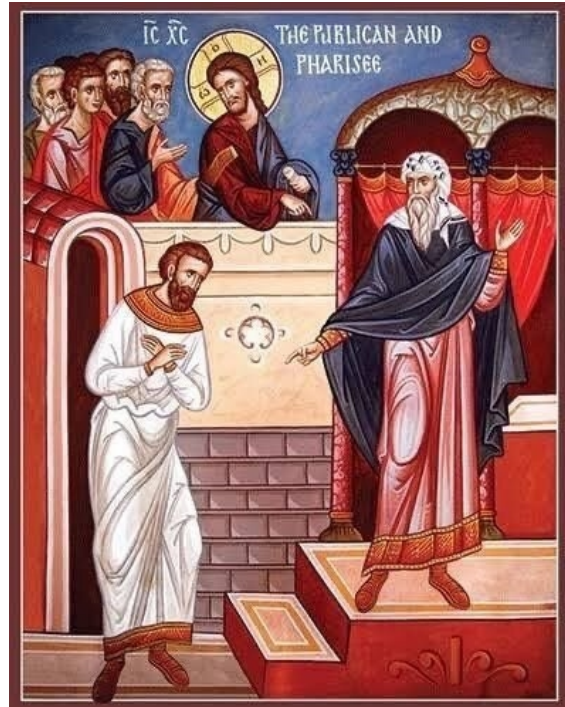
The Inner Unity of the Triodion

The Triodion possesses an inner coherence and unity that are not at once apparent. Why, for example, should St. Theodore the Recruit be commemorated on Saturday in the first week, the holy ikons on the first Sunday, and St. Gregory Palamas on the second? What special connection have these three observances with the ascetic fast of Lent? Let us consider briefly the pattern which links into a single whole the different commemorations during the ten weeks of the Triodion. We shall not enter into details, but shall simply seek to indicate the place for each observance in the general structure of Lent.

The Pre-Lenten Period

The Sunday of Zacchaeus

One week before the Triodion enters into use, there is a Sunday Gospel reading which looks forward directly to the coming fast – Luke 19:1-10, describing how Zacchaeus climbed a tree beside the road where Christ was to pass [see last week's bulletin – ed.]. In this reading we note Zacchaeus' sense of eager expectation, the intensity of his desire to see our Lord, and we apply this to ourselves. If, as we prepare for Lent, there is real eagerness in our hearts, if we have an intense desire



for a clearer vision of Christ, then our hopes will be fulfilled during the fast; indeed, we shall, like Zacchaeus, receive more than we expect. But if there is within us no eager expectation and no sincere desire, we shall see and receive nothing. And so we ask ourselves: What is my state of mind and will as I prepare to embark on the Lenten journey?

The Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee

On this and the following two Sundays, the theme is repentance. Repentance is the door through which we enter Lent, the starting point of our journey to Pascha. And to repent signifies far more than self-pity or futile regret over things done in the past. The Greek term *metanoia* means 'change of mind': to repent is to be renewed, to be transformed in our inward viewpoint, to attain a fresh way of looking at our relationship to God and to others. The fault of the Pharisee is that he has no desire to change his outlook; he is complacent, self-satisfied, and so he allows no place for God to act within him. The Publican, on the other hand, truly longs for a 'change of mind': he is self-dissatisfied, 'poor in spirit', and where there is this saving self-dissatisfaction there is room for God to act. Unless we learn the secret of the Publican's inward poverty, we shall not share in the Lenten springtime. The theme of the day can be summed up in a saying of the Desert Fathers: 'Better a man who has sinned, if he knows that he has sinned and repents, than a man who has not sinned and thinks of himself as righteous.' (*from The Lenten Triodion, translated by Mother Mary and Archimandrite Kallistos Ware, St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 2002*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Second Letter to Timothy 3:10-15 EOB

My son Timothy, you have paid close attention to my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, steadfastness, persecutions, and sufferings. You know what happened to me at Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. I endured those persecutions and the Lord delivered me out of them all! Yes, all those who desire to lead godly lives in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. But wicked impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving others, being themselves deceived. As for you, remain in what you have learned which is what you firmly believe, knowing from whom you have learned them. From infancy, you have known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith, which is in Christ Jesus.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Luke 18:10-14 EOB

The Lord said this parable, "Two men went up into the temple to pray; one was a Pharisee, and the other was a Publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed by himself, like this: 'God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of men, dishonest, unrighteous, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I earn.' But the tax collector, standing far aside, would not even

lift up his eyes to heaven. Instead, he would beat his breast, saying: ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ I tell you, this man, rather than the other, went down to his house justified. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Homily on the Publican and Pharisee

By Archpriest Rodion Putyatin

"Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 18:14). To some people who were sure of themselves that they were righteous, while others were humbled, Jesus Christ spoke the following parable. Two people entered the temple to pray: one was a Pharisee and the other was a publican. The Pharisee, standing up, prayed to himself like this: "God! I thank You that I am not like other people, robbers, abusers, adulterers, or like this publican. I fast twice a week, I give a tenth of everything I get." The publican, standing far away, did not even dare to raise his eyes to heaven, but, striking his chest, he said: "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" And further Jesus Christ adds that this one went to his house justified more than that previous one, for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted (see Luke 18:10-14).

This is what it means to brag about oneself, but speak badly about others, humiliate others! Look at this Pharisee praying in the temple of God. He took nothing from anyone, offended no one, led a chaste life, fasted twice a week, gave a tenth of his estate to the temple and to the poor. Who will not say that this Pharisee is a righteous man? However, he did not go back to his house justified, but the publican did. Yes, this virtuous Pharisee lost all his virtues by boasting of himself, and said about the publican that he was a bad man.

Observe this publican praying in the temple of God. See how he stands at a distance from everyone, how he beats his chest, how he lowered his gaze; everything shows that he is a great sinner. Yet this great sinner went back to his house justified. Yes, this great sinner is justified because he condemned himself, he realized himself as a sinner, which he really was. Let us not, listeners, speak evil of others, but boast of ourselves. To brag about oneself means to humiliate oneself. And God and people will cease to love the one who takes it into his head to boast of himself. Our good deeds cease to be good when we boast of them. We lose the due reward for our labors when we tell everyone about them with complacency.

Equally, to humiliate others is to humiliate yourself. We ourselves become low before God and people when we speak low of our neighbor; we dishonor ourselves when we tarnish the honor of others. And how can we say bad things about others? How long will it take for a bad man to become better than us? Does it take long for

him to correct himself and receive justification from God? Is it long for him and the publican to say: "God, be merciful to me a sinner"? We see and hear that this person abuses, robs, lives dissolutely. But do we see, but do we hear how he beats his sinful chest, how he cries about his sins before God? We know how he sins every day, every hour he makes a lie. But do we know that at the same time that we condemn him, he, perhaps on his knees, covered in tears, stands before the merciful God and prays from the depths of his soul: "God, be merciful to me a sinner"? Maybe at the very moment when we say that this person has done this, that and the other, at that very minute God says to him: "I forgive you this, and that and the other thing, and I forgive you everything."
Therefore, listeners, perhaps we condemn our neighbor at the very time when God justifies him in His righteous judgment. Let us remember that even the lowest sinners are not far from deep humility, for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted, when God justifies him in His righteous judgment. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Do you not know that the Spirit made Simeon a prophet and declared to him an oracle, "not to see death before seeing the Christ"? "Now you are releasing your servant, master, according to your word in peace." Was it not, being provided by him, that he blessed Joseph and Mary? Was it not, being commanded by him, that he spoke to Mary: "Behold, this one is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel"? Was it not through him that Anna was possessed as a prophetess? Was it not, being filled by him, that she announced the coming redemption through the infant?

It was necessary to weave for you the explanation of these things in detail, but perhaps the time has been spent and it was fitting to shorten the discourse out of consideration for your obedience. But if the word is not unbearable to you, since you are insatiable fellow banqueters at the table of the sacred oracles, from where the writer of the gospels began the story for you, from there it was fitting for us also, as far as possible, to shorten the interpretation, so that it may be both timely and suitable to your desire.

"And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon." The Spirit wove no small encomium for this Simeon in the opening words; "For behold," he says, "there was a man in Jerusalem," whom the prophets had long sought and the law had desired, but grace found and having found, crowned with what followed. From where is the crown woven? Pay attention: "And this man was just and devout, awaiting the consolation for Israel." It was fitting to emulate and bless Simeon because he was not only just but also devout, he abstained from all evil;

and as “awaiting the consolation for Israel,” he neither grew numb laboring at virtues, nor grew weary abstaining from evil.

“And the Holy Spirit was upon him.” This too is wonderful and fitting to what was said before; for he was a temple, he had the bridal chamber of the flesh pure, and the bridal chamber of the soul was cleansed of every worldly spiderweb; from there he drew to himself the dwelling of the Spirit. “And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.” Do you see how great a thing it is to be a temple of God; those who have practiced life in this way pass from life to life. Whence also to Simeon “it had been revealed not to see death before seeing the Lord's Christ,” that is, before he should see the one who abolishes death, before he should see the one who raises the dead, before he should see the one who changes tombs into a bridal chamber, before he should behold him who makes his departure from here without fear.

“And he came in the Spirit into the temple.” Nor is this worthy to pass over or to run by; for it is a proof that he acted according to the command of the indwelling Spirit and he undertook neither business in the marketplaces nor any actions at all without him; wherefore into the temple, not otherwise, but indeed he comes with him leading by the hand. “And when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him according to the custom of the law, he too took him into his arms.” Who revealed to him the infant whom he did not know? But indeed it is clear that it was the Spirit dwelling in him and giving oracles and who surely said to Simeon: “Run, old man, run, hasten now, quickly seize the blessing, before the star appears, before the Magi arrive, lest we be insulted. For the light from me will precede the arrival of the star in Bethlehem, so that it may be known that its course is guided by me and it borrows its ray from me. But you should not be harmed if the uncircumcised reap the firstfruits of the blessing.”

“And he blessed God and said: Now you are releasing your servant, Master, according to your word, in peace.” He blessed God the Father with the Son, the Son with the Spirit, since it was the Spirit who was revealing, and he held the Son in his hands, who was pleased to appear in the flesh and to become an infant for our sake; and the Father himself was also at work in such great and mighty mysteries. But for what did he offer the thanksgiving? “Now,” he says, “you are releasing your servant, Master,” when I have no fear of death, but with joy I depart to the dead, proclaiming life to them. “You are releasing according to your word in peace,” that which David the prophet, borrowing from you, said: “In peace I will both lie down and sleep.”

“Because my eyes have seen your salvation,” which many of the prophets desired to see; but now by actual experience you have presented to the human race the most high, humbled for our sake so much as to become an infant; for the potter

could not otherwise save the corrupted clay, but he himself was about to be mixed together with it. "My eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in the presence of all peoples," but of all, since being the creator of all you necessarily set before all the mystery of salvation. "A light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel"; first the Gentiles are enlightened and after this Israel is glorified; for this one was born for whom the last are first, and the first are last, the prerogatives of those before having been lost through negligence.

"And his father and mother were marveling at the things spoken about him." For what reason do you call Joseph a father, O evangelist and writer of the divine genealogy? For you yourself showed what Gabriel said to the virgin, when it was contrived how the conception would be and in what manner the virgin would give birth: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you." - "I have not forgotten my own words," he says; "for even if I were to forget, the Spirit would remember. But the incarnate one willed for Joseph to be so called at that time, so that the one who lies in wait for the mystery of our salvation might be deceived." "And they were marveling at the things being said about him," since the old man was holding an infant, but was uttering hymns to God. "And Simeon blessed them"; for it was necessary for those to be blessed who had ministered the blessing to those laboring under a curse.

"And he said to Mary his mother: Behold, this one is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel"; for this is he about whom Peter, taking up the prophecy of Isaiah, wrote to the churches: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a cornerstone, chosen, precious, and he who believes in him" will not be put to shame. Then he adds, interpreting the prophecy and speaking in agreement with Simeon: "To you therefore who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, the stone that the builders rejected, this has become the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense; they stumble who disobey the word." Therefore, he was set for a fall to the unbelievers and for a resurrection to the believers; for those, thinking they stood according to the law, cast themselves down by unbelief; but these, being among the fallen on account of the multitude of their sins, running to the staff of faith, raised themselves up.

"Behold, this one is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel and for a sign that is spoken against." What is this? - The cross; for that sign, because after the passions he also performed miracles, was spoken of; for he was naked and hid the sun, he was pierced with nails and shook the rocks, his side was opened with a spear and he opened the tombs of the dead. Hence the sign was a sign that was spoken against; for the unbelievers, leaving these things, looked at those; but the faithful with the sufferings beheld the wonders. Thus the people of the Pharisees mocked

him then as a deceiver, but the centurion called him "son of God," and having said so, worshiped him.

The following is in agreement with these things; "And a sword shall pierce through your own soul also, that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed." "A sword your soul," the discernment, will pass through at the time of the cross; for you will marvel seeing hanging on a cross the one born without corruption, the one conceived without a man, the one who did not open the womb and accomplished his own birth impassibly and incorruptibly.

And what will happen from this? "That thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed"; perhaps of others, but much more of those who were disciples of the Lord, and who had seen the sufferings concerning him and the wonders from him, and who had endured a storm of thoughts from both sides, as Cleopas suffered from what Christ revealed to him when he met him on the way to Emmaus; for when Cleopas was asked why they were sad and their hearts troubled, having spoken a little about Christ and as much as the time allowed, not knowing to whom he was speaking, he adds: "But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel," that is, our hope was extinguished in him. The thought of Mary Magdalene was also revealed to be weak; when Christ was crucified, she became weak, when she also said to him: "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away."

Let the tongue of the gospel history run through the remaining things; "And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher; she was advanced in many days, having lived with her husband seven years from her virginity, and she was a widow of about eighty-four years." Splendid is the wealth of Anna, from every side the treasure of good things is gathered for her, first that she was a prophetess; for having a weak vessel as a woman's she purified it, and drew the Spirit of God to her as a dwelling; then that she was an old woman and though aged in body, her mind did not grow old; third that she was a widow and not simply a widow, but having lived with her husband for seven years in number, and being advanced in many days and for so long a time bearing the yoke of widowhood, she did not give over her bed to a second bridegroom, for which reason, therefore, she reached the age of eighty years of her life.

But since she surely saw him who was clearly announced by the Spirit in the eighty-fourth psalm, she sought to say such things about him as David the psalmist, putting them forth, sang in melody: "Lord, you have favored your land; you have turned back the captivity of Jacob. You have forgiven the iniquities of your people; you have covered all their sins. You have withdrawn all your wrath; you have turned from your fierce anger. Truth has sprung up from the earth, and

righteousness has looked down from heaven"; for in these things is "the redemption of Jerusalem," which the woman is next so recorded both to have proclaimed and to have prophesied; for it says: "who did not depart from the temple." Many indeed dwell in the temple, but in dwelling they dishonor it, all those who do not dwell in the same way as Anna happened to be dwelling, "worshiping with fastings and prayers night and day"; for with fastings she purified her body, and with prayers she gave wings to the thought of her soul and happened to be dwelling as a temple within the temple.

"And coming up at that very hour"; for the Spirit certainly brought her, just like Simeon, to the glorification of the infant. "She gave thanks to God"; she was not simply glorifying but giving thanks, proclaiming things very similar to those spoken by Simeon. "And she spoke of him to all who were waiting for the redemption in Jerusalem." What and what sort of things was she saying? "Do not be deceived by the flesh, do not stumble at the form of a servant, let not the infant trouble you." The one who forms infants appearing also as a child, the father of the ages seen as a baby; for otherwise we could not bear to see the redeemer, in another way we were not able to receive him. For our sake he humbled himself, for us he came down; out of compassion for our eyes, he hides the glorious things, he puts forth the humble things. To him be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

– Hesychius, Archbishop of Jerusalem, *Homily on the Hypapante*

Homilies on the Commonwealth of the Church – The Deacon

by Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos

The Deacon is the first rank of the Priesthood, that is, it is the introductory rank, which means first one becomes a Deacon, then one becomes a Presbyter and then a few of the Presbyters are elected Bishops.

In the ancient Church, as described in the Acts of the Apostles, the rank of Deacon was introduced. It is written in the sixth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles that, because the number of the first disciples increased, complaints began to appear from the Greek-speakers that their widows were overlooked by the Hebrew-speakers during the distribution of daily food. Then the Apostles considered that it was not good to leave the preaching of the word of God and to engage in the ministry of tables. Thus, they urged the Christians to find seven men who are full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom they will appoint to do this work.

When the Christians heard this word, they chose seven men, among whom was included Stephen who was "full of faith and the Holy Spirit", whom they brought before the Apostles, who in turn, after praying, placed their hands on their heads (Acts 6:1-6) and ordained them.

We see in this event the first ordination of Deacons. It is observed that the Christians, at the prompting of the Apostles, chose the men, while the Apostles ordained them, placing their hands on their heads, so there is a clear distinction of roles between the Apostles and the Christians. The Apostles do not choose for the Christians to ordain, nor do the Apostles ordain without the choice of the Christians after the exhortation of the Apostles.

Then, the essential qualifications to become a Deacon are also recorded, that is to say, he must be "full of the Holy Spirit". If we analyze what this phrase means, one can understand how one is introduced to the Priesthood. For someone to have the Holy Spirit and to be "full of the Holy Spirit" means that he must have a sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit, which is expressed with great love for God, with noetic prayer of the heart and with theoptia (the vision of God).

We see this in the Protodeacon Stephen, who, when he was in front of the Sanhedrin, saw the glory of God, that is, the Light of God, and Christ standing at the right hand of the Father and his face was shining like the face of an angel (Acts 7:55-56 and Acts 6:15).

Also, the selection of Deacons was not an act of selection and appointment, but of ordination, which is a Mystery. This is the meaning of the phrase "they stood before the apostles, and when they prayed, they laid hands on them" (Acts 6:6).

Of course, it must be specified that the purpose of the Deacons' ordination was to serve in the daily distribution of the necessary food, in the "ministry of the tables", which means that all the works done in the Church are sacred and blessed. And the work of ministering to the material needs of Christians requires people who have the Holy Spirit and many other spiritual conditions, as we see in the Epistles of the Apostle Paul (see 1 Tim. 3:8-10).

Thus, Deacons minister to Christians, but they also minister to Bishops and Presbyters. Of course, other duties were added, such as ministering at the Holy Altar and assisting the Bishops and Presbyters in the Divine Liturgy and the Mysteries of the Church.

In the ancient tradition of the Church, it is clearly seen that the Deacons had a ministerial work, as written in the "Apostolic Constitutions". According to them, the Deacon does not bless, he does not give blessings, but he receives blessings from the Bishop and the Presbyters, he neither baptizes nor offers the Divine Liturgy, but he gives the divine Communion to the people. The Deacon has no blessing to offer a sacrifice or to baptize or to give a small or great blessing. Thus, the characteristic feature of the Deacon is to serve and help the Bishop in the liturgical field and in the field of philanthropy.

The Deacon, as described in the "Apostolic Constitutions", is the "ears and eyes and mouth, the heart and soul" of the Bishop. He is characterized as the eyes of the Bishop, because he watches over the observance of order and faith. He is characterized as the ears of the Bishop, because he conveys to the Bishop the requests and complaints of the faithful. He is the mouth of the Bishop, because he preaches on his behalf and conveys his decisions to the people. And he is the soul and heart of the Bishop, because through him the needs of the poor are felt and through him the Bishop responds to them.

Today we see the Deacon doing his work during the Divine Liturgy, during which he reports the requests of the faithful to God, as he also proclaims the sacred Gospel, as a minister of God, but also transmits the divine Communion to the Christians who have prepared suitably to receive communion of the Body and Blood of Christ.

It is a great honor to be a Deacon of the Bishop and the Presbyters, but also to minister to faithful Christians. The Deacon is in the middle between the people and the Bishop and the Presbyters. He does not complete the Mysteries, but participates and ministers in the Mysteries, especially in the Mystery of the Eucharist, like the Angels. After all, this is also what his orarion shows.

Because the Deacon ministers to the people, that is why Saint Ignatius the God-bearer writes that he is "in the type of Christ", because Christ ministers to the salvation of people, while the Bishop is "in the type of the Father".

In our days, the lack of many Presbyters to stand before the Holy Altars of the Parishes has contributed to the lack of Deacons. All Clergy first become Deacons, but in a short period of time they rise to the rank of Presbyters, so the rank of Deacon is usually considered as a rank and time of preparation for someone to become a Presbyter.

This contributed to the disappearance of the rank of Subdeacon, which belongs to the lower clergy and was created to replace the Deacon in some liturgical acts, not all, but also to help the Deacon in his work, such as guarding the doors after the catechumens left. That's why the ordination of the Subdeacon takes place outside the Holy Altar, where he gives the High Priest water to wash his hands, and that's why he says: "Those who are faithful". That is, after the catechumens and the sinners left the Holy Temple, the faithful remained in the Temple and this is officially announced to the Bishop, with "Those who are faithful", and he offers him the water to wash his hands and begin the Divine Liturgy.

It is a great work to serve God and Christians. (*Translated by John Sanidopoulos*)

The True Nature of Fasting

[This material is taken from the introduction to The Lenten Triodion published by St. Tikhon's Seminary Press – ed.]

‘We waited, and at last our expectations were fulfilled’, writes the Serbian Bishop Nikolai of Ochrid, describing the Easter service at Jerusalem. ‘When the Patriarch sang “Christ is risen”, a heavy burden fell from our souls. We felt as if we also had been raised from the dead. All at once, from all around, the same cry resounded like the noise of many waters. “Christ is risen” sang the Greeks, the Russians, the Arabs, the Serbs, the Copts, the Armenians, the Ethiopians – one after another, each in his own tongue, in his own melody. . . . Coming out from the service at dawn, we began to regard everything in the light of the glory of Christ’s Resurrection, and all appeared different from what it had yesterday; everything seemed better, more expressive, more glorious. Only in the light of the Resurrection does life receive meaning.’

This sense of resurrection joy, so vividly described by Bishop Nikolai, forms the foundation of all the worship of the Orthodox Church; it is the one and only basis for our Christian life and hope. Yet, in order for us to experience the full power of the Paschal rejoicing, each of us needs to pass through a time of preparation. ‘We waited,’ says Bishop Nikolai, ‘and at last our expectations were fulfilled.’ Without this waiting, without this expectant preparation, the deeper meaning of the Easter celebration will be lost.

So it is that before the festival of Easter there has developed a long preparatory season of repentance and fasting, extending in present Orthodox usage over ten weeks. First come twenty-two days (four successive Sundays) of preliminary observance; then the six weeks or forty days of the Great Fast of Lent; and finally Holy Week. Balancing the seven weeks of Lent and Holy Week, there follows after Easter a corresponding season of fifty days of thanksgiving, concluding with Pentecost.

Just as the children of Israel ate the ‘bread of affliction’ (Deut 16:3) in preparation for the Passover, so Christians prepare themselves for the celebration of the New Passover by observing a fast. But what is meant by this word ‘fast’? Here the utmost care is needed, so as to preserve a proper balance between the outward and the inward. On the outward level fasting involves physical abstinence from food and drink, and without such exterior abstinence a full and true fast cannot be kept; yet the rules about eating and drinking must never be treated as an end in themselves, for ascetic fasting has always an inward and unseen purpose. Man is a unity of body and soul, ‘a living creature fashioned from natures visible and invisible,’ in the words of the Triodion (from Vespers for Saturday of the

Dead); and our ascetic fasting should therefore involve both these natures at once. The tendency to over-emphasize external rules about food in a legalistic way, and the opposite tendency to scorn these rules as outdated and unnecessary, are both alike to be deplored as a betrayal of true Orthodoxy. In both cases the proper balance between the outward and the inward has been impaired.

The primary aim of fasting is to make us *conscious of our dependence on God*. If practiced seriously, the Lenten abstinence from food – particularly in the opening days – involves a considerable measure of real hunger, and also a feeling of tiredness and physical exhaustion. The purpose of this is to lead us in turn to a sense of inward broken-ness and contrition; to bring us, that is, to the point where we appreciate the full force of Christ's statement, 'Without Me you can do nothing' (John 15:5). If we always take our fill of food and drink, we easily grow over-confident in our own abilities, acquiring a false sense of autonomy and self-sufficiency. The observance of a physical fast undermines this sinful complacency. Stripping from us the specious assurance of the Pharisee – who fasted, it is true, but not in the right spirit – Lenten abstinence gives us the saving self-dissatisfaction of the Publican (Luke 18:10-13). Such is the function of the hunger and the tiredness: to make us 'poor in spirit,' aware of our helplessness and of our dependence on God's aid.

Yet it would be misleading to speak only of this element of weariness and hunger. Abstinence leads, not merely to this, but also to a sense of lightness, wakefulness, freedom and joy. Even if the fast proves debilitating at first, afterwards we find that it enables us to sleep less, to think more clearly, and to work more decisively. As many doctors acknowledge, periodic fasts contribute to bodily hygiene. While involving genuine self-denial, fasting does not seek to do violence to our body but rather to restore it to health and equilibrium. Most of us in the Western world habitually eat more than we need. Fasting liberates our body from the burden of excessive weight and makes it a willing partner in the task of prayer, alert and responsive to the voice of the Spirit.

Venerable Brigid of Ireland

Saint Brigid (Brigit, Bridget), "the Mary of the Gael," was born around 450 in Faughart (Fochart, Fothairt) , about two miles from Dundalk in County Louth in Ulster. According to tradition, her father was a pagan named Dubthach, and her mother was Brocessa (Broiseach), one of his slaves. Whether she was raised a Christian or converted in 468, as some accounts say, is unknown, but she was inspired by the preaching of Saint Patrick from an early age.

Even as a child, she was known for her compassion for the poor. She would give away food, clothing, and even her father's possessions to the poor. One day he took

Brigid to the king's court, leaving her outside to wait for him. He asked the king to buy his daughter from him, since her excessive generosity made her too expensive for him to keep. The king asked to see the girl, so Dubthach led him outside. They were just in time to see her give away her father's sword to a beggar. This sword had been presented to Dubthach by the king, who said, "I cannot buy a girl who holds us so cheap."

St Brigid received monastic tonsure at the hands of St Mael of Ardagh (February 6). Some miles from Dublin she was granted by the King of Leinster possession of a plain called the Curragh, where she built herself a cell under a large oak tree, thence called Kill-dara, or Cell of the oak. Seven other girls soon placed themselves under her direction establishing the monastery of Kill-dara, which gave its name to the later cathedral city of Kildare. The community grew rapidly thanks to the renown of the holy Abbess, and became a double monastery, with the Abbess ranking above the Abbot, and branched out into several others all over Ireland. This was the beginning of women's cenobitic monasticism in Ireland.

The miracles performed by St Brigid are too numerous to relate here, but perhaps one story will suffice. One evening the holy abbess was sitting with the blind nun Dara. From sunset to sunrise they spoke of the joys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and of the love of Christ, losing all track of time. St Brigid was struck by the beauty of the earth and sky in the morning light. Realizing that Sister Dara was unable to appreciate this beauty, she became very sad. Then she prayed and made the Sign of the Cross over Dara's eyes. All at once, the blind nun's eyes were opened and she saw the sun in the east, and the trees and flowers sparkling with dew. She looked for a while, then turned to St Brigid and said, "Close my eyes again, dear Mother, for when the world is visible to the eyes, then God is seen less clearly by the soul." St Brigid prayed again, and Dara became blind once more.

St Brigid fell asleep in the Lord in the year 523 on February 1 after receiving Holy Communion from St Ninnidh of Inismacsaint (January 18). She was buried at Kildare, but her relics were transferred to Downpatrick during the Viking invasions. It is believed that she was buried in the same grave with St Patrick (March 17) and St Columba of Iona (June 9).

Late in the thirteenth century, her head was brought to Portugal by three Irish knights on their way to fight in the Holy Land. They left this holy relic in the parish church of Lumiar, about three miles from Lisbon. Portions of the relic were brought back to Ireland in 1929 and placed in a new church of St Brigid in Dublin.

The relics of St Brigid in Ireland were destroyed in the sixteenth century by Lord Grey during the reign of Henry VIII. The tradition of making St Brigid's crosses from rushes and hanging them in the home is still followed in Ireland, where

devotion to her is still strong. She is also venerated in northern Italy, France, and Wales.

The *Book of Armaugh*, an ancient Irish chronicle, calls Saint Patrick and Saint Brigid "the pillars of the Irish" and says that through them both, "Christ performed many miracles." (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Newly-Revealed Martyrs of Megara

The year and manner of martyrdom of the Holy Martyrs Adrianos, Polyeuktos, Platon, and George are unknown. But we do know the wondrous manner in which the relics of these holy martyrs were found by the grace of God in Megara.

In the year 1754, a cleric named Oikonomos (which could have something to do with being "Oikonomos" of the Patriarch of Jerusalem) wanted to build a house. When the workers of the community were digging and constructing the foundations, one of them claimed that he felt an intense heat at his feet, and indicated that he couldn't keep working. The Oikonomos put his hands in the spot, and paradoxically felt the same heat as the worker. The rest of the workers, however, kept digging until they hit a marble slab with the following inscription on it: "Λείψανα Μαρτύρων. Αδριανός, Πολύευκτος, Πλάτων, Γεώργιος" [The relics of the Martyrs Adrianos, Polyeuktos, Platon, George]. Lifting up the plaque, he found the all-holy relics of the Holy Four Martyrs, and he glorified God for the heavenly blessing and consolation which he granted to them. In the place where the relics were found, further excavations revealed a large Early Christian Basilica which dates from the mid-5th to the 6th century AD, and which was built in honor of the Four Holy Martyrs. This filled the residents of Megara with joy, but also brought temptation, as someone during the night stole the majority of the relics and fled for Peloponessos. However, a few smaller pieces of the relics remained, and the Oikonomos took the marble plaque to Constantinople to show the Patriarch and tell him about these occurrences. Further excavations in 1998 uncovered more of their holy relics, which were placed in a beautiful reliquary and are honored joyously by the faithful. Their feast is celebrated on February 1st.

For information on six other newly-revealed Holy Martyrs in Megara honored together with the above four as the Holy Ten Holy Martyrs of Megara, see [here](#). (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Also Commemorated Today

[*Follow the links below for more information. - Ed.*]

Martyr [Tryphon](#) (Trypho) of Campsada near Apamea in Syria (250).

New Hieromartyr Archpriest Peter Skipetrov, of Petrograd (1918).

New Hieromartyr [Nicholas](#) priest (1938).

Martyrs [Perpetua](#), a [woman](#) of Carthage, and the catechumens Saturus, Revocatus, Saturninus, Secundulus, and [Felicitas](#) (202-203).
 Venerable [Peter](#) of Galatia, hermit near Antioch in Syria, w/w (429).
 Venerable [Vendemianus](#) (Bendemianus), hermit of Bithynia, w/w (512).
 Venerable [Tryphon](#), bishop of Rostov (1468).
 St. Tryphon of Pechenga or Kola (1583).
 St. Seiriol, abbot of Penmon (Anglesey) (6th c.) (Celtic & British) .
 St. [Basil](#), archbishop of Thessalonica (895) (Greek).
 Venerable [Timothy](#) the Confessor (Greek).
 New Martyr [Anastasius](#) at Nauplion (1655) (Greek).
 Martyrs Theion with 2 children at Kariona (Greek).
 Martyr [Elias](#) the New of Damascus (779).
 Sts. [David](#) (784), Symeon (843), and [George](#) (844), confessors of Mitylene.
 St. Cinnia of Ulster, Virgin (5th c.)
 St. Darlaugdach of Kildare, Abbess & Virgin (Dardulacha, Derlugdach) (after 525)
 St. Crewenna the Confessor of Ireland, virgin disciple of St. Brigid (5th c.)
 St. Jarlath of Armagh, Bishop (Hierlath) (c. 480)
 St. Kinnia of County Louth, Ireland, Virgin (6th c.)
 St. Brigid of Fiesole, Tuscany, anchoress (9th c.)
 Ven. Clarus, hermit in Seligenstadt (c. 1048) (Germany)
 St. Paul of Trois-Châteaux, bishop (c. 405) (Gaul)
 St. Severus of Ravenna, bishop (c. 348) (Italy)
 St. Severus, Abbot and Bishop of Avranches (c. 690) (Gaul)
 St. Ursus of Aosta, preacher against Arianism (6th c.) (Italy)
 St. Euny of Cornwall, brother of St. Ia
 St. Galle (Gall), virgin (6th c.) (Brittany)
 St. Sigebert, King of Austrasia (c. 575) (France)
 St. Ffraid of Wales (woman)
 St. Eubert of Tournai, bishop(?) of Tournai, patron of Lille (Belgium) (3rd c.)
 St. Précord of Soissons, hermit (Belgium) (6th c.)
 The Holy Revealed Saints Gregory, Theodore, and Leon of Kefalonia, soldier-ascetics (4th c.) (transl. 2009)
 St. George of Mytilene, the Confessor (+846) (also May 16)

Pray for our priests and seminarians!

Prayer is powerful, and we need more priests in our Diocese. Metropolitan Gregory is asking that each one of us pray daily that we have more vocations to the priesthood. He also wants us to pray by name for our clergy and seminarians--they aren't sick! The clergy that we are to pray for are: Fr. Kevin Greenwood, Fr.

Andrew Gromm, and Deacon Donald Koch. The seminarians are: Deacon Maximus Cannaverde, Bradley Shaffer, Nicholas Cizin, John Bonnewicz-Coffey, John Fedornock III, Clay Raburn, Spyridon Raburn and Ignatios Leonardo (please also pray for Joshua Horner, who is taking a break from seminary to work full-time). We started this four years ago, and we already see its fruit – Fr. Seamus was on this list the last time I ran it!

Prayer for vocations

Master of all, You promised us, “I will be with you always, even until the very end of the world,” and You have taught, “I will build My Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Mindful of this pledge, we beseech Your great goodness to inspire men to the Holy Priesthood, the service of Your Holy Orthodox Church, so that she may properly be able to fulfill Your will for Your people in this age. There are children to baptize, the sick to heal, and the dying to care for. There is the Bread of Life to distribute, and the Word of God to teach. There are sins to forgive, and charity to be done in Your Name. Send Your Church in this hour and in every age “vessels of clay” to be instruments of Your presence. Hear us, O Lord, and have mercy.

Prayer for the priesthood

O Lord Jesus Christ, Good Shepherd of Your sheep, light the fire of ardent love in the hearts of all Your priests, that they may ever and in all things seek only Your glory. Remember especially, Lord, our Metropolitan Gregory, and our spiritual father Seamus, who are laboring in Your vineyard for the salvation of all those whom You have entrusted to them. Remember also, O Lord, our priests Fr. Kevin Greenwood, Fr. Andrew Gromm, and Deacon Donald Koch, and seminarians Deacon Maximus Cannaverde, Bradley Shaffer, Nicholas Cizin, John Bonnewicz-Coffey, John Fedornock III, Clay Raburn, Spyridon Raburn, Ignatios Leonardo and Joshua Horner. Make their lives as holy as the word they preach. Keep them from being discouraged. Hear their prayers for our salvation. Give them wisdom and courage to proclaim Your truth. Make them priests after Your own heart. For You are a merciful God who loves us, and to You we give glory, together with Your eternal Father and Your all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

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In Your Prayers – Please Remember... His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Eminence Metropolitan GREGORY, Fr. Seamus & Family, Fr. Joseph & Family, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Eldoret and Northern Kenya, Patty Blaydoe, Bennett family, Tatyana & Slava Chumak & family, Luke & Marlena Cooper, Roberta Corson, Tina Crull, Marlene Doukas, Alaina Espinal, Angelo Espinal, Linda A. Georgiev, Sandi Hebel, Howl family, John M. Janowiak, Johnson family, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Helen, Brian, Luke and Mia Mahony, Valentina Makowelski, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & family, Nicholas Pavlik, Weston Perry & family, John Reece, Mary Reed, Marge Rusnak, Rose Song, Dennis Thomidis, Fr. Nectarios & Ia, Mother Virginia Marie & the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, the suffering people of Ukraine & the Middle East, the newly reposed handmaiden of God Janette Gaydovchik and servant of God Robert Murray, and those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Seamus of changes.)