



Holy Ghost Orthodox Church

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GREAT LENT—SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY

ON THE MEND: Please keep the following parishioners and others in your prayers for recovery from their illnesses and injuries: Metropolitan Theodosius [OCA], Archbishop Jovan, Bishop Robert, Father George & Pani Lillian Hnatko, Father John Harvey, Father Jakiw Norton, Father Dragan Filipović, Father Paul Stoll, Father Igor Soroka, Father Joseph Kopchak, Father Elias Warnke, Father Nestor Kowal, Father George Yatsko, Father Paul Bigelow, Father Emilian Balan, Father John Nakonachny, Father Steve Repa, Protopresbyter William Diakiw, Archpriest Dionysi Vitali, Protodeacon Joseph Hotrovich, Father Adam Yonitch, Pani-Dobrodijka Sonia Diakiw, Father Paisius McGrath, Father Michael Smolynech, Joshua Agosto and his family, Eva Malesnick, Stella Peanoske, Nick Behun, Grace Holupka, Virginia Bryan, Joseph Sliwinsky, Gary & Linda Mechtly, Mary Mochnick, Evelyn Misko, Jeanne Boehing, Alex Drobot, Rachelle, Jane Golofski, Doug Diller, Harry Krewsun, Mary Alice Babcock, Dorie Kunkle, Andrea, & Melissa [Betty O'Masta's relatives], Mary Evelyn King, Sam Wadrose, Isabella Olivia Lindgren, Ethel Thomas, Donna, Erin, Michael Miller, Grace & Owen Ostrasky, Patti Sinecki, David Genshi, Sue Segeleon, Mike Gallagher, Liz Stumpf, Theodore Nixon, Michelle Corba Kapeluck, Linda Hippert & family, Margaret Vladimir, Luke Emmerling, John Sheliga, George Rocknage, Robert McKivitz, Liz Obradovich, Halyna Zelinska [Bishop Daniel's mother], Charlotte, Andrew Mark Olynyk, Deborah Finley, Claire Senita, Eleanor Kelly, Bryan, Nancy Barylak, Patrick Keenan, Khrystyna Chorniy, Anthony Cormier, Nathan Forbeck, Sarah Doyle, Samuel Peters, Jean Stutchell, Esther Holupka, David Vallor, Henry Faraly, Betty O'Masta, Julie Eiler, Dorothy Lednovich, Bob C., Allie—young girl with leukemia, Heather Kramer, Jane Wartinbee, Matthew—21-year-old with cancer, Nicholas Orlando, Mary Ann Kuznik, Michael Woloschak, Michael Pryhodzenko, Sonia Luciw, Theresa Ditto, Mary Ann Musial, Mary Pelino, Yvonne Christy, Myron & Barbara Spak, Julia Duda, Lisa Pandle, Kris & Julie Hanczar, John Kennedy, Loretta, Nancy, Carol, & Michael Sheliga, Gaelle Kelly, Irma

McDivitt, Robin Young, Mckayla, Rachel, Carl & Margaret Reed, Lydia Wilson, Robert Pointon, Walter Cecelia, John Persico, Jeff Miller, Mary Kernick, Glenn Miller, Jean Marie, Donna & Walter McCrackin, Bonnie & Eugene Blair [Pani Gina's parents], Mel & Charlotte Malik, David Hoenshell, Barbara Macino, Shelley Hill, Mikaela Kapeluck, Linda Cawley, Gerald Cogley, Helen Bozo, Corey Guich, Robert Vangrin, Pauline Witkowsky, Sera White, Donald Griffey, Deborah Smith, Nancy & Eric Dunik, Julian Stroz [child with cerebral palsy], Dr. Kirsten Ream, Patricia Corey, Michelle, Katie Swarm, Richard Dunst, Michelle, Patrick, Linda Morris, Howard Simpson, Chris, David Hiles, Karen Johnson, Jennifer, Jerry Quinn, Cher Mount, Frank & Janet Horrell, Jim Wandling, Gail, Sirena Sharp, Ron Paulovich, Fred DeNorscia, Sandi Anderson, Sabrina, Shirley, Denny Mader, Ella Campbell, Tom Hyatt, Bill Janiro, Jean Symanko-Andy's sister, William Lemonakis, Barbara McDougall, Alma Wyke, Lindsay Romanczak & family, Virginia Catherine Pynch, Susan Lucas, Neil Carter & family, James Paluh, Mickie Weikel, Evelyn Krempasky, Tammy Strunk, Loida Esbry, Darlene Chicka Deskins, Drew, Alice & Keith Philipa, Kateryna Kocelko, Nancy Heinbaugh, Mira Filipović, Lynn, Jacqueline, Sharon, Zan Cheng, Jeff Jones, Kristy, Elaine Ellenberger, Brandon, Anna Tranchine, Demetra, Blase Urban, Catherine Hogel & children, Jennifer & Dylan, Ron Schwartz, Lydia Wilson, Flora Tomlin, Stella Rossi, Howell Swarm, Jane Bielewicz Allred, Manny "Lazarus" Lopez, Glenn & Lucas Burlack, Katie Elizabeth, Mileva, & Michael, Deirdré Straughan, Terri Paluh, Lori & Steve Lucier, Kyranna Cherpas, Pastor Bruce Nordeen, Millie Koss Good, Heather Ried, Carla Perry, Linda Elliot, Dennis McDaniel, Mike Mangan, Luke Tinsley, Brent, Tricia, Katherine Gorman, Pamela Jaquette, Michael Pawlyshyn, Sherri Walewski, Marika Zeliszczyk, Donna Davis, Jackie Crimbchin, Marta Charron, Mary [Corba], Stella McKeag, Margie Sekelsky, Gary Howell, Fran Fulton, Gina Catanese, Bill Vizza, Jamie Swarm, Kevin Allen (from Ancient Faith Radio), Kathy Flaherty, Tori Reade-Henry's niece, Derick-Glen Burlack's neighbor, Michael, Nichole & Christopher, Cheryl Pomeroy, Ben Douglas, Dianne Donahue, Zachary, Natasha, Noah Willard, Jodi Hanczar, and Ian Brick. ARNOLD: Homer Paul Kline. We pray that God will grant them all a speedy recovery.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY to our March babies: Sonia Luciw on the 3rd; Walter Anthony Burlack on the 7th, Mary Shirley on the 9th, our dear Mother Alexandra on the 11th, and Judy Previc on the 12th. May God grant them Many Happy, Healthy, Prosperous, and Blessed Years! M'nohaya Lita! God Bless them all!

In conjunction with Slickville's Centennial Celebration next year, the Centennial Committee is selling tear-off raffle tickets to help finance the celebration and fireworks. Bill Kuznik is the keeper of the tickets which cost \$2 and are sold every week. Please see Bill if you are interested or with any questions. We have a list of winning numbers in the bulletin insert! Fr. Bob

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS: All Christians and the others in the Middle East who are suffering during this time of great tragedy and unrest. May God watch over and keep them safe! Lord have mercy!

Please remember ALL American service men and women in your prayers. May God watch over them and all American service men and women—and bring them all home safely!

REMEMBER—PRAYERS ARE ALWAYS FREE!

Communion Fasting: nothing to eat or drink after midnight, EXCEPT in cases where your doctor tells you to eat or drink something for medical reasons: medication, diabetes, etc. If you have a question, please ask Father Bob.

AT ANY TIME—if there is an emergency, if you have questions, or if you just need to talk, please CALL FATHER BOB at [412] 279-5640.

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

**SUNDAY, MARCH 05 DIVINE LITURGY OF SAINT BASIL THE GREAT 10:30 AM
1ST SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT; SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY; SAINT LEO-BISHOP OF
CATANIA IN SICILY; HIEROMARTYR SADOC-BISHOP OF PERSIA & 128
MARTYRS WITH HIM; SAINT AGATHO-POPE OF ROME; VENERABLE PRINCE
YAROSLAV THE WISE; SAINT AGATHO-WONDERWORKER OF PERCHEVSKY**

LAVRA

Tone 4

Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-12:2

John 1:43-51

Litany in Blessed Memory of Mary Smith, John Metrick, Andrew Hanczar, Anna Lawrence, Michael Cicio, Chuck Shumski, Terry Reinhart, Joseph Vangrin, & Frank Riznow--Fr. Bob

TRIUMPH OF ORTHODOXY—ALL SAINTS G. O. CHURCH, CANONSBURG, PA—4:30 PM

SUNDAY, MARCH 12 DIVINE LITURGY OF SAINT BASIL THE GREAT 10:30 AM

2ND SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT; SAINT GREGORY PALAMAS-ARCHBISHOP OF THESSALONICA; SYNAXIS OF ALL VENERABLE FATHERS OF PERCHEVSKY LAVRA; SAINT PROCOPIUS THE CONFESSOR OF DECAPOLIS; SAINT THALELAETUS-HERMIT OF SYRIA; SAINT TITUS THE SOLDIER-MONK & SAINT TITUS THE PRESBYTER OF PERCHEVSKY LAVRA

Tone 5

Hebrews 1:10-2:3; Hebrews 7:25-8:2

Mark 2:1-12; John 10:9-16

**SUNDAY, MARCH 19 DIVINE LITURGY OF SAINT BASIL THE GREAT 10:30 AM
3RD SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT; ADORATION OF THE MOST HOLY CROSS; 42 MARTYRS OF AMMONIA IN PHRYGIA INCLUDING CONSTANTINE, AETIUS, CALLISTUS, BASOES, & OTHERS; MONK-MARTYRS CONON & HIS SON CONON; UNCOVERING OF THE HOLY CROSS & NAILS BY EMPRESS SUNDAY HELEN; SAINT ARCADIUS-MONK OF CYPRUS & DISCIPLES JULIAN & BULIUS**

Tone 6

Hebrews 4:14-5:6

Mark 8:34-9:1

BULLETIN INSERT FOR 05 MARCH 2017

1ST SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT; SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY; SAINT LEO-BISHOP OF CATANIA IN SICILY; HIEROMARTYR SADOC-BISHOP OF PERSIA & 128 MARTYRS WITH HIM; SAINT AGATHO-POPE OF ROME; VENERABLE PRINCE YAROSLAV THE WISE; SAINT AGATHO-WONDERWORKER OF PERCHEVSKY LAVRA

TROPARION—TONE 2

We venerate Thy most pure image, O Good One,
And ask forgiveness of our transgressions, O Christ our God.
Of Thy good will Thou wast pleased to ascend the cross in the flesh
And deliver Thy creatures from bondage to the enemy.
Therefore, with thankfulness we cry aloud to Thee:
Thou hast filled all with joy, O our Savior,
For thou didst come to save the world

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever,
and unto ages of ages. Amen.

KONTAKION—TONE 8

No one could describe the Word of the Father
But when He took flesh from you, O Theotokos,

He accepted to be described
And restored the fallen image to its former state
By uniting it to divine beauty.
We confess and proclaim our salvation in word and images

PROKEIMENON—TONE 4

READER: Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our Fathers and praised and glorified is Thy name forever!

PEOPLE: Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our Fathers and praised and glorified is Thy name forever!

READER: For Thou art just in all that Thou hast done for us!

PEOPLE: Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our Fathers and praised and glorified is Thy name forever!

READER: Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our Fathers

PEOPLE: And praised and glorified is Thy name forever!

ALLELUIA VERSES

Moses and Aaron are among His priests; Samuel also was among those who called on His name.

They cried to the Lord, and He answered them.

“As the Prophets beheld, as the Apostles have taught, as the Church has received, as the teachers have dogmatized, as the universe has agreed, as Grace has shown forth, as Truth has revealed, as falsehood has been dissolved, as Wisdom has presented, as Christ has awarded: thus we declare, thus we assert, thus we preach Christ, our true God, and honor His Saints in words, in writings, in thoughts, in sacrifices, in churches, in Holy Icons; on the one hand worshiping and reverencing Christ as God and Lord; and on the other hand honoring as true servants of the same Lord of all, and accordingly offering them veneration. This is the Faith of the Apostles; this is the Faith of the Fathers; this is the Faith of the Orthodox; this is the Faith which has established the universe!”



"Repentance is very important, but it is not the goal, the goal—humility."
Patriarch Pavle



M Alexandra Magan February 21 at 8:49am

Dear Fr Bob,

I miss you all, too! My ♥ to all at Holy Ghost Church in Slickville. Thank you for the blessing and prayers for all of us.

PS: I am glad that you accepted me despite our differences and my admiration for the [Patriots.]

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Protocol 19/17—February 27, 2017

Holy and Great Lent

Your grace has shone forth, O Lord, it has shone forth and given light to our souls. Hymn of Vespers – Sunday of Forgiveness

To the Most Reverend Hierarchs, the Reverend Priests and Deacons, the Monks and Nuns, the Presidents and Members of the Parish Councils of the Greek Orthodox Communities, the Distinguished Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Day, Afternoon, and Church Schools, the Philoptochos Sisterhoods, the Youth, the Hellenic Organizations, and the entire Greek Orthodox Family in America

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we begin this sacred journey through Holy and Great Lent, through a time of earnest prayer and sincere reflection, we are guided by the presence of our Lord and the hymns and prayers of this season to experience the power of God's grace. In preparation for this time, we have witnessed His grace in the forgiveness of the publican. We have seen the

depth of His love in the father's loving embrace of the prodigal son. We have heard the words of our Lord concerning the Last Judgement, when He will come in His glory and welcome into the kingdom His servants who have shown mercy to those in need.

In the days and weeks that will come, our worship and prayers will have a somber and reflective tone. We will be called to examine our lives, to purify ourselves through fasting, and to follow the way of the Cross. We will be asked to consider the condition of our souls and affirm our need for God and His great mercy. As we hear on the eve of Great Lent, and we will experience in this journey, our needs will be met by His abundant grace: "Your grace has shone forth, O Lord, it has shone forth and given light to our souls. Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the season of repentance. Let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light...."

Our true repentance will be blessed with God's forgiveness in grace. Our return to Him in hope will be met with His compassionate embrace. Our service in His name will lead us to our spiritual inheritance of life in His glorious presence. At the beginning of Lent, we can affirm that our path to abundant joy and celebration will be illuminated by the light of His grace.

With this light that shines in our hearts we will also offer a witness through our observance of Lent and through our lives. As we know and experience God's grace, others will see His offering of forgiveness. They will see the power of grace to transform life and bring healing and restoration. They will find salvation in Christ as the grace of God works in and through us to show all His redeeming love.

May the blessings of God's grace be with you during this holy season as we gather in His presence. As His great love embraces you, may your hope and faith be strengthened for the journey to Cross and to the light and life we have in the Risen Christ.

With paternal love in Him,

†DEMETRIOS, Archbishop of America

Here's something I hear from time to time: "I'd like to join the Orthodox Church, but I visited a local church and it just felt dead."

When I hear this it's about Orthodox churches, but that needn't be the case. It could be any church or denomination; it might sound good on paper, but the local church on Sunday morning feels empty and drained.

It's tempting to say, "That shouldn't make any difference. Focus on your own prayer life." But, actually, I know what these people mean. Sometimes, when you visit a church, something just feels "off." It makes you really eager to get out of there.

I've puzzled over what this *is*, exactly. It seems like, anywhere the same people gather regularly—a school, an office, a church—a hard-to-define quality develops, an atmosphere or a mood. Even though I know that quality or mood shouldn't affect me, it does. I can't just ignore it.

The first impulse, when that happens, is to get out of there, and look for a church that feels more alive. But there's another possibility: a "dead" church can be revived. There are things you can do to bring a church, of whatever denomination, to life.

Go back to that moment when you were looking around the congregation and feeling dismayed. It's been said that 20 per cent of the people in a church do 80 per cent of the work. When you first visit a church, most of what you see will naturally be that 80 per cent. It seems like they aren't really engaged with worship; maybe, you think, they're there for social reasons, or just out of habit.

But the 20 per cent whose faith is strong, the ones who pray and read the bible, who sincerely seek the Lord—they're there too; they're just not as visible. In every congregation, there is a hidden "starter set" of committed people. Your task is to find them, band together with them, and begin to fan the flame.

You'll find, no doubt, that the pastor is on your side. A pastor's life isn't easy, and it doesn't pay well, either. People take up the calling despite this because they sincerely want to help others deepen and strengthen their faith. If things feel "off" in church, if there's a vacant feeling, a rattling-around chill, it not because that's how the pastor likes it. So, if you want to understand this church, listen to him. He knows the people in the congregation better than anyone else does, and he knows what prayer groups or book studies have been effective in the past.

Now, where are you going to find these more-committed people? One place is mid-week services. People who take the trouble to go to church when it isn't Sunday morning probably have a motivation similar to yours.

Say you notice somebody who comes regularly to mid-week services, or arrives early on Sundays and stays late, or carries a well-worn bible (or prayer rope, in an Orthodox church)—any kind of tip-off. Take the initiative and make contact. On Sunday, look around for them during coffee hour, and go over and start a conversation. Find out if you are reading the same books, or mention something in worship that you found meaningful. Build bridges.

This next part might be shocking, so brace yourself: these people might not be the same age you are. They might not dress in ways you find attractive. They might not read as much as you do, or not read the same things. If you walk with them to their car, you might see a bumper-sticker you don't like.

Don't let these things throw you off. As you become fond of someone, the very things that were initially off-putting can transform and become endearing.

It's likely that some of these people will literally be little old ladies. That's OK. Someone who's had decades of experience with prayer might be just what you need in your life right now. Also, sometimes old ladies turn out to be interesting. I know because I am one.

If you attend a liturgical church, you can also remind yourself that, even if the church's atmosphere dismays you, you are still receiving communion. The Prophet Elijah, alone in the wilderness, was sustained by ravens who brought him bread. In the Divine Liturgy, the Holy Spirit gives you the Bread of Life; ultimately, that's all you need.

Remember also that bitter, discouraged Elijah was less alone than he thought he was. He complained that he was the only faithful person remaining in the land, and the Lord revealed that there were another 7000 who had never abandoned the faith.

Here's another practical suggestion: Pray through the church directory, a page or two every day. When you get to the end, start over. Invite your church-friends to do the same, praying for each person by name. Don't pray for God to change them; just call them to mind, remembering them, as St. Paul did ("I remember you constantly in my prayers," 2 Timothy 1:3;

"I remember you in my prayers," Philemon 1:4). Just lift them up before the Lord; The Lord knows better than you do what they need.

If you know of specific needs, for healing perhaps, of course you can include those requests. Let the pastor know that you and your friends are glad to pray for any needs he thinks it right to share.

This habit of praying through the directory has the practical benefit of teaching you the names of everyone in the church. It will help you remember who's married to whom, which kids go with which families, and so on.

In time, this habit of praying for all the congregation by name will change something inside of you. The worshippers will stop seeming like a mass of indistinguishable faces. They will be revealed instead as what they always were: unique individuals, each of whom is thoroughly known and loved by Christ. The congregation is not a block of stone but a mosaic, composed of countless faces.

That's so often the way with spiritual growth: you realize something was true all the time. Christ was *already* present, already working in these lives, long before you walked in the door. He was already loving them and calling them into a closer relationship with himself. And, fortunately, they're people who are already in the habit of coming to church. A line in a hymn, a scripture reading, a sermon illustration, may be just the spark they need.

Your role is to pray.

There probably are more prayerful and faithful people in the congregation than you've been able to see. Superficial factors, like clothing and age, may be rendering them invisible to you. In C. S. Lewis's *The Screwtape Letters*, a senior devil teaches a young devil how to corrupt his "patient." Although the young man in question has started going to church, it's not necessarily a lost cause, because of his preconceptions about what the Church should look like.

When he gets to his pew and looks round him, he sees just that selection of his neighbors whom he has hitherto avoided. You want to lean pretty heavily on those neighbors. Make his mind flit to and fro between an expression like "the body of Christ" and the actual faces in the next pew.

It matters very little, of course, what kind of people that next pew really contains. You may know one of them to be a great warrior on [God the Father's] side. No matter. Your patient, thanks to [the Devil], is a fool.

Provided that any of those neighbors sing out of tune, or have boots that squeak, or double chins, or odd clothes, the patient will quite easily believe that their religion must therefore be somehow ridiculous.

As time passes, and church members who are prayerful and intentional find each other, a kind of chemical change takes place. They find that they constitute a living community within the congregation. They sense that they are upheld by each other's prayers. When they come to worship, they do so prepared to love and serve God.

A quality of warmth and illumination accompanies them, and it begins to pervade worship. This is something others can sense—even those people you'd written off. Christ is Life, and everyone seeks life. The warmth of faith is attractive in the sense that a magnet is attractive, and it draws people forward. You are moving toward a tipping point, in which the Light of Christ becomes so perceptible that the feeling of worship on Sunday morning is transformed.

If you think a congregation is "dead," your only option is not to go somewhere else. Where Christ is, there is resurrection. By finding and befriending other church members who are spiritually strong, by following the pastor's vision, and by giving prayer support to the work God is already doing in worshippers' lives, you can help bring a congregation to life.

*****Frederica Mathewes-Green www.frederica.com



Susan Schneider February 25 at 8:08pm

Sunday before Lent

The last of the preparatory Sundays has two themes: it commemorates Adam's expulsion from Paradise, and it is also the Sunday of Forgiveness. There are obvious reasons why these two things should be brought to our attention as we stand on the threshold of the Great Fast. One of the primary images in the Triodion is that of the return to Paradise. Lent is a time when we weep with Adam and Eve before the closed gate of Eden, repenting with them for the sins that have deprived us of our free communion with God. But Lent is also a time when we are preparing to celebrate the saving event of Christ's death and rising, which has reopened Paradise to us once more (Luke 23:43). So sorrow for our exile in sin is tempered by hope of our re-entry into Paradise:

*O precious Paradise, unsurpassed in beauty,
Tabernacle built by God, unending gladness and delight,
Glory of the righteous, joy of the prophets, and dwelling of the saints,
With the sound of thy leaves pray to the Maker of all:
May He open unto me the gates which I closed by my transgression,
And may He count me worthy to partake of the Tree of Life
And of the joy which was mine when I dwelt in thee before.*

Note how the Triodion speaks here not of 'Adam' but of 'me': 'May He open unto me the gates which I closed'. Here, as throughout the Triodion, the events of sacred history are not treated as happenings in the distant past or future, but as experiences undergone by me here and now within the dimension of sacred time.

The second theme, that of forgiveness, is emphasized in the Gospel reading for this Sunday (Matthew 6:14-21) and in the special ceremony of mutual forgiveness at the end of Vespers on Sunday evening. Before we enter the Lenten fast, we are reminded that there can be no true fast, no genuine repentance, no reconciliation with God, unless we are at the same time reconciled with one another. A fast without mutual love is the fast of demons. As the commemoration of the ascetic saints on the previous Saturday has just made clear to us, we do not travel the road of Lent as isolated individuals but as members of a family. Our asceticism and fasting should not separate us from our fellow men but link us to them with ever stronger bonds. The Lenten ascetic is called to be a man for others.

(Triodion)



Why it's hard to accept forgiveness

Frederica Mathewes-Green

<http://frederica.com/writings/why-its-hard-to-accept-gods-forgiveness.html>

My daughter-in-law, Khouria Jocelyn Mathewes, has a good column today on repentance, as we head into Great Lent. She makes a point about accepting forgiveness for past sins (not the ones that continue in the

present, but completed deeds in the past.) She reminds us that we must accept forgiveness and move on, and not keep revisiting them and “beating yourself up.”

I think that, when we continue to be distraught over a forgiven sin in the past, it's linked to our pride. It's that we can't believe we would ever *do* such a thing. It doesn't fit our sense of the “kind of person” we are. So we can never quite assimilate it; we keep being startled by it, and regard it as strange and appalling. We think of it as something inexplicable that “happened,” rather than something we did.

Yet it stares back at us steadily, reminding us that we ***did*** do it. Apparently, we ***are*** the kind of person who would do that. Maybe only that one time, maybe only under extreme circumstances, only when exhausted or under terrible stress. But there it is.

People usually say that such a person “won't accept forgiveness,” but I think what we won't accept is that we did it in the first place.

Speaking very precisely, God is never disappointed in us. He's never disappointed. That's because his expectations weren't that high to begin with. We're the ones with an artificially-inflated idea of our innate goodness, and groundless certainty about the things we'd never do. But God knows what combination of temptations would be able to overthrow us. He knows us, even if we don't know ourselves.

My spiritual father, Fr George Calciu (1925-2006) was tortured in communist prison, and compelled to renounce his faith. And he did. When out of your mind with pain, you don't even know what you are saying. The torturers added outrage to outrage, and compelled the prisoners to do things they never would otherwise have done. Their aim was to create in the prisoners a horror of themselves, breaking them down psychologically, in order to rebuild them into the “ideal communist man.”

But, Fr. George said, when he was taken back to his cell at night, and could pray and weep, the mercy and forgiveness he sensed streaming from God was profoundly sweet. He had learned he was capable of doing things he thought it would be impossible for him to do. But God had known his limits, all along; God knew him better than he knew himself.

Broken down in repentance, Father George could receive mercy more deeply than he ever had. The expert brain-washers never did Fr George into

the "ideal communist man." He became instead man of faith and courage, who spent his life as a valiant witness for Christ.

Deep repentance can do that for you. But first you have to accept that you really did do the things you want God to forgive.

Being a Lenten Apprentice

Great Lent is often called a time to return to basics because we focus on central dimensions of our Christian faith: we read from Scripture to remind us of the need for a Savior; we become more focused on matters of prayer and worship; we increase our philanthropic and charitable efforts; and, of course, we follow the ascetic discipline of fasting from certain foods.

In some ways, we return to being novice Christians, doing things we were taught years ago. To borrow a concept, we become apprentices once again. According to the dictionary, an apprentice is someone who is "learning by practical experience from more skilled workers." Parish life could and perhaps should be thought of as an "apprenticeship program" in Christian life.

We learn how to be an Orthodox Christian by participating in the life of the Church with more experienced teachers. The experienced share what they have learned with new generations of participants. The wisdom of experienced people is really important. They have internalized the wisdom of the community through their practice of the Faith. This is best shared in face-to-face encounters.

Who are the "more experienced" in our parishes? First, of course, are the clergy. They have been educated in the Faith at a fairly high level and should be considered the chief teacher of the Faith in a parish (of course the bishop is the chief teacher in the Church). Second, there are the adults in the community who have years of experience living as Orthodox Christians. Don't underestimate the influence of grandparents and senior citizens. Studies have repeatedly shown that grandparents have enormous influence on the religious lives of the young. Third, there are the teachers and youth advisors. They are a specialized group because of their focus on intentional instruction, class work, discussions, and activity.

Who are the apprentices? First, the young. They are learning and need a great deal of guidance. Second, there are the new to the Faith. They may have read about Orthodox Christianity in a book, but are now trying to

apply what they've read to their lives. Finally, all of us are apprentices to one degree or another. We are continually learning. We are always disciples—students—of Christ and the way of life He invites His followers to observe.

How we do this?

Work together, alongside one another. We don't just bring prosforo to church; we can bake it together. It's learning by doing.

Advice and guidance. There's a great deal that is learned "on the job," especially what's unwritten or can't be explained easily. Apprentices are often observed performing their jobs by more experienced teachers, and if possible, being corrected or reminded of things along the way. To continue with the prosforo baking example, someone probably has to show us when the dough has been kneaded adequately. That part of the process can't be found in a book.

Small jobs, in time, become large jobs. Being a GOYA officer can lead to Parish Council membership. Serving on a committee leads to chairing the committee. Small liturgical roles can become larger ones in time. In this approach, the lived work of the Church is handed on to newer generations, little by little.

Classes are useful. Apprentices often take classes, to learn the theory about their job and to deepen their knowledge of an area. It's often in preparation for performing a new task. Let's not underestimate the power of teaching groups. Jesus often His disciples, privately, apart from the crowds. He explained his teachings to them.

Great Lent offers opportunities to place all of these qualities into practice in our parishes, teaching one another, but especially the young and new to the Faith, the way of Christian living.

Rev. Anton C. Vrame, Ph.D., Director

*Department of Religious Education, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America
50 Goddard Avenue, Brookline, MA 02445, Tel. 646-519-6300*

Susan Schneider February 21 at 5:25pm

Staretz Tikhon (Golenkov) spiritual father of St. Paisios is one of the most famous Russian elders on Mt Athos. He received the nickname "Russian" because he has revealed to the Holy Mountain Russian holiness. Like St.

Seraphim of Sarov, a wild boar fed out of the elder's hand. Even a fox came to him for lunch. (Monk Seraphim Zakharov)

Holy Ghost wall calendars for 2017 are available downstairs for your use—take one home and put it on the refrigerator or wall to keep track of daily bible readings and Feasts and Fasts of our church!

Also, there are donation envelopes for your use—please help support our parish and its work in God's Vineyard! God Bless you!

UPDATE ON SLICKVILLE TICKET WINNERS:

We have had several winners last year—AND this year—you may be next!

Check your tickets and contact Bill Kuznik if you have a winning ticket!

Remember, the tickets are the main way to finance the fireworks display for the Slickville Centennial Celebration next August. Any left over money will be divided among the three churches and the volunteer fire department!

More details on the Centennial will be forthcoming—please check the Centennial website for more information: <http://slickville100.com>

Slickville Centennial hats and clothing are now available—see Bill for order forms for hats, t-shirts, polo shirts, and sweatshirts!!! Show your Slickville pride to everyone!