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GREAT LENT—THE GREAT FAST—SAINT GREGORY PALAMAS

ON THE MEND: Please keep the following parishioners and others in your prayers for recovery from their illnesses and injuries: Father Bob, Archbishop Daniel, Metropolitan Antony, Metropolitan Yuriy, Archbishop Jovan, Metropolitan Savas, Father Jakiw Norton, Father Paul Stoll, Father Joseph Kopchak, Father Elias Warnke, Father George Yatsko, Father Paul Bigelow, Father Emilian Balan, Father John & Pani Mary Anne Nakonachny, Father Steve Repa, Archpriest Dionysi Vitali, Protodeacon Joseph Hotrovich, Father Paisius McGrath, Father Michael Smolynec, Father Lawrence & Matushka Sophia Daniels, Father Joe Cervo, Father John Harrold [Saint Sylvester], Igumen Patrick, Pani Mary Ann Chubenko, Father Jim Orr, Father Rick Seilier, Panimatka Laryssa Charest, Fr. Vasyl Sendeha, Father George & Dobrodijka Oksana Bazylevsky, Father Angelo Artemas, Father John Haluszczak, Joshua Agosto and his family, Eva Malesnick, Nick Behun, Grace Holupka, Joseph Sliwinsky, Gary & Linda Mechtly, Evelyn Misko, Jeanne Boehing, Alex Drobot, Rachelle, Jane Golofski, Doug Diller, Harry Krewsun, Mary Alice Babcock, Dorie Kunkle, 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, Robert McKivitz, Liz Obradovich, Halyna Zelinska [Archbishop 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, Esther Holupka, David Vallor, Henry Faraly, Julie Eiler, Dorothy Lednovich, Bob C., Allie—young girl with leukemia, Heather Kramer, Jane Wartinbee, Matthew—young man with cancer, Nicholas Orlando, Mary Ann Kuznik, Michael Pryhodzenko, Sonia Luciw, Theresa Ditto, Mary Ann Musial, Yvonne Christy, Father Deacon Myron & Barbara Spak, Julia Duda, Lisa Pandle, Kris & Julie Hanczar, John Kennedy, Gaele 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], David Hoenshell, Barbara Macino, Shelley Hill, Linda Cawley, Gerald Cogley, Corey Guich,

Robert Vangrin, Pauline Witkowsky, Sera White, Deborah Smith, Nancy & Eric Dunik, Julian Stroz [young lady with cerebral palsy], Dr. Kirsten Ream, Patricia Corey, Michelle, Katie Swarm, Michelle, Patrick, Linda Morris, Chris, David Hiles, Jennifer, Cher Mount, Frank & Janet Horrell, Jim Wandling, Gail, Sirena Sharp, Ron Paulovich, Sandi Anderson, Lina, Shirley, Denny Mader, Ella Campbell, Tom Hyatt, Bill Janiro, Jean Symanko-Andy's sister, William Lemonakis, Alma Wyke, Lindsay Romanczak & family, Susan Lucas, Neil Carter & family, James Paluh, Mickie Weikel, Evelyn Krempasky, Tammy Strunk, Loida Esbry, Darlene Chicka Deskins, Drew, Alice & Keith Philipa, Kateryna Kocelko, Mira Filipović, Lynn, Jacqueline, Sharon, Zan Cheng, Kristy, Elaine Ellenberger, Brandon, Anna Tranchine, Demetra, Blase Urban, Catherine Hogel & children, Jennifer & Dylan, Ron Schwartz, Lydia Wilson, Flora Tomlin, Howell Swarm, Jane Bielewicz Allred, Katie Elizabeth, Mileva, & Michael, Deirdré Straughan, Terri Paluh, Lori & Steve Lucier, Kyranna Cherpas, Pastor Bruce Nordeen, Heather Ried, Carla Perry, Linda Elliot, Dennis McDaniel, Luke Tinsley, Brent, Tricia, Katherine Gorman, Pamela Jaquette, Sherri Walewski, Marika Zeliszczuk, Donna Davis, Jackie Crimbchin, Marta Charron, Mary [Corba], 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, Ben Douglas, Dianne Donahue, Zachary, Natasha, Noah Willard, Jodi Hanczar, Gregory Cervo, Lisa Bruce, Martha Nezolyk, Kathy Cvetkovich, Judy, Will, Emma, Ginny, Ye-Jin, Maria, John & JoAnn, Jim & Kitty, Phil Bouse, Ralph & Beverly Stoker, Noah Willard, Nikola, Natalie, Nikola, & Nevenka Jovonovich, Julia Collier, Amy Kemerer, Thomas Smith, Tracy Slaughaupt, Louis & Teresa Bercelli, Tom Nolan, Silvia Martin, Dena & George, Georgia, Lawanda [Evelyn's niece], Maureen Sams, John Kendall, Judi Danser, Darcy, Denis Strittmatter, Nancy, Ian Brick, Cecilia Barnhart, Logan Magorien, Pam & Gordon Grant, Debbie & Jerry Novosel, Noah Willard, Sandra Dillard, Danielle McCann, Barry [Father Jim Orr's cousin], Tim Joyce, Joe Samchuck—vocations, Albert Heckman, Brianna Stumpf, Stanley Porembka, David & Terry Coyne Hartnett, Mike C., Jennifer Scheirer [Nick Behun's daughter], Catherine Beecham [Father Bob's cousin], JoAnne & Dave Andrews, Rev. Peg Bowman, Pat & Jan Jennings, Tim Sams, Mike Ruzzi, Stephen Popichak—Fr. Bob's brother, Mary Kay Ludovicy, Pastor Sara Irwin, George Dilendorf, Andy & Sharon Torick, Carol Behun, Erv Frye, William Lusherand, Colin Kirton—Stage 4 pancreatic cancer, Clifford, Joe Veto, Paul Riley, Tonee & Sydnee Turner, Annette Paluh, Theresa Paluh, Cathy Lotinsky, Monk Andrew, Jeff & Buschra Kerr, Rose Mary Pavlovich—Mary Anne Kuznik's Cousin, Margaret Sekelsky, Robert Sekelsky, Robert Rodriguez, Dollie Irvin, Joe Mrvos, Alexandra & Bowen, Katherine Kulik,

Pastor Terry Polen, Eleanor Kitt, Stacie & Gary, Maria Warholak, Stacie & Gary, Anna Sekelik, Christy, Mariruth, Rich & Judy Previc, Ben Williams, Denis Strittmatter, Father Joe Uzar—newly ordained, Tim—surgery, John Wakin, Olivia—young girl with a brain tumor, Rick & Sharon Morgan, John Stasko [triple by-pass], John, Kris & Kait, Kristi Wilson, Wendy LaGamba, Melissa Gross [hip replacement], Mike & Amy Forbeck, David Salazar, James Mary, Barb Bookser, Dr. Paul Riley, David Hess, Serena, Wyatt, Makenzie, Jennifer, Carolyn Strittmatter, Barbara Shegat & Chaplain Rachelle Zazzu, Candace Irvin, Carol Muschick, Grace Love [knee replacement], Stacie Riley, Joseph Paul Cervo, Jr. [infant], Elizabeth [5-year-old], Lillian Skowvron, Pani Cathy Danczak, Sue & Greg Heinen, Paul Simpson [Father Bob's cousin, car accident], Sharon Curtis Rivas, Kathy Milcic, Lisa Bolan, David G. [cancer], Donna [dementia] & Darla, Linda Snow, the McKenna family, David Gazella, Brian & Michele Cannone, Robert & Eleanor Rodrigues & family, Father Deacon James Rossetti & Diakonissa Kari—ordination!, Michael Welsh, Nick Solominsky, Samantha & Lisa Houser, Sarah Stepanovich Clark, Julia Baloga, Brett Crosby, Randy Lapuh, Henry & Shirley [skin cancer] Tkacik, Diane & Arthur Chaklis, Denny Mader, Robert Chicka [cancer], Myra Woodruff [cancer], Zoe Oswalt—Fr. Bob's cousin [cancer], Barbette [cancer] & Scott, Kristin [cancer], Erm Hartmann, Barbara Bookser [cancer], Bob Mazzuca [cancer], Marko, Taylor, Terri Crosby-Vega, Christine Mohamed, Sue Demko, Tammy & Donnie [cancer] Marsico, Terry & David Hartnett, Jamie Ball, Kay Williams, Hannah Stewart, Jim Wyko—Alex's friend, and Susan Pulcini—Father Ted Pulcini's mom. We pray that God will grant them all a speedy recovery.

PLEASE REVIEW THE NAMES ON THE PRAYER LIST ABOVE AND LET FATHER BOB KNOW ANY NAMES THAT CAN BE REMOVED...

HAPPY BIRTHDAY to our March babies: Sonia Luciw on the 3rd, Walter Anthony Burlack on the 7th, Mary Shirley on the 9th, 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 and their families!

PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE! PRAY FOR PEACE IN THE WORLD—AND OUR LIVES!

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ... There is NOTHING to keep us from praying...for each other, for our family and friends, and most of all for the first responders—EMTs, nurses, doctors, firefighters,

police officers, and members of our military who keep us safe. Be well and be SAFE!!! God Bless!

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] 956-6626.

SERVICES IN SLICKVILLE

SUNDAY, March 12 READER SERVICE IN SLICKVILLE 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 THALELAEUS-HERMIT OF SYRIA; SAINT TITUS THE SOLDIER-MONK & SAINT TITUS THE PRESBYTER—OF PERCHEVSKY LAVRA

Tone 6

Hebrews 1:10-2:3; Hebrews 7:26-8:2; Galatians 5:22-6:2
Mark 2:1-12; John 10:9-16; Luke 6:17-23

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

Tone 7

Hebrews 4:14-5:6
Mark 8:34-9:1

Litany in Blessed Memory of Mary Smith, John Metrick, Andrew Hanczar, Anna Lawrence, Daria Masur, Michael Cicio, Charles Shumsky, Terry Reinhart, Jean Stutchell, Joseph Vangrin, Frank Riznow, Michael Holupka, and Joseph Nezolyk—Fr. Bob

SUNDAY, March 26 OBEDNITZA-SAINT BASIL THE GREAT-UPSTAIRS 10:30 AM

4TH SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT; SAINT JOHN CLIMACUS—OF THE LADDER OF DIVINE ASCENT; TRANSLATION OF THE RELICS OF SAINT NICEPHORUS THE CONFESSOR-PATRIARCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE; MARTYR SABINUS OF EGYPT; MARTYRS AFRICANUS, PUBLIUS, & TERENCE OF CARTHAGE; MARTYR ALEXANDER OF MACEDONIA; MARTYR CHRISTINA OF PERSIA; VENERABLE ANINAS THE PRESBYTER OF THE EUPHRATES

Tone 8

Hebrews 6:13-20; Ephesians 5:8-19

Mark 9:17-31; Matthew 4:25-5:12

BULLETIN INSERT FOR 12 MARCH 2023

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 THALELAEUS-HERMIT OF SYRIA; SAINT TITUS THE SOLDIER-MONK & SAINT TITUS THE PRESBYTER—OF PERCHEVSKY LAVRA

TROPARION—TONE 8

O Light of Orthodoxy! Teacher of the Church! Its confirmation!
O Ideal of Monks and invincible Champion of Theologians!
O wonder-working Gregory, glory of Thessalonica and Preacher of Grace!
Always intercede before the Lord that our souls may be saved!

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

KONTAKION—TONE 4

Now is the time for action! Judgment is at the doors!
So let us rise and fast, offering alms with tears of compunction and crying:
Our sins are more in number than the sands of the sea;
But forgive us, O Master of All,
So that we may receive the incorruptible crowns.

PROKEIMENON—TONE 5

READER: Thou, O Lord, shall protect us and preserve us from this generation forever!

PEOPLE: **Thou, O Lord, shall protect us and preserve us from this generation forever!**

READER: Save me, O Lord, for there is no longer any that is godly.

PEOPLE: **Thou, O Lord, shall protect us and preserve us from this generation forever!**

READER: Thou, O Lord, shall protect us and preserve us.

PEOPLE: From this generation forever!

ALLELUIA VERSES

Praise the Lord from the heavens! Praise Him in the highest!

The righteous will be remembered forever; he is not afraid of evil things!

JOURNEY TO PASCHA

Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA

DATE	WEEKLY THEME/READINGS	PARTICIPATION
JANUARY 29 Normal Fasting Week	 <p>ZACCHAEUS SUNDAY EPISTLE: 1 TIM. 4:9-15 GOSPEL: LUKE 19:1-10</p>	Like Zacchaeus, make a personal effort to see Christ. Participate in Divine Liturgy. If you have been dishonest - fix it like Zacchaeus did. <i>"See" Christ is all those around you (not as easy as it sounds).</i>
FEBRUARY 5 Fast-free Week	 <p>PUBLICAN AND PHARISEE EPISTLE: 2 TIM. 3:10-15 GOSPEL: LUKE 18:10-14</p>	Do not think too highly of yourself. Realize your own sinfulness, asking the Lord for forgiveness and strength to overcome your shortcomings. <i>Do a good deed in secret, telling nobody (not boasting).</i>
FEBRUARY 12 Normal Fasting Week (Final Week for meat)	 <p>PRODIGAL SON RETURNS EPISTLE: 1 COR. 6:12-20 GOSPEL: LUKE 15:11-32</p>	God awaits our awakening to our mistakes and welcomes us with open arms. Partake in the Eucharist. <i>Commit to breaking a bad habit (watch less TV, spend less time on Social Media, spend more time with family...)</i> Final week to enjoy meat products
FEBRUARY 19 Meatfare Sunday (Final Day of meat)	 <p>THE LAST JUDGMENT EPISTLE: 1 COR. 8:8-9:2 GOSPEL: MATTHEW 25:31-46</p>	Contemplate the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Matthew 25:31-46) - when were you like a "goat" and when were you like a "sheep"? <i>Buy someone lunch (homeless person, bring a meal to a shutin, or pay it forward at a Drive-thru)</i> Final week to enjoy cheese products and dairy
FEBRUARY 26 Cheesefare Sunday (Great Lent begins tomorrow)	 <p>EXPULSION OF ADAM/EVE FROM PARADISE EPISTLE: ROMANS 1:11-14:4 GOSPEL: MATTHEW 6:14-21</p>	FORGIVENESS SUNDAY Ask each other for forgiveness, and forgive them (and mean it). Go to Confession/Communion. <i>Each day this week make an effort to ask forgiveness of others (at work, school, and home).</i> Final day for cheese/dairy. Lent begins tonight at 6 PM
MARCH 5	 <p>TRIUMPH OF ORTHODOXY EPISTLE: HEB. 11:24-26, 32-12:2 GOSPEL: JOHN 1:43-51</p>	Bring an icon to church with you. Clean your icon corner at home. <i>You are a living icon of Christ - make an effort to show Christ to the world around you this week. Be patient, kind, smile, and point others towards God and salvation.</i>
MARCH 12	 <p>ST. GREGORY PALAMAS EPISTLE: HEBREWS 1:10-2:3 GOSPEL: MARK 2:1-12</p>	St. Gregory Palamas advocated for constant prayer, use a prayer rope to remind you to pray and help you focus. <i>Nurture silence (don't listen to music, talk less) so you can better focus on God.</i> Every day, as often as you can, pray the Jesus Prayer. "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."
MARCH 19 (Half way to Pascha)	 <p>ADORATION OF THE CROSS EPISTLE: HEBREWS 4:14-5:6 GOSPEL: MARK 8:34-9:1</p>	Place a cross in the center of your icon corner. <i>Visibly wear your cross all week.</i> Each morning and evening this week pray: "Before Your Cross we bow down in worship, O Master, and Your holy Resurrection we glorify."
MARCH 26	 <p>ST. JOHN CLIMACUS (OF THE LADDER) EPISTLE: HEBREWS 6:13-20 GOSPEL: MARK 9:17-31</p>	We constantly climb a ladder through our lives as we work to reach Christ. Often we fall and start over...again and again. Never stop climbing. <i>Spend time with family - preparing and enjoying meals. Tell each other of an issue you encountered in your day and how you turned a negative into a positive.</i>
APRIL 2	 <p>ST. MARY OF EGYPT EPISTLE: HEBREWS 9:11-14 GOSPEL: MARK 10:32-45</p>	Saint Mary of Egypt became a saint only after realizing her sinfulness. <i>Contemplate which qualities you like/dislike in others, and then do a self-assessment. Would you like yourself?</i> Do you think God is happy with you?
APRIL 8	 <p>LAZARUS SATURDAY EPISTLE: HEBREWS 12:28-13:8 GOSPEL: JOHN 11:1-45</p>	By resurrecting an unquestionably dead Lazarus, Christ reaffirmed that all things are possible with God. Out of compassion the Lord wept. <i>When you encounter someone who is having a hard day, or is sad, comfort them.</i>
APRIL 9 (Great Week begins)	 <p>ENTRY OF THE LORD INTO JERUSALEM (PALM SUNDAY) EPISTLE: PHILIPPIANS 4:4-9 GOSPEL: JOHN 12:1-18</p>	Bring Palms (Pussy Willows) to church to be blessed, and then take them home and place them in your icon corner. When the Lord entered Jerusalem the people yelled out, "Hosanna in the highest" which is more than praise and adoration, but is used when crying out for help and means "save us". These same people later cried out "Crucify Him!" <i>Take care not to use the Lord's name in vain.</i>
APRIL 12 (Presanctified Liturgy)	 <p>GREAT WEDNESDAY (ANOINTING/UNCTION SERVICE) GOSPEL: MATTHEW 26:6-16</p>	The sinful woman anointed the Lord's feet with expensive oil, and wiped them with her hair. As you comb your hair today, realize the great love the Lord has for you, in that he knows the exact count of hairs upon your head. Show your love for God by helping someone - open a door, carry a burden, give a lift, feed them...
APRIL 13	 <p>GREAT THURSDAY (MYSTICAL SUPPER) (WASHING OF FEET) <small>LIT.: 1 COR. 11:23-32; MT. 26:1-20; JN. 13:3-17; MT. 26:21-39; LK. 22:43-45; MT. 26:40 - 27:2; MT. 26:6-16 RITE OF THE WASHING OF FEET: JN. 13:1-11; JN. 13:12-17</small></p>	After the Mystical Supper, the Lord washed the feet of the Disciples to show them how they are to treat each other - with humility, compassion and love. They were to serve, and not wait to be served. We are to serve and not be served. Without grumbling - make dinner, wash the dishes, sweep the floors, and pray for others.
APRIL 14 (STRICT Fast day)	 <p>GREAT FRIDAY (CHRIST IS CRUCIFIED) ROYAL HOURS AND VESPERS</p>	The Lord suffered, was tortured, and NAILED TO THE CROSS TODAY. Abstain from joviality. No TV. No music, singing, dancing. It is a STRICT fast day. Try to abstain from food until after venerating the Holy Shroud.
APRIL 15 (Liturgy of St. Basil)	 <p>GREAT SATURDAY (HARROWING OF HADES) EPISTLE: ROMANS 6:3-11 GOSPEL: MATTHEW 28:1-20</p>	Christ's Body rests in the tomb, as He frees the righteous souls in Hades. Nurture peace. No loud music. No TV. No arguing. Prepare Paschal meal. Color eggs.
APRIL 16	 <p>PASCHA CHRIST IS RISEN! EPISTLE: ACTS: 1:1-8 GOSPEL: JOHN 20:19-25</p>	CHRIST IS RISEN! Put all worldly cares aside and rejoice!



Father Joseph Cervo offers some thoughts on Great Lent:



ICXC NIKA - "Jesus Christ Conquers!"

Today is the first day of Orthodox Great Lent. Orthodox Lent is not ushered in with excessive celebration (eg. Mardi Gras), but with the exercise of forgiveness.

An old English proverb says: "The worst of men are those who cannot forgive."

We all need God's mercy & forgiveness, but that means we must be willing to forgive those who have offended and hurt us; even if they are not repentant, then we must more earnestly pray for their enlightenment and "change of heart." The words of the Apostle James should be engraved in our memory: "For judgment (i.e. God's judgment) is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy." Understanding this does not require a biblical scholar. God will judge us at the end of our life, as we judged others (which we should avoid) and likewise, the mercy we have extended to others will be the mercy that God graciously will extend to us. In my humble opinion, this is the most critical challenge to living a Christian life. If we cannot forgive and pray for those who have offended and hurt us, then all our "good works" are, to use the Apostle Paul's metaphor, as "filthy rags."

Without forgiveness, Great Lent is but a futile external exercise. May we pray that the Lord will open our hearts and minds to acquire humility and strength to exercise Christ-like love and compassion to forgive one another, even as we need God to forgive us.

**"O Lord and Master of my life!
Take from me the spirit of sloth,
faint-heartedness, lust of power, and idle talk.
But give rather the spirit of chastity,
humility, patience, and love to Your servant.
Yes, Lord and King! Grant me to see my own errors
and not to judge my brother (and sister),
for You are blessed unto ages of ages. Amen"**
(Lenten Prayer of St. Ephrem the Syrian).



CATECHETICAL HOMILY at the Opening of Holy and Great Lent + BARTHOLOMEW

*By God's mercy Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome and Ecumenical
Patriarch*

To the Plenitude of the Church

*May the Grace and Peace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,
Together with our Prayer, Blessing and Forgiveness Be with All*

Most honorable brother Hierarchs and blessed children in the Lord,

By the goodwill and grace of the all-merciful and all-benevolent God, already living in the blessed and reverent period of the Triodion, tomorrow we enter Holy and Great Lent, the arena of fasting and "venerable abstinence" that eliminate the passions, during which the depth and wealth of our Orthodox Tradition and the vigilant care of the Church for the spiritual progress of its children are revealed. As we are reminded by the Holy and Great Council of Crete (June, 2016), "the Orthodox Church, in strict conformity with the apostolic precepts, the synodal canons, and the patristic tradition as a whole, has always proclaimed the great significance of fasting for our spiritual life and salvation" (*The Importance of Fasting and its Observance Today*, para. 1).

In the life of the Church, all matters have a solid theological foundation and soteriological reference. Orthodox Christians share the "common struggle" of asceticism and fasting "giving thanks in everything" (Thess. 5.18). The Church invites its children to run the race of ascetic exercises as a journey toward Holy Pascha. It is a central experience of the life in Christ that genuine asceticism is never despondent, since it is imbued with the expectation of resurrectional delight. Our hymnology speaks of the "spring of fasting."

In this sense, far from the trappings of Neoplatonist dualism and the alienating efforts to "mortify the body," genuine asceticism cannot

conceivably aim at the eradication of an "evil body" for the sake of the spirit or the liberation of the soul from the torment of its shackles. As emphasized, "in its authentic expression, asceticism is not directed against the body but against the passions, whose root is spiritual because the intellect is the first to fall to passion. Thus, the body is hardly the great opponent of the ascetic."

The ascetic endeavor pursues the transcendence of egocentrism, for the sake of love that "does not seek its own" and without which we remain enslaved within ourselves, in the "insatiable ego" and its unquenchable desires. Being self-centered, we shrink and lose our creativity, as has been said: "Whatever we give is multiplied, and whatever we retain for ourselves is lost." For this reason, the wisdom of the Fathers and the experience of the Church associate the period of fasting with the "showering of mercy," with good deeds and philanthropy, which are the evidence of surpassing self-love and acquiring existential fullness.

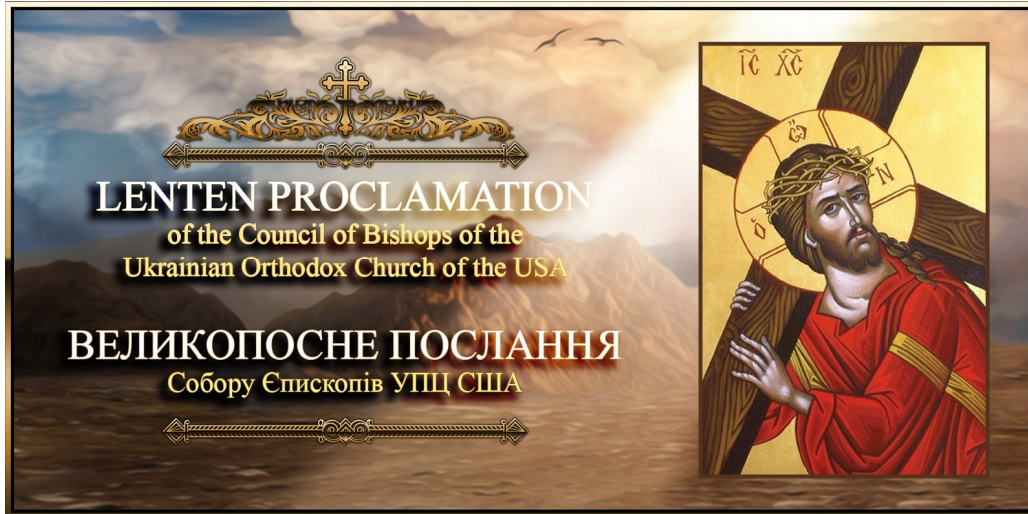
Such wholeness is at all times the characteristic of life in the Church. The liturgical life, asceticism and spirituality, pastoral care, and good witness in the world, are expressions of the truth of our faith, interconnected and mutually complementary elements of our Christian identity, which share the eschatological Kingdom as a point of reference and orientation, as well as the completeness and fulfillment of the divine Economy. While church life in all its expressions reflects and depicts the coming Kingdom of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, it is the mystery of the Divine Eucharist that above all, as underlined by the late Metropolitan John of Pergamon, recently of blessed memory, "expresses the Church in its fullness" (*The Image of the Heavenly Kingdom*, Megara 2013, p. 59). "Pure communion," the rendering of our existence into that of the church, as participation in the Holy Eucharist, is the "end" of fasting, the "crown" and "prize" of ascetical struggles (see John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Isaiah VI: On the Seraphim*, PG 56.139).

Today, in an age of desacralization of life, when humankind "attributes great importance to entirely insignificant things," our Christian mission is the practical elevation of the existential depth of our Orthodox "triatykh of spirituality," as the inseparable unity of liturgical life, ascetic ethos, and solidarity, the essence of the revolution of values in the fields of ethos and civilization constituted by faith in Christ and the divinely-granted freedom of the children of God. We consider it of paramount importance that we should live Holy and Great Lent as a revelation and experience of the true meaning of freedom "for which Christ has set us free" (Gal. 5.1).

With these thoughts and sentiments of love and honor, we wish you, our most honorable brothers in Christ and spiritual children of our Mother Church throughout the world, a smooth course in the arena of fasting,

invoking on all of you the grace and mercy of Christ our God, who always delights in the ascetic struggles of His people. To Him belongs the blessed and glorified power of the Kingdom, now and always, and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Holy and Great Lent 2023
+ BARTHOLOMEW of Constantinople
Your fervent supplicant for all before God



To the Clergy, Monastics, and Faithful of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the United States of America, our Eparchy of Western Europe, of our Eparchy of Australia and New Zealand, and our Eparchy in South America

Dearly beloved Spiritual Fathers, Sisters and Brothers of the FAITH,

CHRIST IS AMONGST US! HE IS AND ALWAYS SHALL BE!

As we enter the blessed Great Lenten journey in preparation for the celebration of the FEAST of ALL FEASTS–PASCHA or the RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD–it behooves us to contemplate the necessary temporal and spiritual conditions for the successful completion of that journey and the fullness of Joy, Peace and Love of PASCHA. What are these preparations? Through the five weeks in anticipation before Great Lent we are provided with Scriptural lessons that manifest them clearly.

We begin with the story of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10) who was a tax collector/thief, who had such a desire to be with Christ that he faced ridicule by people for climbing a sycamore tree to come face to face with our Lord, Who responded by speaking directly to Zacchaeus, indicating that He knew Zacchaeus and would stay at his home. Zacchaeus responded to criticism that our Lord would stay at the home of a sinner, declaring that he would make amends to all whom he had cheated and give half his wealth to the poor. The Lord responded that "*salvation has come to this home*

today...because the Son of Man has come to see and to save that, which was lost."

The lesson about the Publican (also a tax collector) and the Pharisee) (Luke 18:10-14)–a religious leader–depicts the Pharisee standing in the front of the Holy Altar proclaiming his "righteousness" and adherence to the Law and how great he was in comparison to the Publican. The Publican stood simply at the rear of the temple, head bowed low and beating his chest and beseeching: "*God have mercy on me a sinner*" and he alone, through his sincere humility returned to his home "justified."

Next, we heard the lesson about the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32), who demanded what would be his inheritance from his father, received it, and rapidly squandered it in a foreign land, finally ending up in the fields feeding swine. Finally, he "*came to himself (схамелувся)*" and returned to his father declaring: "*Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.*"

The Last Judgment (Matthew 25:31-46) is the next lesson, presented by our Lord with a clarity that does not leave any room for us to **misunderstand**. The choices we make in relating to ALL our neighbors and ALL mankind will determine whether we will be judged to be lambs or goats. The way we respond to the two Great Commandments: "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it–You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.*" (Matthew 22:37-40)

The final scripture lesson is about forgiveness, the manner of our fasting, and storing up treasures in Heaven. (Matthew 6:14-21). Each time we pray the "Lord's Prayer" we ask, "forgiveness of our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." These cannot be empty words but, rather a heartfelt petition with consequences determined completely by each of us as individuals. If we cannot forgive...neither will we be forgiven. The way we fast is between each of us and God and the way others fast is of no concern to any of us. Forgiveness and sincere fasting enable us to store up treasures in Heaven where we hope to find ourselves after the final judgment.

Having received and internalized all these lessons, we are prepared to enter into the fullness of Great Lent and to make a confession that arises from the depths of our hearts and souls–rather than from the often-confused intellect that can so easily succumb to all the temptations of the world, leading us away from, rather than to Christ. Throughout this Great Lent seek to come face to face with Christ, Who, you will discover, knows

you intimately from the moment of your cleansing Baptism and the Seal of your Chrismation. Seek to make amends to those you have wronged; seek forgiveness from those you have offended; and offer forgiveness to those who have offended you; approach God with a humility that does not offer excuses or reasons for bad behavior and sinfulness; “come to yourself” in the recognition that you have squandered God’s gifts to you—your talents, your ability to love, your ability to share yourself and your treasures. Search for the ways that you can minister—to your neighbor, to the homeless, to the naked, to the thirsty, to the sick, to those imprisoned (physically, mentally, or emotionally), and search for the ways you have failed to minister to all.

As we enter the Great Lenten Season, we, your hierarchs, successors to the Holy Apostles, humbly beseech your forgiveness for any way we may have hurt you, not been present to you, misled you, or have been, in any way, responsible for spiritual confusion or even pain of any nature. We promise to strive for improvement in the future under the Grace and Guidance of the Holy Spirit. In turn, we express, from the depth of our hearts, minds, and souls the same forgiveness to you on both the spiritual and temporal levels. We love you all without reserve and assure you of our prayers for you daily, beseeching your prayers also for us.

Finally—as the one-year anniversary of the invasion approaches, we request that throughout this Great Lent and Paschal Seasons, you dedicate your prayers, fasting, and hope for the welfare of our brothers and sisters suffering through another genocide. This unjustifiable invasion of Ukraine is inspired by an all-consuming hatred in the minds and souls of those who would eradicate Ukraine and her ethnic distinction as a people. Pray fervently for an end to the suffering through the deliberate targeting of civilians and non-military infrastructure. Further, pray fervently for the repose of the souls of all those who have perished during the aggressive insanity. May our Loving Lord hear our petitions and bring an end to this horror forever.

In our Lord’s All-Encompassing Joy, Peace, and Love,

+ ANTONY, By the Grace of God, Metropolitan

+ JEREMIAH, By the Grace of God, Archbishop

+ DANIEL, By the Grace of God, Archbishop

**GIVEN THIS 10TH DAY OF FEBRUARY 2023-THE FEAST OF VENERABLE
EPHRAIM THE SYRIAN AND VENERABLE EPHRIAM OF THE KYIVAN CAVES
MONASTERY (PECHERSKA LAVRA) AT THE METROPOLIA CENTER OF THE
UOC OF USA, SOUTH BOUND BROOK-SOMERSET, NJ**