

# St Michael's Orthodox Church

*A parish of the Orthodox Church in America, Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania*

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**March 2, 2025 – The Expulsion from Paradise** (*the final Pre-Lenten Sunday*)

*Also known as **Cheesefare Sunday** and **Forgiveness Sunday***

## Calendar

*The first half of the week will be served by Fr Bill; the second half (through March 9) by Fr. John.*

Saturday, March 1 – **No Vespers.**

Sunday, March 2, 9:30 a.m. – Divine Liturgy (Fr Bill Rusk).

*Followed immediately by **Forgiveness Vespers** and the Rite of Forgiveness.*

**MONDAY, MARCH 3 – BEGINNING OF GREAT LENT.**

Monday, March 3, 6:30 p.m. – Great Compline with the **Canon of St Andrew.**

Tuesday, March 4, 6:30 p.m. – Great Compline with the **Canon of St Andrew.**

Wednesday, March 5, 6:30 p.m. – Divine Liturgy of the **Presanctified Gifts**

Thursday, March 6, 6:30 p.m. – Great Compline with the **Canon of St Andrew.**

Friday, March 7, 6:30 p.m. – **Akathist to the Theotokos** (part 1 of 4)

Saturday, March 8, 4:00 p.m. – Great Vespers & Confessions.

Sunday, March 9, 9:30 a.m. – Divine Liturgy & Fellowship. *The Triumph of Orthodoxy* (1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent)

ANNUAL MEETING. “SOUPer Bowl” Charity Potluck for IOCC, and final day of the **canned goods** collection for the local food bank. All proceeds from the potluck will be given to local shelters or IOCC.

***A full Lenten Calendar is available at the candle desk. Please take one!***

*Coffee Hour is offered by:*

March 2: Susan Schlasta & Deborah Bernosky

**March 9: SOUPer Bowl Charity Potluck (Lenten)**

*(All coffee hours are Lenten until Pascha)*

March 16: Millie Telep & \_\_\_\_\_ (*need volunteer*)

March 23: Mat. Dolores & Marilyn Petorak

March 30: Ruthie Lasichak & Roxanne Neutts

## Announcements

Due to the weather, our **Annual Meeting was rescheduled to March 9.** *This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> announcement of the new date.*

**Our PASCHAL FLOWER DRIVE ends next week.** If you want to make an offering for Pascha Flowers, please find the “Easter Flowers” envelope near the middle of April. Or use any envelope and write “Pascha Flowers” on it. Or, you may use the DONATE button on our website and enter your name and “Pascha Flowers” in the comments. **Flower Offerings are due by March 9**, so that we can place an order from our neighborhood supplier. *We will only order flowers from these donations, so your offerings determine how many flowers there will be.*

## In your prayers

**The ill and the afflicted:** Fr. Daniel Donlick, Fr Gregory White, Pdn. Gabriel Petorak, Dn Geoffrey LoBalbo, Mat. Myra Kovalek, Gregory Hansen, Olga Krutz, Maryanne Krisa, Michael Krisa, Barbara Mosley, Mary Ann Serafini, Alexis Meholic, Tom Shaw, George Petorak, Sandy Gillott, Debbie Jadick, Susan Schlasta, Evan Kraky, Laura Piwowarski, Karen Abercia, Daniel Kitchura, Mark Klapatch, Gregory Klapatch, Jerry Soroka.

**Homebound:** John Drutarosky, Theresa Krenitsky, Barbara Palubniak, Peggy Petrilak, Nicholas Mattise, Jerry & Marilyn Soroka, Paul Kostiak, Dolores Brophy, Paul Mosley, Adam & Mary Ann Serafini, Florence Zielinsky.

**The newly-departed:** Abp. Anastasios of Albania (1/25). Karen (Dippel) Wisneski (1/26). Helen Meholic (1/27).

## Hymns of the Day

*Resurrection (Tone 3)*

Let the heavens rejoice! / Let the earth be glad! / For the Lord has shown strength with His arm. / He has trampled down death by death. / He has become the first born of the dead. / He has delivered us from the depths of hell, / and has granted to the world great mercy.

*St Michael the Archangel (Tone 4)*

O Commander of the heavenly hosts, / we who are unworthy beseech you ceaselessly / that you would encompass us with the shelter of your prayers, / and cover us beneath the wings of your immaterial glory. / We fall down before you, crying out: / "Protect us all from harm, // O Michael, Prince of the powers on high!"

*Cheesefare Sunday (Tone 6)*

O Master, Teacher of wisdom, / Bestower of virtue, / Who teachest the thoughtless and protectest the poor, / strengthen and enlighten my heart! / O Word of the Father, / let me not restrain my mouth from crying to Thee: / "Have mercy on me, a transgressor, // O merciful Lord!"

## Today's Scripture

*Epistle: Romans 13:11-14:4*

*Brethren:* Now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

*Gospel: Matthew 6:14-21*

*The Lord said:* "If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

"And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust[a] consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust[b] consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

*"Only struggle a little more. Carry your cross without complaining. Don't think you are anything special. Don't justify your sins and weaknesses, but see yourself as you really are. And, especially, love one another." – Fr Seraphim Rose*

## SILENCE IN THE GREAT FAST

In many parts of the Orthodox world, the faithful are encouraged to undertake a discipline of silence, especially in the first week of Lent (as well as Holy Week). While this may seem something that only exists in monastic communities, silence (really, *stillness*) is a universal virtue of the Christian life. It is not merely a mechanical silencing of sound but rather the silencing of the will, the quieting of the mind, the resistance to "idle talk". The pursuit of silence in the heart is our obedience to God's commandment to us at the Red Sea: "*I will fight for you; you have only to be still.*"

An attitude of silence does not mean we do not speak. Certainly we continue to communicate when we need to; we continue to go to work, make necessary phone calls, and complete the tasks that life demands. But our mind should be more reflective than expressive; we should listen more than we speak; we should strive to be free of the impulsiveness of speech; so that when we do need to speak, our words are more filled with grace and intention. Silence is also the beginning of any prayer. Any rule of prayer, no matter how short or how long, should begin with at least a brief quieting of the mind, because only out of stillness can real prayer begin to grow.

As we begin Great Lent, perhaps it would be helpful for us to take at least the first few days of this first week, even if just a little bit, to explore this gift which the Orthodox Faith has offered us from the earliest times.

## Why and How do we fast? What is a sensible approach to Great Lent in this parish?

Many of us grew up with different degrees of strictness in fasting, depending on where we were raised or which parish we called home, or who our priest was. Sometimes what we learned about fasting varied from one part of the world to another, which then results in a patchwork of different rules among different pockets of immigration. And many who are newer to the faith might find these inconsistencies confusing, or when they see those inconsistencies, may wonder if we are disregarding these disciplines altogether.

We could write a book trying to summarize “the rules” (and many such books have already been written). But sometimes we lead busy and stressful lives, and we look for simple guidance which does not expect too much of us (nor too little). I think this can and should be an ongoing discussion, but maybe we can begin with a few points.

1. Fasting is one of **three pillars** which should not be separated: **Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving**. Each of these cannot function “in a vacuum”. They all depend on each other in order to be effective. Prayer without any kind of fasting or almsgiving risks being empty words. Almsgiving without prayer or fasting risks becoming transactional, a mere transfer of money. And most of all, *fasting without any prayer or almsgiving* can lead to all kinds of serious spiritual problems. If I am obeying the fast but find myself even more filled with misery and sin than before, one possibility is that these three things are way off-balance.
2. Fasting is **simplicity**. It’s not just eating less or eating different things. It’s about being less concerned with food in general. Eat when you need to! But be satisfied with simpler things.
3. Fasting is **humility**. No one should be proud of having “achieved” all the fasting rules. If you find yourself obsessing over perfection, stop fasting entirely and go to confession. Remember, the demons keep a perfect fast: they never eat.
4. **Judgment destroys the benefits of fasting**. As the saying goes, “keep your eyes on your own plate”. Never think less of someone else if they are less strict than you. Even parents, when concerned that a child is disregarding a fast, should approach this in a spirit of compassion and education rather than scolding. Everyone is at a different point in their spiritual journey.
5. Fasting **re-orient**s our relationship with food, and by extension, our **relationship with everything we possess**. The saints tell us that one of the reasons we eat less is so that those who have nothing to eat can have more. ***We should eat more simply so that we spend less and give more to others***. If my fasting means replacing my usual diet with expensive substitutions which cost even more than what I am trying to replace, then I might be missing the whole point. I should ask myself, what was I trying to accomplish by seeking out such substitutions? Was my mind really centered on sacrifice, or was I pursuing an addiction to a “taste” and had to seek out a similar taste?
6. In general, **Great Lent includes weekends**. There is a myth that “weekends aren’t Lent” but the Orthodox Faith does not number the days of Lent this way. Great Lent is 40 Days, continuous, from the evening of Forgiveness Sunday up until the eve of Lazarus Saturday—at which point we begin an even more intense focus during Holy Week. Other Christian groups may number Lent as 40 days which skip weekends, but this is not the Orthodox tradition. *This doesn’t mean relaxing the fast on a weekend is impossible; only that we should not do so carelessly*.
7. **Fasting never calls attention to itself**. Strictly speaking, we should *hide* our fasting from others, so there is no danger of pride. *“When you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly”* (Matt 6:17-18). If someone serves you non-fasting food, accept it with thanksgiving.

**So how should I fast?** The following are just suggestions. (It’s impossible to give blanket advice for everyone. It’s always best to discuss this with your priest one-on-one or in confession. A priest will try to be aware of your particular challenges and situation in life and make sure that you’re not being too hard on yourself.)

If you have never kept a fast very seriously before, don’t try to make a drastic change. Add only a little more discipline this year. If you have never fasted from anything, maybe just eliminate red meat and continue to allow everything else. If you’ve fasted from meats on weekdays but allowed them on weekends, maybe eliminate them on weekends or only include them in one of those meals. If you usually fast from meats but not dairy, why not try to eliminate dairy one or two days a week (especially on Wednesdays and Fridays). But go little by little. It is so tempting to dive into “all the rules” but I promise you, this often ends in burnout and a rejection of the discipline as a whole. It is far better to, as Fr Seraphim Rose once said, “only struggle a little more”.

Finally, **fasting should be joyful**, even if difficult. If I *really* hate fasting, I’m doing it wrong and I should stop. ***Food is not bad, but our attitude towards food is often twisted, and Great Lent is meant to “un-twist” that attitude and restore joy***. Fr. Alexander Schmemmann once said that all hunger is an image of our hunger for God, and that every shared meal is, in some tiny way, a reflection of the Eucharist. May we be granted such a re-orientation, and may all of our Tables be shared for the glory of God.

## Adam's Lament

*"The anonymous Kontakion, 'On Adam's Lament', is one of the earliest we possess and is probably of the fifth century and pre-dates those of St Romanos. It is still used in the office of Matins for the Sunday before Lent."  
(courtesy of anastasis.org.uk and translated by Fr Ephrem Lash, of blessed memory)*

*(Prelude)*

Guide of wisdom, Giver of prudence,  
Teacher of the foolish and defender of the poor,  
establish and give understanding to my heart, O Master.  
Give me a word, O Word of the Father,  
for see, I shall not restrain my lips from crying to you:  
"O Merciful One, have mercy on the fallen."

*(Ikos 1)*

Then Adam sat and wept  
opposite the delight of Paradise,  
beating his eyes with his hands and saying:  
"O Merciful One, have mercy on the fallen."

*(Ikos 2)*

Share in the pain, O Paradise, of your beggared master,  
and with the sound of your leaves  
implore the creator not to shut you:  
O Merciful One, have mercy on the fallen.

*(Ikos 3)*

Bend down your trees like living beings  
and fall before Him who holds the key,  
that thus you may remain open for one who cries:  
O Merciful One, have mercy on the fallen.

*(Ikos 4)*

I breathe the fragrance of your beauty  
and I melt as I recall how I delighted there  
from the sweet scent of the flowers:  
O Merciful One, have mercy on the fallen.

*(Ikos 5)*

I am polluted, I am ruined, I am enslaved to my slaves;  
for reptiles and wild beasts, whom I subjected by fear,  
now make me tremble;  
O Merciful One, have mercy on the fallen.

*(Ikos 6)*

My throat, which holy waters had made sweet,  
has become bitter from the multitude of my groans,  
as I cry out:  
O Merciful One, have mercy on the fallen.

*(Ikos 7)*

How have I fallen? Where have I arrived?  
From a pedestal to the ground;  
from a divine admonition to a wretched existence I have  
been reduced:  
O Merciful One, have mercy on the fallen.

*(Ikos 8)*

Now Satan rejoices having stripped me of my glory;  
but this gives him no joy;  
for see, my God clothes me:  
O Merciful One, have mercy on the fallen.

*(Ikos 9)*

God himself pities me, clothing my nakedness;  
by this he shows me  
that he too cares for me, the transgressor:  
O Merciful One, have mercy on the fallen.

*(Ikos 10)*

"Swiftly, O Adam, you have understood  
the wish of my compassion;  
therefore I do not deprive you of this your hope as you cry out:  
'O Merciful One, have mercy on the fallen.'"

*(Ikos 11)*

"I do not wish, nor do I will, the death of the one I fashioned;  
but having chastened him enough  
I will glorify eternally the one who cries out:  
'O Merciful One, have mercy on the fallen.'"

*(Ikos 12)*

NOW THEREFORE, O SAVIOR, SAVE ME ALSO who seek for you with  
longing;  
I do not wish to take you in,  
but I wish to be taken in by you and to cry to you:  
O Merciful One, have mercy on the fallen.

*(And again, the Prelude)*

Guide of wisdom, Giver of prudence,  
Teacher of the foolish and defender of the poor,  
establish and give understanding to my heart, O Master.  
Give me a word, O Word of the Father,  
for see, I shall not restrain my lips from crying to you:  
"O Merciful One, have mercy on the fallen."