

FIRST SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST



*Icon of the Holy and Great Martyr Theodore the Recruit (Tyr)
(lower left) and Others -- February 17th*

February 17, 2013
FIRST SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST – THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY
THE HOLY GREAT MARTYR THEODORE THE RECRUIT
Tone 5

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES FOR THE WEEK OF FEBRUARY 18 – FEBRUARY 24

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 20 – OUR VENERABLE FATHER LEO, BISHOP OF CATANIA IN SICILY

6:30 PM – Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 22 – THE FINDING OF THE RELICS OF THE HOLY MARTYRS AT THE EUGENE GATE

9:30 AM – Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 23 – 2ND ALL-SOULS SATURDAY; THE HOLY HIEROMARTYR POLYCARP, BISHOP OF SMYRNA

9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy & Panakhyda

6:00 PM – Great Vespers

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 24 – 2ND SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST; SUNDAY OF GREGORY PALAMAS; THE FIRST AND SECOND FINDING OF THE PRECIOUS HEAD OF THE HOLY PROPHET, FORERUNNER AND BAPTIZER JOHN

9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy

For All Parishioners

Remorse is always a prisoner of the past; it does not shrug its shoulders and forget it. The past is present; the fault is ever before the eyes, but there is no way to undo it....

Repentance is also self-reproach, like the other states, but it is never sterile; it lays hold of the past by undoing it through penance. Both Judas and Peter denied Our Lord, but Judas repented unto himself, which was regret and remorse, and took his own life; Peter repented unto the Lord, which produced a new man

– *Abp. Fulton J. Sheen*

Catechetical Video Series

Today, after the Divine Liturgy we continue showing a series of catechetical videos. The first series to be shown will be “Catholicism” by Fr. Robert Barrons.

Please attend! Будьмо Уважні!

On the Church

“The likeness of Thy Church, O Lord, is that woman who went behind and touched the hem of Thy garment, saying within herself: ‘If I do but touch His garment I shall be whole’ (Mt. 9:21). So the Church confesses her wounds, and desires to be healed.”

– *St. Ambrose of Milan, 4th C*

Sunday offering for February 10

Amount	Number
\$5.00	1
\$10.00	3
\$20.00	3
\$40.00	2
\$50.00	2
\$52.00	1 (loose)
\$75.00	2
\$100.00	3
\$120.00	1
\$125.00	1
<hr/>	
\$1022.00	19 Parishioners

Parishioner Total: \$1022.00

Average / parish household (40): \$24.93

Weekly Stewardship Goal: \$2125.00

Shortfall: **(\$1103.00)**

Proceeds from Breakfast: \$215.00

THE LITURGY OF THE PRESANCTIFIED GIFTS

Adapted from an article by Very Rev. Thomas Hopko

The eucharistic Divine Liturgy is not celebrated in the Byzantine Church on lenten weekdays, since the full Divine Liturgy has a joyful character not in keeping with the somberness of the Great Fast. However, in order for the faithful to sustain their lenten effort by participation in Holy Communion, the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is served. The service is an ancient one in the Byzantine Church. We officially hear about it in the canons of the seventh century, which obviously indicates its development at a much earlier date.

On all days of the holy fast of Lent, except on the Sabbath, the Lord's Day, and the holy day of the Annunciation, the Liturgy of the Presanctified is to be served (Canon 52, Quinisext, 692).

The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is an evening service. It is the solemn lenten Vespers with the administration of Holy Communion added to it. There is no consecration of the eucharistic gifts at the presanctified liturgy. Holy Communion is given from the eucharistic gifts sanctified on the previous Sunday at the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, unless, of course, the feast of the Annunciation should intervene; hence its name of "presanctified."

The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is served on Wednesday and Friday evenings, although some churches may celebrate it only on one of these days. It comes in the evening after a day of spiritual preparation and total abstinence. The faithful who are unable to make the effort of total fasting because of weakness or work, however, normally eat a light lenten meal in the early morning.

During the psalms of Vespers, the presanctified gifts are prepared for communion. They are transferred from the altar table where they have been reserved since the Divine Liturgy, and are placed on the table of oblation. After the evening hymn, the Old Testament scriptures of Genesis and Proverbs

are read, between which the celebrant blesses the kneeling congregation with a lighted candle and the words: "The Light of Christ illumines all," indicating that all wisdom is given by Christ in the Church through the scriptures and sacraments. This blessing was originally directed primarily to the catechumens -- those preparing to be baptized on Easter -- who attended the service only to the time of the communion of the faithful.

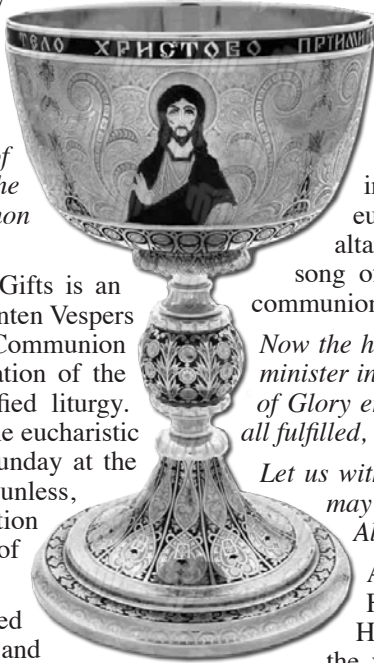
After the readings, the evening Psalm 141 is solemnly sung once again with the offering of incense. Then, after the litanies of intercession and those at which the catechumens were dismissed in former days, the presanctified eucharistic gifts are brought to the altar in a solemn, silent procession. The song of the entrance calls the faithful to communion.

Now the heavenly powers (i.e., the angels) do minister invisibly with us. For behold the King of Glory enters. Behold the mystical sacrifice, all fulfilled, is ushered in.

Let us with faith and love draw near that we may be partakers of everlasting life. Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.

After the litany and prayers, the Our Father is sung and the faithful receive Holy Communion to the chanting of the verse from Psalm 34: "O taste and see how good is the Lord. Alleluia." The post-communion hymns are sung and the faithful depart with a prayer to God who "has brought us to these all-holy days for the cleansing of carnal passions," that he will bless us "to fight the good fight, to accomplish the course of the fast, and to attain unto and to adore the holy resurrection" of Christ.

The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is traditionally considered to be the work of the sixth-century pope, Saint Gregory of Rome. The present service, however, is obviously the inspired liturgical creation of Christian Byzantium.



A FASTLESS FAST?

Source: Eparchy of Newton

CHEESEFARE SUNDAY IS TRADITIONALLY the last day for eating dairy products until Pascha, as the Great Fast begins. This poses a problem in our society where meat and dairy are the substance of every meal. Some people say that they cannot do without meat and so they only fast sporadically. By this they may mean they need protein and are not aware of other sources of protein, such as beans, peas, soy products (tofu), as well as seeds and nuts. But it is perhaps more likely that people miss the taste of meat, fish or dairy products more than their protein content.

As a result many people replace these foods, not with vegetables and grains, but with meat and dairy substitutes made to taste like meat and dairy products. Technically these foods are not meat or dairy – they only taste like them – so they don't break the Fast. Or do they?

Christian fasting is not based on an avoidance of any foods because they are unclean or taboo in any way. Neither do we abstain from meat or dairy during the Fast for health reasons, out of respect for the creatures that produce them or for environmental concerns, legitimate as they may be. We do not even fast during this season to lament Christ's suffering and death. As St John Chrysostom wrote, "The Passion is not a reason for fasting or mourning but one for joy and exultation" (*Sixteenth Homily on Matthew*).

Fasting in the Eastern Churches is a tool for retraining the ego. It is a way of curbing the "I crave" in each of us and doing it together as a community. Fasting is a type of self-denial, an imitation of Christ's own emptying Himself in order to share our human condition. The liturgy expresses this poetically: "The flower of abstinence grows for the entire world from the tree of the Cross. Let us then accept the Fast with love

and take pleasure in the fruit of Christ's divine commandments" (*Orthros, First Wednesday of the Fast*). The self-emptying of the cross bears fruit in us when we strive to empty ourselves through fasting.

People with real health issues will always receive a blessing to eat meat or dairy during the Fast but for most people, their reluctance to avoid these foods – and for forty days, at that – is because they don't want to give up the taste. If we look to the Fast in the way that the Church does, as an exercise in curbing our ego, we may well decide to avoid meat and dairy "look-alikes" as well.

The teaching on fasting in the Sermon on the Mount, read at today's Liturgy, concludes with the admonition, "*Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal*" (Matthew 6:19). Fasting is a school in which we try to live by this precept. In our affluent society most of us have some "treasures on earth" which we are reluctant to give up. Fasting helps us learn that we can in fact live without some of the things on which we base our way of life.

FASTING AND COMPASSION

In the Gospel Christ admonishes us to avoid making a show of our fasting. In ancient Israel people often manifested their sorrow or repentance by tearing their garments or wearing sackcloth and smearing their faces with ashes. Christ taught the opposite: "*But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting*" (Matthew 6:17-18).

The Church encourages us to do the same, and specifies the ointment we should use: "Let us anoint the head of our soul with the oil of loving compassion" (*Canon, First Monday of the Fast*). In Greek the words for oil and mercy are virtually

identical, giving rise to the idea that the joy of the season is to be found in extending compassion to the needy. “When you give, give generously, your face lit up with joy. And give more than you were asked for...” (*Isaac the Syrian, Ascetic Treatises*, 23).

The frequency of Lenten charity suppers or alms boxes in our churches are expressions of this sentiment.

Compassion has been defined as “the deep awareness of the suffering of others coupled with the desire to relieve it.” It is much more personal than writing a check or dropping off a donation to the local thrift store. Compassion is what motivates the coming of Christ in the flesh. “If He came down to earth, it was out of compassion for the human race. He suffered our sufferings before suffering the cross, even before taking our flesh. If He had not suffered, He would not have come down to share our life with us” (*Origen, Sixth Homily on Ezekiel 6,6*). Imitating the compassion of Christ, then, means becoming personally involved with those you seek to help, even to the extent of sharing their condition. For most of us, learning to do so might take a lifetime of Lents.

It has long been the custom to speak of the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy, ways of showing compassion that are within the reach of every believer. They are:

Corporal (physical) Works of Mercy:

- Feeding the hungry
- Giving drink to the thirsty
- Sheltering the homeless
- Clothing the naked
- Visiting the sick
- Visiting the imprisoned, and
- Burying the dead

Spiritual Works of Mercy:

- Admonishing the sinner
- Instructing the ignorant
- Counseling the unsettled
- Comforting the sorrowful
- Bearing wrongs patiently
- Forgiving all injuries, and
- Praying for the living and the dead.

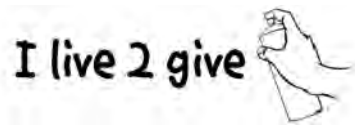
Can at least one of these form part of your exercise of the Great Fast?

ST THEODORE THE STUDITE ON FASTING

“Fasting then is a renewal of the soul, for the holy Apostle says, *Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward is being renewed day by day*. And if it is being renewed, clearly it is being made beautiful according to its original beauty; made beautiful in itself it is being drawn lovingly to the one who said, *I and the Father will come and make our dwelling with him*. If then such is the grace of fasting, that it makes us into a dwelling place of God, we must welcome it, brethren, gladly, not grieving at the plainness of the diet, for we know that the Lord, though he is able to nourish lavishly, made a banquet for thousands in the wilderness from bread and water. Also because what is unusual, with enthusiasm becomes acceptable and painless. Fasting is not defined by foods alone, but by every abstinence from evil, as our godly fathers have explained. “And so, I beg you, let us abstain from despondency, idleness, sluggishness, jealousy, strife, maliciousness, self-indulgence, self-reliance; let us abstain from destructive desire which the many-shaped serpent lays before us when we are fasting. Let us listen to the one who says, ‘The fruit which slew me was beautiful to behold and fair to eat’. ..This is what our forefather Adam suffered when he was tricked by the serpent; for when he touched the forbidden food, he found death instead of life.” (*Catechesis 54*)

LIVE TO GIVE... WHAT?

From Parish Publishing LLC



Waiting for a red light to turn green, my eye caught some bold graffiti on a corner telephone pole. “I live 2 give,” was the large black spray-painted message. “Well, that’s different,” I thought to myself. In fact, it struck me as a rather noble sentiment... at first. But then, the incongruity of a generous thought delivered by means of a careless defacing of property became apparent.

WHAT MAKES A GIFT A REAL GIFT?

I wondered what kinds of gifts does this person “live to give?” And what types of “gifts” are unwelcome ones... graffiti? Thoughtlessness? Cheap attention getters? What makes a gift a real gift? How about quality control! And before judging another, how about my own kind of gifts and my own quality control? Who sets my standard?

Because God gives first to you and to me, giving should be a response to God’s loving gifts. God’s gifts set the standard! My gifts cannot be on par with God’s gifts to me, by my gifts, large or small, can be my way of showing love and glorifying God. With the best of intentions, I should give my best, knowing that God’s grace will overcome my inadequacy. Hopefully, I, too, “can live 2 give,” but live to give my best to God and others!

KING DAVID’S ACCEPTABLE OFFERING

From Parish Publishing LLC

King David was truly remarkable in the depth of his devotion to God, but no less remarkable was the distance he was able to fall away from God at times. At one point fairly late in his reign, David ordered a census to be taken of the population of his kingdom. For reasons that are not clear from Scriptures, this census was a sin against God.

The Bible does not even hint at why this aroused God’s anger, but we may assume that the wrongness of the act was so obvious at the time that the biblical author did not feel that he needed to explain it.

It was so clearly wrong that even Joab, the commander-in-chief of David’s army, strongly advised the king not to do it, but David ordered it done anyway. Soon thereafter, a plague, which was understood to be God’s punishment for David’s sin, killed 70,000 men in Israel in three days. The plague ended before Jerusalem itself was touched by it, and David was deeply repentant of his sin.

David’s Sacrifice

The prophet Gad came to David with God’s instruction. David was to offer a sacrifice at the place where the angel of death stopped. That spot happened to be the farm of a Jebusite named Araunah.

Araunah was working at his threshing floor harvesting grain when David approached and asked to purchase the threshing floor to build an altar unto the Lord. Araunah felt that it would be a great honor to serve the king and offered to give David not only the threshing floor for the location, but also his oxen for the sacrificial animals and the threshing sleds and ox yoke for the firewood.

But David replied, “No, but I will buy it from you for a price; I will not offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God which cost me nothing.”

The gift must cost the giver

II Samuel 24:18-25 speaks loudly to us of honoring God. David could have accepted Araunah’s generous offer but in so doing he would have dishonored God and himself. The kingdom of God requires sacrificial devotion, and that can only be so when the gift costs the giver.

David knew that the sacrifice would have far less value and meaning if he offered to God that which belonged to another. It was meaningful only if it cost him. David knew something that Christians often overlook... that stewardship, which is another name for honoring God, is not an optional part of our faith, but an integral element of it. In fact, without stewardship, the rest of our Christian witness is devalued; just as David’s sacrifice would have been had he not paid for it.



HOMILY ON “FASTING” -- SEVEN QUESTIONS, SEVEN ANSWERS

His Grace, Michael ~ Orthodox Bishop of New York & the Diocese of New York and New Jersey

Question #1: Why do we fast?

Just as the children of Israel ate the “bread of affliction” (Deuteronomy 16:3) in preparation for the Passover, so Christians prepare themselves for the celebration of Pascha by observing the fast of Great Lent. Moses fasted on Mount Sinai (Exodus 34:28), and Elijah on Mount Horeb (I Kings 19:8-12). But most importantly Our Lord fasted in the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights (Matthew 4:1-2) and we imitate His example.

Question #2: But, did Jesus really teach fasting?

Yes, He instructs us, “When the Bridegroom is taken away, My disciples will fast” (Matthew 9:15). And He presumes His followers will fast, in His Sermon on the Mount when He teaches, “**When** you fast ...” not “**If** you fast”. He goes on to say, “Anoint your head and wash your face so that you do not appear to be fasting before men ... your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.” (Matt. 6:16-18).

Question #3: When did fasting on certain days originate?

As early as the first century, in the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, we read: “He (Christ) commanded us to fast on Wednesday and Friday.” The Saints explain, we fast “on Wednesday because on this day Our Lord was betrayed; and on Friday because on this day He suffered death for our salvation.”

Question #4: What is the purpose of fasting?

Although fasting has many health benefits, the primary aim of fasting is to make us conscious of our dependence on God. We voluntarily experience physical hunger in order to become aware of our true spiritual hunger. Another reason we fast is to subdue our passions and self-will. The Saints tell us there is no way we can control our urges for pleasure, money or power, if we cannot control our stomach. Fasting is the first step toward self-control. And our self-will is cut off by being obedient to the Church and her rules.

Question #5: Is fasting only a matter of diet?

No, it is moral as well as physical. True fasting is to be converted in heart and will; it is to return to God, to come home like the Prodigal Son to our Father’s

house. In the words of Saint John Chrysostom it means “abstinence not only from food but from sins.” He says, “The fast should be kept not only by the mouth but also by the eye, the ear, the feet, the hands and the other members of the body.” The eye must abstain from impure sights; the ear, from malicious gossip; the hands, from acts of injustice. Saint Basil says “it is useless to fast from food and yet indulge in cruel criticism and slander: You do not eat meat but devour your brother.” And although we may return to eating meat and cheese after Pascha comes, we should of course strive NOT to return to the sins from which we struggled to abstain during the course of the Fast. We give up rich foods for Lent ... We should give up gossip and laziness and greed, forever.

Question #6: What is the inner significance of fasting?

The deepest meaning of fasting is best summed up in the triad: prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Fasting is valueless if not combined with prayer. In the Gospel, Our Lord tells us that the devil is cast out by “prayer and fasting” (Matthew 17:21); and Acts of the Apostles records the early Christians “fasted and prayed” (Acts 13: 3). The Great Fast is certainly a time to improve our prayer life, both personally at home, and by our participation in Lenten services at church.

Question #7: And what about almsgiving?

Prayer and fasting should be accompanied by almsgiving – by love for others expressed in practical form. The second century Shepherd of Hermas insists that the money saved from abstaining from rich foods during the fast should be given to the widow, the orphan, and the poor. Lent is certainly the time to increase our works of mercy for “the least of His brethren,” for those who are in need. So, as we begin Great Lent, let our hearts sing out this hymn of the Church: Let us set out with joy upon the season of the Fast, and prepare ourselves for spiritual combat. Let us purify our soul and cleanse our flesh; and as we fast from food, let us abstain also from every passion. Rejoicing in the virtues of the Spirit, may we persevere with love.



**Українська Греко-Католицька Церква
Святого Йоана Хрестителя
St. John the Baptizer
Ukrainian Greco-Catholic Church**

4400 Palm Avenue
La Mesa, CA 91941
Parish Office: (619) 697-5085

Website: stjohnthebaptizer.org

Pastor: Fr. James Bankston
frjames@mac.com

Fr. James' cell phone: (619) 905-5278

A Declaration of Faith

There is one God, the Father of the living Word, who is His subsistent Wisdom and Power and Eternal Image: perfect Begetter of the perfect Begotten, Father of the only-begotten Son.

There is one Lord, Only of the Only, God of God, Image and Likeness of Deity, Efficient Word, Wisdom comprehensive of the constitution of all things, and Power formative of the whole creation, true Son of true Father, Invisible of Invisible, and Incorruptible of Incorruptible, and Immortal of Immortal and Eternal of Eternal.

And there is One Holy Spirit, having His subsistence from God, and being made manifest by the Son, to wit to men: Image of the Son, Perfect Image of the Perfect; Life, the Cause of

the living; Holy Fount; Sanctity, the Supplier, or Leader, of Sanctification; in whom is manifested God the Father, who is above all and in all, and God the Son, who is through all.

There is a perfect Trinity, in glory and eternity and sovereignty, neither divided nor estranged. Wherefore there is nothing either created or in servitude in the Trinity; nor anything superinduced, as if at some former period it was non-existent, and at some later period it was introduced. And thus neither was the Son ever wanting to the Father, nor the Spirit to the Son; but without variation and without change, the same Trinity abides ever.

*St. Gregory Thaumaturgos
(the Wonderworker)*