

Holy Assumption Orthodox Church
Celebrating 125 years witnessing to the Apostolic Faith

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Marblehead, OH 43440

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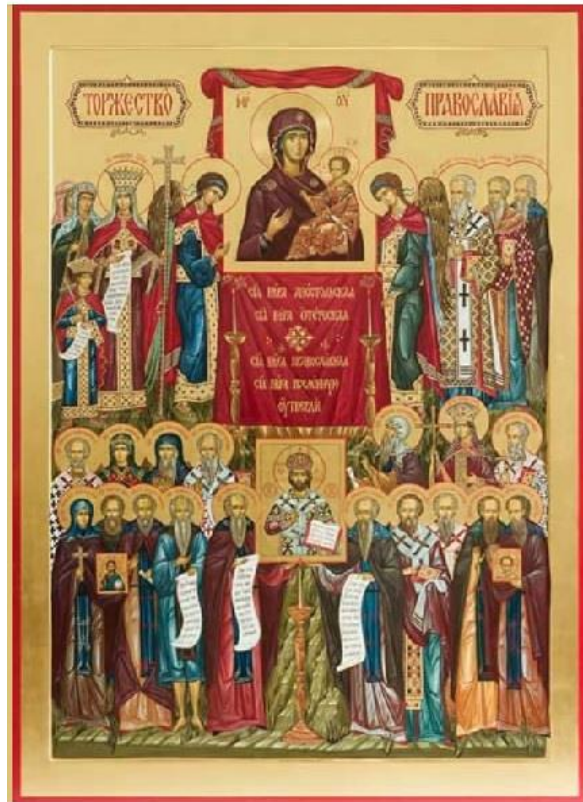
***Holy Assumption Orthodox Church is a parish of the Orthodox Church in America,
Diocese of the Midwest***

MARCH 9, 2025

**FIRST SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT
SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY**

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

Bretheren: By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being



Sunday of Orthodoxy

They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being

destitute, afflicted, tormented – of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us. Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

EPISTLE: Hebrews 12:1-10

Bretheren: Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: “My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.” If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness.

GOSPEL: Jn 1:43-51

At that time, Jesus decided to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, “Follow Me.” Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” And Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.” Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!” Nathanael said to Him, “How do You know me?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” Nathanael answered and said to Him, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” Jesus answered and said to him, “Because I said to you, ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ do you believe? You will see greater things than these.” And He said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”

GOSPEL: Mt 20:1-16

The Lord spoke this parable: The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a

day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' So, they went. Again, he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.' So, when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.' And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner, saying, 'These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.' But he answered one of them and said, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?' So, the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen."



FOR YOUR PRAYERS

Basil Glovinsky, 1007 Glendale Drive, Port Clinton, OH 43452; **Irene Vangeloff**, 454 Strouse Lane, Sandusky, OH 44870

PRAYER LIST

Parishioners & Family: Tina Rindfleisch / Sharon Shaheen (Patti Owen's sister) / Norb / Heidi Golob / Ron & Bobbie Royhab / Rodney Clevenger / Jennifer Heffernan / Tom Hileman / Pam / Jim Twarek / Ed Garrity / Patti Owens / Barbara Wroblewski / Michal Tomáš / Helena Tomášová / Ruth Sheller / Basil Glovinsky / Dale / Sophie / Carol / David Martin / Fred Soski / Chris Hannon / Subdeacon Roger Pinta / Irene Vangeloff / Sonja Rose / Ron Royhab / James Bargdill / Carole Conaway / Gary Conaway / Sharon Dietrich / Michael Glovinsky / Shirley Gresh / Joseph Habegger / Betty Kovach / Child Stella Miller / William Pipenur / Earl Rindfleisch / Helen Jean Rofkar / George Royhab / Marianne Royhab / Kathy Jacob / the child Bodhi Cassell / Gleice, Sophie & Chloe / Carol / Nora.

Other Requests: Marcia / Tony Sudac / Sarah King / Catechumen Blake Shoemaker / Catechumen Nickolas Dawenport / Catechumen Joshua Paull / Catechumen Danielle Paull / Catechumen Wrenley Paull / Arimus Paull / Linkoln Paull / Catechumen Joshua Schulden / Catechumen Ryan Stamp / Matushka Melania / Sharyn Osborne / Christine Zahm / Amy / Bill Byrnes / Susanne / Charles Schlett / Kathy Debevits / Maxwell Chaney / Anthony / Archpriest Ján Čížmár / Archpriest David Lis / Archpriest Emilian & Matushka Laryssa Hutnyan / Donald Gresh / Mark Ludvik / Robert Piznar / Mark Masica / Valerie Ritzenthaler / William / Rick Rowe / Chris.

Military: Craig Cassell / Jake Ellithorpe / Jordon Fulton / Justin Issler / Tikhon / Nicholas / & All Military



READERS LIST

Sunday Mar 9 – Jake
Sunday Mar 16 – Tim
Sunday Mar 23 – Tim



MARCH REPOSED

Michael Elchisko (1909) No date provided; Helen Millie (1910) No date provided; George Danchisen (1912) No date provided; **1-** George Danchisen (2018); **3-** Anna Stoyka (2018); **4-** Andrew Mazur (2001); **4-** Maria Pitts (2025); **6-** Frank Guzy (2002); **6-** Robert Haynal (2022); **8-** Mat. Sonya Tutko (2021); **11-** Ella Mazur (1918); **13-** Richard Michael Benya (1983); **17-** Frank Holodnak (1961); **23-** Eva Pondillo (2001); **23-** Ella Mazurik (1985); **23-** Francis Mitchell (2008); **23-** Barbara Ann Wasylenko (2017); **29-** Todd Pollack (2019); **29-** Carolyn Woodward (2000); **30-** John Rofkar (2019)

LITURGICAL SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK

MON. Mar 10	Martyr Quadratus and those with him; Gen 3:21-4:7, Prov 1:1-20
TUE. Mar 11	Saint Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem; Gen 4:8-15, Prov 5:1-15
WED. Mar 12	Venerable Theophanes the Confessor; Gen 4:16-26, Prov 5:15-6:3 6:00 PM PRESANCTIFIED LITURGY, Followed by Lenten soup social
THU. Mar 13	Translation of the relics of Saint Nikephoros; Gen 5:1-24, Prov 6:3-20
FRI. Mar 14	Venerable Benedict of Nursia; Gen 5:32-6:8, Prov 6:20-7:1 6:00 PM AKATHIST TO THE PASSION OF CHRIST, Followed by Book Club
SAT. Mar 15	Memorial Saturday , Martyrs Agapius and Seven with Him; Heb 3:12-16, Mk. 1:35-44 9:10 AM HOURS 9:30 AM DIVINE LITURGY 4:00 PM VESPERS
SUN. Mar 16	2nd SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT – Tone 5, St. Gregory Palamas 9:10 AM HOURS 9:30 AM DIVINE LITURGY Followed by Coffee hour

MARCH CANDLE SPONSORS



Altar Candles: Fr. Peter and Mat. Michelle, For Health and God's Blessings for Barbara Wroblewski, and Michal & Helena Tomáš (\$50); **Chandelier:** Available (\$50); **Eternal Light & Icon Screen:** Available (\$25); **Candles at the Cross:** Laura Kovach, Birthday blessings to Greg and in memory of Russ (\$20); **Candles at St. Tikhon Icon:** Available (\$20)

MARCH BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES



15 – Blake Shoemaker; **23** – Wrenley Paull; **27** – Josh & Danielle Paull Anniversary; **29** – Donna Schoonmaker; **30** – Bobbie Royhab; **30** – Fred Cassell; **31** – Greg Mazur

VIGILS FOR MARCH 2



Susan Guzy 1 In loving memory of father, Frank (3/6) Vichnaya Pamyat

Jean Hileman 2 For healing and recovery of Larry, Maureen, Nancy, For safe travels for Linda & Jim, Janet & Frank, Tom & Jean

Laura Kovach 3 For health and/or healing of Sarah F., Mike T., Nikki W., Andrew K., Matushka Melania, Ron R., Betty K., Margaret M., Hannah S., Mark M., Dana M., Bodhi C., Kathie J., Jerry P., Irene V, Heidi & Wayne G., Sarah K. and Brett D.

Birthday blessings to Tony

Memory eternal to Ed Vangeloff, Dan Haley, and Marcia Ontko

Sandy Martin 1 Special Intentions

Gabe Mazurik 1 Special Intentions

David & Roddie Mazurik 2 In memory of Ed, Special intentions

Natalie Twarek 9 Birthday blessing to Andy(2/27), For the Health and recovery of Mike Turinsky, For the health and recovery of Marcia Focht, Safe travel for Nikki and for Missy, Andy, Wyatt and Lily, Birthday blessing to Ruth and Mariah, For the health & recovery of Matushka Melania, For the health and recovery on Basil, Ron, Ruth and Mike, Rodney, Betty, Carol, Kayla, Pam, Jim, Heidi, Wayne, Health and healing for Father's parents Michal & Helena and Matushka's mom Barbara, and Walter, For the health of Jen, Tina & Tony, Father David, Carole, Gary, Sharon, Tina's dad, Earl, Sonya, Margi & Joe, Jackie, MaryAnn & Bob, Bodhi, Stella, Jake, Pat

ATTENDANCE



03/01 Vespers, **5** attending; **03/02** Divine Liturgy, **21** attending; **03/03** Canon of St. Andrew, **9** attending (1 guest); **03/04** Canon of St. Andrew, **13** attending (2 guests); **03/05** Presanctified Liturgy, **13** attending (1 guest); **03/06** Canon of St. Andrew, **9** attending (1 guest); **03/07** Akathist to the Passion of Christ (**7** attending)

UP-COMING EVENTS IN OUR PARISH – MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Mar 15th Memorial Saturday (*Saturday*)

Mar 22nd Memorial Saturday (*Saturday*)

Mar 25th ANNUNCIATION OF THE MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS (*Tuesday*)

Mar 29th Memorial Saturday (*Saturday*)

Apr 13th Palm Sunday (*Sunday*)

Apr 20th HOLY PASCHA (*Sunday*)



COFFEE HOUR SPONSOR LIST

Mar 9– Roddie
Mar 16– Matushka Michelle
Mar 23– Danielle & Josh (Wrenley's 2nd Birthday)

Please sign up to host coffee hour. Signup sheet is located in the Social Hall

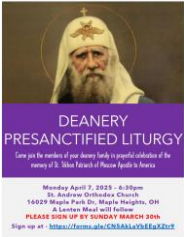


CLEANING SCHEDULE

Mar 10, Basil & Tim
Mar 17, Susan
Mar 24, Jean
Mar 31, Stephanie

CHARITY OF THE MONTH

“Danbury Food Pantry” is the charity we donate to for the month of March.



DEANERY PRESANCTIFIED EVENT

You are invited to the Deanery Presanctified Divine Liturgy which will take place on Monday, April 7, 2025, from 6:30pm at St. Andrew Orthodox Church, 16029 Maple Park Dr., Maple Heights, OH hosted by Cleveland Deanery. A Lenten Meal will follow. If you are planning to attend, please sign up at <https://forms.gle/CN5AkLaVbEEgXZtr9>
 See the Flyer on our bulletin board!



SUNDAY OFFERING

Sunday, March 2, 2025

Tithe	\$1,150.00
Candles	\$ 54.00
Vigils	\$ 70.00
Memorial Donation Fund	\$ 850.00
Holy Day Donation	\$ 345.00
Building Restoration	\$ 50.00
Danbury Food Pantry (Mar)	\$ 115.00
Total:	\$2,634.00

May the Lord reward you for your financial and spiritual support!



OUR SYMPATIES – MEMORY ETERNAL

Our deepest sympathies are offered to Fred and Teri Cassell on passing of Teri's mother †**MARIA PITTS**, who passed away on **Tuesday, March 4th** and was buried from St. Innocent Orthodox Church in Olmsted Falls. “Grant rest eternal in blessed repose, O Lord, to thy servant †**MARIA** who is fallen asleep and make her memory to be eternal! Memory Eternal!

MATUSHKA'S CORNER



Why does God let us suffer?

Christ did not promise us a life without suffering, but that we share with Him in our suffering.

“Take up your cross and follow me,” He said.
 -Matthew 16:24

Whoever carries his cross in faith, unites himself with Christ. We discover that it is not a burden, but a path to holiness.

“Prayer is food for the soul. Do not starve your soul. It is better to let the body go hungry. Do not judge anyone forgive everyone. Consider yourself worse than everyone in the world, and you will be saved. As much as possible, be more quiet.” - St. Joseph of Optina

Marry Me Beans (with creamy Tuscan sauce)

- 2 Tablespoon oil of choice
- 1 large onion, diced
- 4 garlic cloves, minced



- 1 teaspoon tomato paste**
- 1 Tablespoon Italian seasoning**
- Salt and pepper to taste**
- 1 cup full fat coconut milk or dairy free milk of your choice**
- 7 oz sun dried tomatoes, chopped**
- 17.6 ounces butter beans, drained and rinsed**
- Handful of baby spinach**
- Chili oil for topping (optional)**
- Serve with warmed sourdough bread**

In a large pan, heat oil over medium heat. Add diced onion and garlic together. Sauté for 5-7 minutes, until the onion is translucent and the garlic is fragrant.

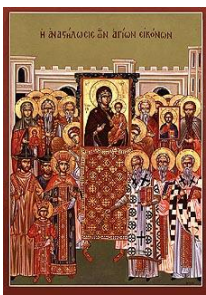
Stir in the tomato paste and cook for about 1 minute, until well combined.

Add Italian seasoning and salt and pepper to taste. Stir well.

Pour in cream of choice, stirring continuously, until well mixed. Add the chopped sun dried tomatoes and stir to combine. Cook for about 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Continue to cook for about 10 more minutes or until the sauce has thickened to your desired consistency. Once the sauce has thickened, stir in the baby spinach. Stir for about 2-3 minutes, until the baby spinach has wilted.

Serve and enjoy with sourdough bread!



1st Sunday of Great Lent: Sunday of Orthodoxy

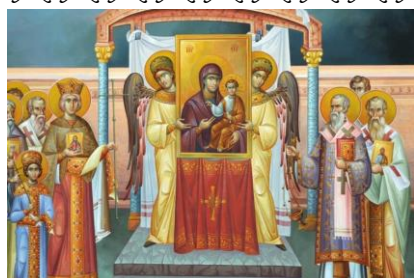
Commemorated on March 9

The first Sunday of Great Lent is called the Sunday of Orthodoxy because it commemorates the restoration of the Holy Icons and the triumph of the Orthodox Faith against the terrible heresy of the Iconoclasts, i.e. those heretics who refused to honor the Holy Icons. For more than a hundred years the Church was disturbed by the evil doctrine of iconoclasm.

The first Emperor to persecute the Church was Leo the Isaurian, and the last was Theophilus, the spouse of Saint Theodora (February 11), who reigned after her husband's death and re-established Orthodoxy in the time of Patriarch Methodios (June 14). Empress Theodora proclaimed publicly that we do not kiss the Icons as a sign of worship, nor do we honor them as "gods," but as images of their prototypes.

In the year 843, on the first Sunday of the Fast, Saint Theodora and her son, Emperor Michael, venerated the Holy Icons together with the clergy and the people. Since that time this event has been commemorated every year, because it was definitively determined that we do not worship the Icons, but we honor and glorify all the Saints who are depicted on them. We worship only the Triune God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and no one else, neither a Saint, nor an Angel.

Originally, the Holy Prophets Moses, Aaron, and Samuel were commemorated on this Sunday. The Alleluia verses appointed for today's Liturgy reflect this older usage.



The Unity of the Faith by Hieromonk Gabriel

We are gathered here together on the first Sunday of Great Lent to celebrate the Triumph of Orthodoxy. This feast was originally established to commemorate the victory of the venerators of icons over the iconoclasts, but more generally we also commemorate on this day the victory of the true Orthodox faith over all the heresies that have challenged it throughout history.

There is an interesting fact which we easily overlook about this feast: the original Triumph of Orthodoxy, the triumph of the veneration of icons, was not only a victory in a battle waged within the Church, but also within society and the entire Byzantine Empire at large. You see, when the final victory of the holy icons occurred, the Seventh Ecumenical Council was long over, the bishops had already decreed that the icons are a holy and necessary part of our faith. It was rather the iconoclast emperors who had continued to resist; therefore, the Triumph of Orthodoxy was not only a theological triumph, but also a political triumph.

I mention this fact because it stands in such sharp contrast to our own world today: we have come to assume that our Christianity is, by and large, a strictly private affair. We do not generally think of our faith as something appropriate to bring openly into public life. And we especially become nervous at any mention of theology or dogma around those who do not share our faith: this subject seems just too contentious, too divisive, and also rather unnecessary and perhaps a bit embarrassing. We have come to believe that society is better off without such things, that we will all get along much better if we simply leave those things in the privacy of our own homes and churches.

Such a view of religion and society, the “separation of church and state,” is a quite recent phenomenon and totally unique in human history. It would take too much time to get into the political, philosophical, and historical causes behind this idea, but suffice it to say that it is almost universally believed today by everyone, Christians, and atheists alike.

But is it true? Despite the great syncretist goal on which America was founded—*E Pluribus Unum*, “Out of the Many, One”—we now watch as our country daily grows ever more divided by class, race, culture, and ideology. Our national discourse is plummeting—indeed, has plummeted—into an abyss of vitriol, hostility, bitterness, and resentment. Meanwhile, our schools are no longer safe places to send our children; divorce and abortion have become ever-present facts of life; depression and anxiety are the norm; and modern life has become so meaningless, so unbearably empty, that drug overdose is now the leading cause of death in Americans under fifty. Religion in general and Christ in particular have all but vanished from public life all across the world; yet the dream and promise of a peaceful and enlightened secular society, grounded in shared ideals of humanism, is nowhere to be found. Certainly, this has not been for lack of effort; indeed, the history of the past several centuries reads like a catalog of failed attempts to create such a society.

But the reality is that this society does not and cannot possibly exist. Christ said: “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.” How can we think to create a good and healthy society that does not follow the Way, is not founded on the Truth, and does not seek to bring Life to all its people? For as St. Paul writes: “other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (I Cor. 3:11).

So, what am I saying, that we ought to unify society by forcibly creating a theocracy, at the edge of the sword? Of course not. But what I am saying is that we must, above all else, unify our own hearts. We cannot continue to divide our lives into career, family, politics, entertainment, and over there in one small corner our Christianity. Our faith is not something to take out and look at for an hour on Sunday mornings, and then put back away again safely for another week. Such a faith is no faith. It is only a lifeless idol; it cannot save us, and it cannot save those around us.

And the world today desperately needs our Holy Orthodox Faith. It is the pearl of great price, worth far more than all the treasures in all the world put together. It is only Christ and His Holy Church that can heal the spiritual sickness and existential pain that we see all around us every day. But the plain fact is that the people around us, in all likelihood, have precisely one chance of ever finding the Church: through us. Through the witness of our daily lives. As someone once said: Christians should live in such a way that, if Christ had not been raised from the dead, their lives would be absurd.

Of course, we must use discernment. We cannot force our faith on others, we cannot bring healing to those around us by relying upon arguments and contentions and debates. There will probably be times

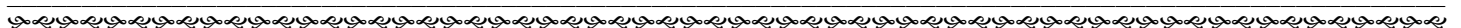
when we are called upon to preach the faith directly, but most of our lives are actually a preparation for such times. Most of the time, we are called simply to be Christians in every place and at every moment of our lives, without exception. And that means to begin and end every day with prayer. It means to pray as much as possible throughout the day, and to pray openly with the sign of the Cross before and after meals, whether at home or in public. It means not to watch anything that you would be ashamed to watch with your children or your priest. It means to seriously keep each one of the fasts. It means to attend church as often as you can. It means to go regularly to confession, repenting sincerely of all the things in your life that keep you from God. It means to never, ever say an unkind word about anyone, whether openly or behind their back. It means to always put everyone before yourself. It means to make real, meaningful sacrifices for those in need, especially strangers and the poor. It means to forgive everyone for everything, all the time and no matter what. It means to never judge another human being for anything whatsoever. It means to thank God sincerely for every single thing in your life, even the things that are the most unpleasant, confusing and painful. It means to trust God totally, and to obey Him completely. In short, it means to die to everything in this world, to take up whatever crosses God may send you, and to follow Him.

Perhaps you might think that this sounds a bit unrealistic, suitable maybe for monks but beyond what God expects of people living ordinary lives in the world. If so, then I suggest a very simple and purely scientific experiment: just try it. Try this Lent to remember Christ all the time, to really love Christ with every thought and word and action. Try really keeping the fast. Try going without impure and frivolous entertainment. Try praying like it really, really matters. Try giving up things that you want for the sake of those around you. Try being the kindest to the people that you like the least. Try to really live as though all the pleasure and honor and possessions and prestige that this life can offer mean absolutely nothing in comparison with eternity. Try living like you could die tonight. And then see—even if you don't do a very good job of it—whether your life doesn't become better. See whether your life doesn't become fuller and not emptier, richer and not poorer, more joyful and not more dull. I'm not saying that it will be easy. But I promise you that it will be worth it.

Because God, Who is our loving Father, never gives a single commandment that is not solely for the sake of our own eternal joy and happiness. He really does know better than we do what is good for us; but we must discover this fact for ourselves, in actual experience in our own lives. We must be willing to take the risk of believing God. But despite our fears, every sacrifice we make to God is never, ever something that we lose. He always gives back the gift a thousandfold, and we always find ourselves infinitely richer and not at all poorer for having made the sacrifice. After all, God does not need Lent. We do. And so do all the people around us, because as St. Seraphim of Sarov said: "Acquire the Spirit of Peace, and a thousand souls around you will be saved."

And once we begin to live in this way, once the Holy Spirit begins His work of transformation and deification in our hearts, then and only then we will be able to speak to others of the holy truth of our faith. Because then and only then will anyone have a reason to listen. The world will never know Christ if we never speak openly of Him; but if the world does not see Christ in us, if it does not meet Christ in us, then in all our talk they will know us for what we truly are: Pharisees and hypocrites. But though they will know us, they will not know Christ. How sad it is, how shameful it is, that so many living in the world today have known only these two types of Christians: those who are silent about their faith, and those who are hypocrites.

Let us then sincerely repent of these two great sins. Let us learn with the help of God to become true Orthodox Christians. Let us pray fervently to the Lord, and let us all strive to acquire the Holy Spirit in every aspect of our lives during this Lenten fast, so that not only we but a thousand souls around us will be able to experience together the supreme and incomparable joy of the Lord's Pascha, both now and in the eternal kingdom which is to come. May God grant us this, through the intercessions of the Most Holy Theotokos and of all the saints. Amen.





March 2, 2025
Protocol 03/001

To the clergy, monastics, and faithful of the Orthodox Church in America, beloved children in the Lord,
Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

We read in the life of St. Euthymius the Great that, in the time of the great Palestinian monastic fathers, many of the monks had a practice of retreating into the desert, not just for the forty days of Lent, but for the entire period between Theophany and Palm Sunday. This practice is referenced in the hymns of the Triodion. At Matins on Friday of the Sixth Week—the last of day of Lent—the final troparion of the second canon proclaims: “All who dwell in deserts, in mountains and in caves, draw near and assemble with us, to meet the King and Master with palms in your hands; for he comes to save our souls.” Such a practice is unthinkable in our time, even for most monastics. Still, this practice holds an important lesson for all Orthodox Christians as we prepare for Great Lent. Namely, that ascetic effort should not be divorced from silence, *hesychia*, a withdrawal from the tumult of the world.

In fact, the cultivation of silence has a special value in this age of constant noise. Social media platforms capitalize, quite literally, upon our endless “engagement” with one another. Advertising is ubiquitous, invading every nook of our life, sometimes in truly insidious forms. Thanks to smart phones, a barrage of “entertainment”—podcasts, TikTok videos, YouTube Shorts, Spotify playlists, mobile games—is constantly at our fingertips. News outlets try to persuade us to read or watch or listen to the world’s happenings on a 24-hours-a-day basis. Streaming services like Netflix and live-streaming services like Twitch provide us with a nearly endless river of “content.” And the prevailing ideology tells us that self-expressions and making ourselves “heard” are among life’s highest values.

However, if we constantly fill our eyes and minds with soul-numbing entertainment, what room do we leave for the encounter with God? If we constantly fill our ears with the sound of our own voice and opinions and expression, how shall we hear the eternal Word of the Father?

Therefore, I call upon each of us, all the clergy, monastics, and faithful of the Orthodox Church in America, to make a Lenten commitment to cultivate silence in our life in some concrete way. I offer here but a few examples, asking each of us to consider adapting the practice of silence to the realities of our own daily life. We might:

- fast from posting on social media, or perhaps fast from using social media entirely, even passively;
- limit our time on the computer by turning it off at dinnertime and not turning it on again till after breakfast the next day;
- make rules around cellphone usage—no entertainment apps, no podcasts or videos.
- give up all streaming services for the entirety of Lent, or even give up movies, television, and videos altogether for the holy Forty Days.

Regardless of our other efforts, all of us would benefit from resolving to spend 10 minutes or half an hour in complete silence each day, both for the period of the Fast and beyond. In this regard, I recall the 8th and 9th maxims of Protopresbyter Thomas Hopko: “Practice silence, inner and outer. Sit in

silence 20 to 30 minutes each day.” It would behoove all of us to practice such deliberate silence in addition to the time we spend in prayer each day.

This practice of silence will take effort, and we may find that we fall short of our goals. But, as with every ascetic effort, we recognize that we are passionate sinners, weak and erring, and in need of God’s strengthening grace. Despite our failures, we know that Christ receives and rewards authentic struggle. As St. John of the Ladder says, to fall is human, but to remain fallen is proper only to the demons. If we come up short, we repent and try again, and if we keep trying, by God’s grace, we will notice a change in ourselves.

To wit, when we cultivate silence, we weaken our passionate ties to the world. We challenge our tendency to idolize our own words and actions. We become more vigilant, noticing the movements in our mind and soul, helping us to see our own sinfulness and our need for Christ. Perhaps most importantly, when we are still and silent, we allow God to act and to speak.

“Be still, and know I am God,” says the holy Scripture (Ps. 45:10); the Word of God came to the holy prophet Elijah in the silence after the storm, as a still, small voice (1 Kings 19:12). When Christ quieted the winds and waves, saying “Silence, be still,” then the disciples recognized his power (Mk. 4:39). If we, too, wish to encounter his power and his Person, we must practice stillness, allowing him to calm the waves of passion and worldliness that trouble our heart and soul.

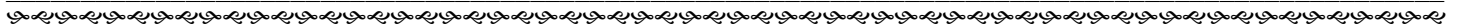
The Russian term for a monastic novice is *poslushnik*: the one who obeys, or, more fundamentally, the one who listens. Though we may not be able to retreat into the desert like the great monastic fathers of old, at least we can imitate the novice’s way of life by cultivating a small measure of silence and attention in our lives. In addition to our usual and necessary Lenten efforts in fasting, prayer, almsgiving, this Lent, let us all become novices in spirit, through silence learning to listen to God and to obey his word, in which lies our salvation and his great mercy.

Wishing all of you a soul-saving Forty Days, with my primatial blessing and prayers, I remain,

Yours in Christ,

+TIKHON

Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada





Orthodox Church in America
DIOCESE OF THE MIDWEST

Monday, 3 March 2025
Monday of the First Week of Lent
№. 025

ARCHPASTORAL GREETINGS OF ARCHBISHOP DANIEL
ON THE FIRST DAY OF GREAT LENT

*“Let us begin the fast with joy!
Let us prepare ourselves for spiritual efforts!
Let us purify our soul and cleanse our flesh!
Let us fast from every passion as we fast from food!
Let us rejoice in virtues of the Spirit and fulfill them in love,
that we all may see the most sacred Passion of Christ our God,
and rejoice in spirit at the Holy Pascha!”*
(Sticheron at Vespers, Monday of the First Week of Lent)

Beloved Fathers, Sisters, and Brothers in the Lord,

As we enter the spirit of prayer and repentance today, please know that I am remembering all of you with love and gratitude. On this first day of the Great Fast, I pray with you and for you that the Lord will grant us all a grace-filled forty days. May our shared Lenten journey bring all of us to also share in the fullness of Christ’s joy as we celebrate Pascha, the glorious Feast of Feasts!

With love in Christ our Savior,

DANIEL
Archbishop of Chicago and the Midwest