

2024 Lenten Calendar

Dear Parish Family,

*The end is drawing near, my soul, is drawing near!
But you neither care nor prepare.
The time is growing short. Rise!
The Judge is at the very doors.
Like a dream, like a flower, the time of this life passes.
Why do we bustle about in vain?
(St. Andrew's Canon, Monday's reading: 4.2)*

As we enter into the liturgical period of Great Lent, starting on March 18th this year, we begin our journey to the great day of resurrection, Pascha. What we are able to receive from this journey cannot be underestimated, but we must make ourselves ready. Just as one would not start any journey without preparation, so it is with Great Lent. We say to our souls the words of St. Andrew, "Why do we bustle about in vain?" Make haste and draw near!

The Church in her wisdom not only provides a map through this journey but also tools to aid us in our repentance. Two of these tools are the Canon of St. Andrew, which can be read here, and the prayer of St. Ephraim, which is added to all of our weekday services as well as to our daily prayers. These prayers are not meant to drive us to despair but to till the soil of our hearts toward repentance, making ready the ground for the seed of life. May we all diligently commit ourselves to the task at hand. Take courage, commit yourselves to the journey. Let us not take lightly the martial nature of this endeavor but be alert and attentive as we seek the face of God.

Asking your forgiveness and in the love of Jesus Christ,

~Priest Paul Hamner

Great Lent: (March 17 - April 27) Forgiveness Sunday through Lazarus Saturday

Holy Week : (April 28 - May 4) Palm Sunday through Holy Saturday

Holy Pascha: Sunday, May 5

Bright Week: Monday, May 6 thru Saturday, May 11

General Lenten Fasting Guidelines

1. No meat or dairy products—essentially a vegan diet—thru the end of Holy Week.
2. Wine and olive oil are allowed on weekends and on certain feast days (refer to calendar).
3. Fish/wine/olive oil may be eaten on Annunciation and Palm Sunday.
4. Shellfish is allowed during Lent, but try to save for the weekends and feast days. Some Orthodox will eat canned fish on occasion.
5. Increase prayer life, church attendance, and spiritual reading.
6. Increase works of mercy—we show honor to the Lord by helping the poor.
7. Guarding of the heart and tongue.

Eucharistic Fasting Guidelines

1. If a Liturgy is earlier than noon, fast from midnight on.
2. If a Liturgy is in the afternoon, fast, if possible, completely from food and water for 6 hours before receiving Communion.
3. If you arrive late to an evening Liturgy because of work or traffic, but have prepared yourself by fasting, prayer, and recent confession, receive Holy Communion despite arriving late. (On Sundays this probably does not apply.)
4. Children should be included in Lenten meals. Parents may need to supplement “fast” appropriate foods with non-Lenten foods, but our children can and should participate in the lifestyle changes that Lent brings. If in doubt about how to modify these guidelines, please see the priest.

Fasting during Clean Week, March 18-23

1. If possible, eat extremely simple foods (xerophagy or “dry-eating”) such as nuts, vegetables, fruits, bread. Xerophagy helps us spend less time on food prep, yet keep up our strength for prayer and labors.
2. Mid-week on Wednesday and Friday evenings we have a cooked meal such as soup and salad. On Friday, March 22 we begin our weekly soup and salad meal after evening Presanctified Liturgy.
3. Be as strict as you can without causing sickness or endangering self or others.
4. Simpler food preparations leave more time for prayer and worship.

Fasting During Holy Week, April 29–May 4

1. Similar to Clean Week (xerophagy and simple foods)
2. Holy Friday is the strictest fast of the entire year.
3. After Liturgy on Holy Saturday, we break our fast with blessed bread and wine (and other “dry” foods). We begin fasting again, in preparation for the Paschal Liturgy by 7 PM.

The End of Great Lent ~ Days of Transition

Great Lent ends on the Friday before Lazarus Saturday; this year the date is April 26th. We will be serving Matins on this day (Friday, 4/26) at 6pm in preparation for liturgy the following morning. Lazarus Saturday is a resurrectional feast commemorating the raising of Lazarus from the dead (see John 11). The day is a traditional day for baptisms and chrismations—from death to life in Christ. On Lazarus Saturday, we will have the baptisms of many of our catechumens at 8:30am, followed by divine liturgy at 10:00am. All church members should be praying daily for our catechumens!

- Friday, April 26: 6 PM, Matins. Runs about 45 minutes + -
- Saturday, April 27: 8:30 AM, Baptisms
10 AM, Divine Liturgy

Entrance into Jerusalem / Palm Sunday

This Feast commemorates the Entrance of the Lord into Jerusalem before His Passion. Palms are blessed at the Vigil service. We hold them throughout the Liturgy the next morning, then place the blessed palms behind our icons at home.

- Saturday, April 27: 6 PM, Vigil (about 2 hours)
- Sunday, April 28: 9 AM—Divine Liturgy and Procession
6 PM, Matins of Great and Holy Monday (1.25 hr)

Holy Week

GREAT AND HOLY MONDAY, TUESDAY AND WEDNESDAY

The Matins of Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday (which we will serve by anticipation on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday evenings) takes its name from the Gospel reading about the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins waiting for the Bridegroom (Matt.25), and from the hymn: “Behold! The Bridegroom comes at midnight, and blessed is the servant whom He shall find watching...”

On Sunday evening we read Matthew 21:18–43. Midnight is the moment when the old day comes to its end and a new day begins. It is thus the symbol of the time in which we live as Christians, not asleep, but watchful for the Lord’s appearance. On the one hand, the Church is still in this world, sharing in its weaknesses and tragedies. Yet, on the other hand, her true being is not of this world, and her mission is to announce and to reveal the coming of the Kingdom and of the New Day. Her life is a perpetual watching and expectation, a vigil pointed at the dawn of this new day. One of the most beloved hymns from these services says the following: “Thy Bridal Chamber I see adorned, O my Savior, but I have no wedding garment that I may enter, O Giver of Light, enlighten the vesture of my soul and save me.”

- Sunday, April 28: 6 PM, Bridegroom Matins (about 1.5 hour in length)
- Monday, April 29: 6 PM, Bridegroom Matins for Tuesday
- Tuesday, April 30: 6 PM, Bridegroom Matins
- Wednesday, May 1: 6 PM, Presanctified Liturgy

GREAT AND HOLY THURSDAY

- Thursday, May 2: 11:30 AM, Vesperal Liturgy for the Mystical Supper

The name “Last Supper” for Christ’s meal with His Apostles is only last in earthly terms, but first in its initiating the Apostles and us into the Eucharistic Love offered to us in the Body and Blood of Christ. The Kingdom is revealed as True Food, which is the antidote to death and the Medicine of Immortality. This scene of love and offering is the context for the ultimate betrayal of Christ by the disciple Judas and the glory of God’s humility.

- Thursday, May 2: 6 PM, Matins of Holy Friday: the Reading of the 12 Passion Gospels (3 hours). In this dramatic, yet very sober Thursday evening Matins service (Matins for Holy Friday by anticipation), we hear twelve selections from the Holy Gospel about the

Passion of the Lord. The first reading from St. John Chapter 14 is especially lengthy, and sets the context for everything else that is to happen. These Gospel readings are interspersed between the profound hymnography, which is our response to the dreadful occurrence of the betrayal, trial, beating and crucifixion of the Lord of Glory. Bells are tolled at the beginning of each reading. This unique and soul-stirring Service is one of the highlights of Holy Week and one in which all Orthodox Christians ought to participate. We hold candles throughout the Service. Many people take the lit candle home to light the lamps in front of their home icons.

GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY:

The Day of the Cross

This day is kept as one of the most significantly holy days of the year for Orthodox Christians. We take the day off from work in honor of the Lord's voluntary crucifixion, and fast strictly from all food and drink the entire day, eating only after sundown, only if we must. We work toward an attitude of inner and outer quietness (with radios and TVs off). Friday begins the Three-Day Pascha of our Lord. We have reached the destination of our Lenten Journey.

- Friday, May 3: 9 AM, Royal Hours (1.5 hour)

3 PM, Great Vespers of the Blessed Sabbath

Great and Holy Friday is the Day of the Cross—a revelation of spiritual darkness in which we see God rejected, yet also a day of redemption, of God's unsurpassable love for us. The death of Jesus Christ is revealed to us as a saving death and the destruction of death itself by the Divine Love in Christ. At the end of Vespers the Icon of Christ in the life-giving tomb, the Holy Shroud, called the "Plaschanitsa" in Slavonic, or the "Epitaphios" in Greek, is solemnly carried out of the Altar and placed in the center of the Church. We kiss it, giving honor not to the material and paint, but to the One Who gave His life as a ransom to death. The long day of fasting comes to an end with Vespers, and the new Liturgical Day—The Blessed Sabbath—begins. The fast, and therefore, the Vigil, continues.

GREAT AND HOLY SATURDAY:

The Blessed Sabbath

We now reach the liturgical center of the Orthodox Church year, a day which leads us from sorrow to joy, from death to life, from prophecy to fulfillment, the day of the destruction of death and the victory of the Cross.

- Friday, May 3: 6 PM, Matins of Holy Saturday with the Lamentations (about 2.75 hours long) *This is one of the most hauntingly beautiful services of our Church year. If you have never attended, please make every effort to be here.*

With the end of Holy Friday Vespers comes the "Blessed Sabbath," the Day of Rest, and the revelation of the Life-Giving Tomb of Christ. This is the Day that connects Great Friday with the Resurrection: sorrow is transformed into joy, and so, this is one of the most favored of Holy Week Services. We gather around the "Tomb" in the center of

the Church, and like the Theotokos, and the women bearing myrrh, we sing our lamentations—short verses of profound theological depth, interspersed with that most magnificent of hymns, Psalm 118 (119), the longest Psalm in the Bible, which is a pure expression of the love for the law of God, His Will and Providence for mankind, and the very song of the Word of God Himself. When the Lamentations are finished, we continue singing Resurrectional hymns which offer to us the meaning of what the Lord has done and does for us. Near the end of the Service we join in the procession around the Church holding candles, singing “Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.” This is not merely a “funeral procession,” but a procession of the Son of God, the Holy Immortal One, the Light of Life dispelling the darkness of Hades and death, announcing to “Adam of all generations” the joy of the forthcoming Resurrection. In the words of the Iroms of Ode 9 on Great and Holy Saturday,

Do not lament me, O Mother, seeing me in the tomb, the Son conceived in the womb without seed, for I shall arise and be glorified with eternal glory as God. I shall exalt all who magnify you in faith and in love.

He proclaims that the “dead in the graves will arise.” We re-enter the Church passing under the Shroud. Once within the Church we hear the Prophecy of the Resurrection from Ezekiel 37, the Lessons from Galatians 3:13–14, and I Cor. 5:6, and the reading from Matthew 27:62–66. When Matins has ended, people will take turns reading the Psalms all night long at the Shroud, keeping watch until the next Service on Saturday afternoon.

• Saturday, May 4: 1 PM, Vesperal Liturgy of Great and Holy Saturday (2.5 hours)

Here at the Church, the morning hours Great and Holy Saturday are profoundly quiet, and full of expectation. There is no other day in the entire Church year with this level of expectation. Come to the Church early just to feel this sense of preparation and focus, as we enter into the great Sabbath Rest of Christ. In this most liturgically magnificent of creations of the Church, we hear the choir chant: “Today Hades groans and cries aloud: ‘my power has been destroyed. I accepted a Mortal Man as one of the dead. Yet I cannot keep Him prisoner...’”

We hear 15 readings from the Old Testament, prophecies concerning Baptism, Resurrection and Salvation which are the last catechesis of the Catechumens prior to Baptism—and the way in which we too rekindle the baptismal Grace given personally to each one of us. The purple cloths throughout the Church are put away and white cloth take their place during the hymn “Arise, O God, and judge the earth...”. We hear the Gospel of the Empty Tomb, sing the hymn “Let all mortal flesh keep silence...,” receive Holy Communion, and break our fast in a modest way with bread, dried fruits, nuts and wine. This is a strict Fasting day, with no food or drink taken prior to the receiving of Holy Communion. No oil is taken on this day. We resume our fasting for only a little longer, from about 6 PM until the Paschal Communion. Naturally, kids, the sick, elderly or infirm fast with less strictness.

At the conclusion of the Vespereal Liturgy volunteers read the Book of the Acts of the Holy Apostles before the grave until about 11:15 PM. As it is the custom to read the Psalter at orthodox vigils here we read the acts of the Holy Apostles as we make a grave watch. Awaiting the resurrection.

GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA

The Resurrection of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ

- Sat/Sun, May 4/5: 11:00 PM, Saturday evening Nocturne Service
12 AM, Matins and the Divine Liturgy (3 hours)

Pascha is the Feast of Feasts, and the Holy Day of Holy Days; the day that fulfills the old Sabbath, and is called the Eighth Day, the day beyond the days of this world and age, and the image of the Age to Come, the Eternal Day.

We begin the Service in a darkened Church with the hymns of the Midnight Service solemnly chanted before the Shroud. Come at 10:30PM to secure a good spot to stand. At the conclusion of the Midnight Service all the candles in the Church are extinguished. Out of the darkness come the voices of the clergy singing, “Thy Resurrection, O Christ our Savior, the angels in heaven sing, enable us on earth, to glorify Thee with purity of heart.”

And with this hymn, the Altar doors open and the newly lit candle is brought out and the flame is passed from person to person. We make a procession around both of the Churches—recalling the baptismal procession of the newly-illuminated and that Christ has illumined the darkness of the grave once and for all. When all have exited the Church and made the procession, we stand before the closed doors and begin the magnificent hymn: “Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered...Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life.” We all enter into the magnificently lit Church, hearing again and again the greeting: Christ is risen!

Indeed, He is risen! during the exuberance of Paschal Matins. As children doze on the floor we begin to celebrate the Divine Liturgy of Pascha, fully celebrating His Resurrection and the death of death and of sin. As the Services comes to an end, we each receive a red egg from the priest, a symbol of new life in Christ.

- Sunday, May 5: 1 PM, Sunday afternoon, Agape Vespers of Pascha
After sleeping for a few hours, we return to the Church for a bright, beautiful Vespers Service—exuberantly melodic with the joy of the Resurrection of the Lord, our own spiritual resurrection, and the pledge that we too will rise from the dead.

BRIGHT WEEK

- Monday, May 6: 9 AM, Paschal Hours and the Divine Liturgy
- Tuesday, May 7: 6 PM, Paschal Hours and Vespers

- Wednesday, May 8: 6 PM, Paschal Hours and Vespers
- Friday, May 10: 6 PM, Paschal Hours and Vespers
- Saturday, May 11: 9 AM, Paschal Hours and Liturgy; Great Vespers, 5PM