
❖ THE TORCHBEARER ❖

Vol. 10 ... No. 4

Great Lent, 2001

From the Pastor...

Beloved in the Lord:

On February 26th, the Orthodox Church begins Great Lent. As we make our way as a family, as a community, toward our Lord's empty tomb let us all strive to return to God, much like the Prodigal Son, and see what good God has to offer to fill the emptiness of the world. Please do something to observe this great gift that God gives to us. Don't let this time go by and fail to see the potential that you have within you to affect a change for the good of your mind, body and soul. Many "extra" liturgical services will be celebrated - become a part of them and become reunited with God and His Saints.

Below please find the most, in my opinion, uplifting, insightful, and hopeful sermon in the writings of the Fathers of the Church. Please don't read it! Rather, take the time to absorb these words and reflect on their meaning in our lives as Christians. You cannot help but see our Lord's Resurrection in a different light and context.

I very much look forward to seeing all of you during this most special time of the year. Please remember that I love you and pray for you. Please remember my family and me in your prayers, and remember that I am just a phone call away if you should ever need me. On behalf of my family, Khouria Joan, Alexander, Elizabeth Rose, and Nathaniel, and in anticipation of the Great Feast, I want to wish each

of you and those whom you love a most blessed Pascha, and a spiritually fulfilling Lenten journey.

With much love in Christ,

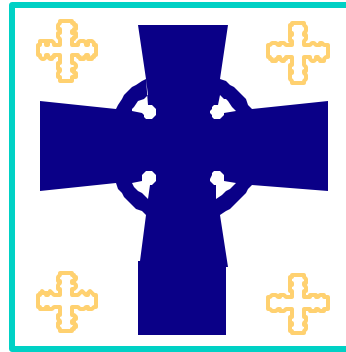
Fr. John K. Teebagy, Pastor

THE CATECHETICAL HOMILY OF SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM.

If any are pious and lovers of God, let them delight in this fair and radiant festival. If any are honest servants, let them enter and rejoice in the joy of their Lord. If any are wearied with fasting, let them now enjoy the reward. If any have worked from the first hour, let them accept their just pay. If any have come after the third, let them feast with thankfulness. If any have arrived after the sixth, let there be no doubt, for they shall suffer no loss. If any come after the ninth, let them draw near, let them not waver. If any have arrived only at the eleventh, let them not be fearful for their tardiness, for the Master is gracious and accepts the last as well as the first. He gives rest to those who worked from the first hour. He is merciful to the last and provides for the first. He gives to this one and to that one he shows kindness. He receives their labors and acknowledges the purpose, and he honors the deed and praises the intention. Therefore, let everyone enter into the joy of our Lord, and let the first and the second take part in the reward. Those rich and those poor, join hands together. Those sober and those sorrowful, honor this day. Those who fast and those who do not, be glad today. The table is full, indulge yourselves sumptuously. The calf is ample, let no one go away hungry. Let all enjoy the wealth of righteousness. Let none lament their poverty for the kingdom is revealed to all. Let none deplore transgressions, for forgiveness has dawned forth from the tomb. Let none be fearful of death, for the death of the Savior has set us free. By

tasting his flesh, death has been quenched. He who went down to Hades despoiled Hades, and Hades was embittered when he tasted Christ's flesh. Isaiah, anticipating this, cried out and said: Hades was embittered when it met you face to face below. It was embittered, for it was abolished. It was embittered, for it was mocked. It was embittered, for it was cast down. It was embittered, for it was chained. It received a body and encountered God. It received earth, and met heaven face to face. It received what it saw, and fell where it saw not. O death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory? Christ is risen, and you are overthrown. Christ is risen, and the demons have fallen. Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice. Christ is risen, and there are no dead in the tombs for Christ is raised from the dead, and has become the first fruits of those who were asleep. To him be glory and dominion to the ages of ages. Amen.

GREAT LENT



It is hard work to be a good Christian, and sometimes we may get lazy or forgetful. Great Lent is a time to help us practice skills to be a good Christian. We need to practice to be a good musician, good ball player or a good dancer. In the same

way, we need this special time to remind us how to be a good Christian - how to be like Jesus and do what He taught His followers to do. The church reminds us of the practices of Christian life and tells us to do more of it during this time.

1. Prayer

Home Prayer - Do we remember to say our prayers every day? During Great Lent, we must try to say our prayers in the morning and the evening and at each meal. Prayer is like talking to God, just as you would your parents. You tell Him thank you, ask Him for help to do His work, and tell Him how much you love Him.

Church Attendance - There are many more services to attend during Lent, such as Presanctified Liturgy, Great Compline and the Akathist Hymn (praises to the Mother of God). When we are planning a special program or game, we need to attend many more rehearsals or practices to get ready. In the same way, this is why the church asks us to attend more services to help us prepare for Pascha. Learn as much as you can about each service so you can understand what it is all about and be able to participate.

2. Fasting

On regular weeks, we usually fast from certain foods (meat) only on Wednesday and Friday. During Lent, we fast for forty days. We not only choose to fast from certain foods but also from things like going to movies and watching a favorite TV program. We then use this time to do what the church asks us to do: prayer, reading the Bible, good works, etc. Fasting also helps us to remember to give up our bad ways such as being selfish, being lazy in our chores and school work, saying unkind things and disobeying our parents and teachers.

Great Lent in the Family Home by Joan Teebagy

Children should be taught about the importance of Great Lent at an early age. They need to know that it is a special time that helps us practice being a good Christian. By experiencing Great Lent as a family, as well as individually, children can begin to assimilate, through modeling and practice, this time as a part of their spiritual development.

Encourage your child to plan activities for Great Lent. Create a calendar to mark the days of Great Lent. Attend as many of the Lenten services as you can with your children. Learn as much as you can about each service so you can help your children understand and participate. For example, have your children bring an icon to the Liturgy on the morning of the Sunday of Orthodoxy. Have them make an alms box to save money for the poor. Our archdiocese provides boxes for this purpose for the Food for Hungry Program. Spend more time with them in reading and in prayer. Participate in the fast as much as you can as a family as well as on an individual basis. Have children choose what they would like to fast on individually, such as a candy or a favorite television program and then help them to meet their goal.

The following is an excerpt from the curriculum "New Life in the Church" which hopefully will help you talk to your children about Great Lent.

3. Almsgiving

This means that you should give what you can to the poor and needy. You can use a special box to put in your nickels, dimes and quarters that you saved by not buying treats for yourself during Lent. You can then give this money to the poor. Think also about other good things you can do for others. Remember what Jesus said, "When I was hungry, you gave me food. I was thirsty, you gave me drink. I was lonely and you gave me friendship. I was naked and you gave me clothes. I was ill and you cared for me. I was in prison and you came to see me there." Matthew 25:35-36.

There is also a special prayer you will hear during the special services of Great Lent. It is a prayer written by St. Ephraim. This prayer reminds us of negative (not good) things we want to get rid of and points out the positive (good) things we want to grow in. Here is how it is said in church:

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.
Yea, O Lord and King!
Grant me to see my own errors
and not to judge my brother;
For You are blessed to the ages of ages. Amen.

Here is how you can say it at home to help you understand what it means:

O Lord and Master of my life!
Do not let me be lazy, complain and only see the
bad things,
be selfish and gossip or say bad things about
others.
But help me to be pure, humble and able to see
good things,
Help me to be patient, and have love.
Yes, O Lord and King!
Help me to see my own wrongdoing
and not to judge anyone else:
For You are blessed forever. Amen.

From the Chairman...

I hope this newsletter finds you and your family in the best of health during this most holiest Lenten period.

By now, many of you have had the opportunity to see the new chandeliers in our church. They are absolutely beautiful! I would like to give a very special thank you to Olivia Waishek and her committee for their vision and hard work to make this a reality. I would also like to thank all the people who gave special donations to help finance this very successful endeavor. I am very proud of the commitment and dedication of this committee.

The successes of the refurbishment and hanging of our precious chandelier from Museum Road, as well as the installation of the 8 new chandeliers, leads me to the topic I wanted to address in this newsletter ... parishioner involvement.

We just finished sending in our 2001 census to the Archdiocese. I am pleased at the fact that we have over 970 parishioners registered as members of our parish! However, I'm also disappointed that less than 10% of our parishioners are actively involved in our parish. What this does is puts tremendous pressure and burnout on the 100 or so people who keep our parish running from year to year.

Many of you have told me that you don't want to join so the various church organizations for fear of the time commitment involved. That's very understandable. However, ask yourself, "Can I give 2 hours a month to my church"? I think all of us can answer yes to that question. If 500 parishioners could give an average of 2 hours time per month, just think of what we can accomplish together!

You've all heard the expression "Many hands make light work". We need your help and welcome your involvement. You will hear much more about parishioner involvement in the months ahead, as we work to create and expand our parish ministry teams. Won't you say, "yes" when called upon to help? More importantly, like the parishioners who felt strongly about hanging the chandeliers, why not come forward and volunteer to make a difference. Just like they say in the Nike commercial, "Just Do It!"

If you would like to get more involved or have a new idea, please don't hesitate to contact Fr. John or me. You can always reach me by leaving a message at the church office, or e-mail me at execboard@stjohnd.org

Your brother in Christ ...

John M. Haddad
Chairman, Executive Board

Liturgical Notes...

- As is the custom during Great Lent, the clergy of the New England Deanery will celebrate Great Compline at the various churches of the deanery on Monday evenings at 7 p.m. The schedule is as follows:

Feb 26 nd	St. George, Norwood
March 5 th	St. Mary, Cambridge
March 12 th	St. George, Boston
March 19 th	St. John, Dedham
March 26 nd	St. Mary, Pawtucket
April 2 nd	St. George, Worcester

- As is usual the Church calls us to increase and intensify our prayer life. Keeping this in mind, please note that we will celebrate the Presanctified Liturgy on Wednesday evenings during Great Lent at 6:30 p.m. This year, we will worship with our sister churches of West Roxbury and Norwood for three Wednesdays. We will all gather for the Presanctified at West Roxbury on March 7th, Norwood on March 14th, and all will gather at St. John's on March 21st. All other Wednesdays during Lent we will be here. If you wish to receive the Eucharist that evening please fast (from food, drink, and smoking) from your noon meal on. Afterwards we will have, as in past years, a *Lenten* pot luck dinner. This is a wonderful opportunity for you to receive communion, observe Lent, and break bread with your brothers and sisters in Christ.
- On Friday evenings, during Great Lent, we will chant the Akathist Hymn to the Virgin Mary at 7 p.m.
- **LAZARUS SATURDAY COMMUNION BREAKFAST:** The Lazarus Saturday

Communion Breakfast will be held on April 7th this year. The Church School will host this breakfast immediately after the Liturgy, which starts at 9:30 a.m. *Remember that this service is traditionally attended by the entire family.* All are invited to be with us!

- **NOTE:** If you are planning to be anointed with oil of Holy Unction on Holy Wednesday, April 7th, and participate in communion on Holy Thursday and Pascha, **YOU MUST HAVE YOUR CONFESSION HEARD BEFORE HOLY WEDNESDAY** (i.e., **Holy Tuesday is the last night for confessions.**) CONFESSIONS during the Lenten Season will continue to be heard before and after ALL services prior to HOLY WEDNESDAY, or by appointment. **Please don't wait until Holy Week to have your confession heard. Don't miss out, because of laziness, on receiving the Eucharist!**
 - **KEEPING VIGIL AT THE TOMB OF CHRIST** - Following the Lamentations on Great & Holy Friday, April 13th, the church, led by the teens will begin to keep watch (vigil) over the tomb of Christ. We will be reading from the Psalms and Gospels all through the night. You are encouraged to sign up for an hour or so to come and keep watch together. Please watch for the sign up sheet in the hall. The youth are especially encouraged to be at the church all night. The vigil will end on Saturday morning, when we will all gather together for Divine Liturgy and partake of the Eucharist.
FOOD FOR HUNGRY PEOPLE PROGRAM - Each year at this time our Archdiocese sponsors this program that has helped to feed many hungry people all around the world. Please consider offering a generous donation to this most worthy cause; make your check payable to the Church of St. John of Damascus earmarked "Food for Hungry People." Checks may be mailed to the church or left in the vestibule of the church. We encourage the whole family to share with those less fortunate. God bless you!
 - **A WARM THANK YOU FROM FR. JOHN** - To all those who graciously welcomed me into their homes during this house blessing season, I would like to express my deepest appreciation and thanks for your gracious hospitality!! God grant you all many years!
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Church Records...

“As many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.”

Savannah Mae Vartabedian daughter of Jeffrey and Danielle (Clark) Vartabedian of Lewiston, Maine was baptized on January 14, 2001

Christina Marie Clark daughter of Gregory and Diane (Serris) Clark of Burlington was baptized on February 11, 2001

Many Years!!



“Blessed are they whom thou has chosen and taken O Lord!”



Kevin Tahmoush (30) of Boston fell asleep in the Lord on January 13, 2001. His parents, two brothers and one sister survive him. Burial was at Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park.

Nicholas Nash (82) of Hyde Park fell asleep in the Lord on January 16, 2001. His wife and family survive him. Burial was at Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park.

Elizabeth “Emma” Tawa of West Roxbury fell asleep in the Lord on February 5, 2001. Three sons and two daughters survive her. Burial was at Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park.

Memory Eternal!!



Confession...

Great Lent is the perfect opportunity for you to receive Confession, especially if you plan on receiving the Eucharist on Palm Sunday (April 7th) and Pascha (Easter – April 15th). Confession is available before and after all Lenten services, during Matins on Sunday or by appointment. Please don't wait until the last minute to come to confession! In addition, because of the many extra responsibilities Fr. John will have during Holy Week, he **WILL NOT** be able to hear Confessions

on Palm Sunday morning or from Holy Wednesday on (i.e. Holy Tuesday is the last chance for Confession for Easter). So please plan accordingly! In addition, please note that being anointed on Holy Wednesday is not a form of Confession. Hence, if you plan on being anointed on Holy Wednesday, please plan on coming to Confession before Holy Wednesday!

How Can We Keep Great Lent?

It is obviously impossible for us to go to Church every day. And since we cannot keep the Lent liturgically, the question arises: what is our participation in Lent, how can we spiritually profit by it? The Church calls us to deepen our religious conscience, to increase and strengthen the spiritual contents of our life, to follow her in her pilgrimage towards renewal and rededication to God.

Fasting...

The first universal precept is that of fasting. The Orthodox teaching concerning fasting is different from the Roman Catholic doctrine and it is essential to understand it. Roman Catholics identify **fasting** with a “good deed,” they see in it a sacrifice which earns them a “merit.” “What shall I give up for Lent?” - this question is very typical of such an attitude toward fasting. Fasting thus is a formal obligation, an act of obedience to the Church, and its value comes precisely from that of an **ascetical effort**. It is the effort to subdue the physical, the fleshly man to the spiritual one, the “natural” to the “supernatural.” Limitations in food are **instrumental**; they are not ends in themselves. Fasting thus is but a means of reaching a spiritual goal and, therefore, an integral part of a wide spiritual effort. Fasting, in the Orthodox understanding, includes more than abstinence from certain types of food. It implies prayer, silence, an internal disposition of mind, an attempt to be charitable, kind, and - in one word - **spiritual**. “Brethren, while fasting bodily, let us also fast spiritually...”



Prayer...

We must always pray. But Lent is the time of an increase of prayer and also of its deepening. The simplest way is, first, to add the Lenten prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian to our private morning and evening prayers. Then, it is good and profitable to set certain hours of the day for a short prayer: this can be done “internally” - at the office, in the car, everywhere. The important thing here is to remember constantly that we are in Lent, to be spiritually “referred” to its final goal: renewal, penitence, closer contact with God.

Spiritual Reading...

We cannot be in church daily, but it is still possible to follow the Church’s progress in Lent by reading those lessons and books which the Church reads in her worship. A chapter of the Book of Genesis, some passages from Proverbs and Isaiah do not take much time, and yet they help us in understanding the spirit of Lent and its various dimensions. It is also good to read a few Psalms - in connection with prayer or separately. Nowhere else can we find such concentration of true repentance, of thirst for communion with God, of desire to permeate the whole of life with religion. Finally, a religious book: Lives of the Saints, History of the Church, Orthodox Spirituality, etc. is a “must” while we are in Lent. It takes us from our daily life to a higher level of interests, it feeds us with ideas and facts which are usually absent from our “practical” and “efficient” world.

Change of Life...

And, last but not least: there must be an effort and a decision to **slow down** our life, to put in as much quiet, silence, contemplation, and meditation. Radio, TV, newspapers, social gatherings - all these things, however excellent and profitable in themselves, must be cut down to a real minimum. Not because they are bad, but because we have something **more important** to do, and it is impossible to do without a change of life, without some degree of **concentration** and discipline. Lent is the time when we **re-evaluate** our life in the light of our faith, and this requires a very real effort and discipline. Christ says that a **narrow path** leads to the kingdom of God and we must make our life as narrow as possible. At first the natural and selfish man in us revolts against these limitations. He wants his usual “easy life” with all its pleasures and relaxations. But once we have tasted of such

spiritual effort, once we have made by it one step towards God, the reward is great! We discover a joy that cannot be compared to any other joy. We discover the reality of the spiritual world in us. We begin to understand what St. Paul meant by “the joy and peace in the Holy Spirit.” **God himself enters our soul:** and it is this wonderful coming that constitutes the ultimate end of Lent:

“If a man loves me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him and we will come unto him and make our abode with him.” (John 14:23)

Let us make this Lent a real Lent!

(This article was excerpted from an article entitled **Great Lent: The Time of Repentance** by Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, former dean of St. Vladimir’s Seminary. For a fuller treatment on the meaning of Lent, read the book **Great Lent**, also written by Fr. Alexander Schmemmann.)

From the Virgin Mary Society...

Just a reminder that our ever popular Sfeeha sale is now underway. We have already started baking sfeeha in order to fill the many orders which we know we will receive. The deadline date for orders is March 25th with a “pick-up” date of April 1st. Order forms are available in the church office if needed. It would be appreciated if arrangements could be made so as all orders can be picked up on March 28th after church in the main hall. Thank you!!

Once again the Virgin Mary Society will sponsor their Annual Lenten Dinner which is scheduled for Friday evening, April 6th from 5:30-7 p.m.. The menu is as follows:

**M’judarra (Lentils) with Salad
Baked Fish, Spinach Pies, Hoomus
Dessert and Coffee**

\$10.00 per adult/ \$5.00 per child



Proceeds from this dinner will go to the Antiochian Women as our pledge to “Project 01” which will benefit and support many orphanages in Guatemala, Lebanon and Syria. Help us make our pledge rewarding for this very worthwhile cause by attending our dinner! For reservations please call Maryann Hamwey at (781) 326-3417 or Patti in the Church Office at (781) 326-3046. Looking forward to seeing you on April 6th.

Sincerely,

Maryann Hamwey, President

From the Fellowship of St. John the Divine...

Each year during the Lenten season, the Archdiocese sponsors Food for Hungry People program. All churches participate. The alms boxes and cans will be available at the Bengari. Everyone is aware that this project is very important. Your dedication and support is depended upon. Please make out your check to the church and earmark it "FFHP". Thank you.

Fellowship Lobster Dinner...

Make plans to attend the Annual Fellowship Lobster Dinner on May 16, 2001. For Reservations please call Linda Hakar at (781) 551-9444.

Antiochian Village Camp...

Join the celebration as we mark 20 years of faith, fellowship and fun. Last year's two-week sessions were filled to capacity, so an extra week was added to make sure there'll be room for everyone. Camper Registration forms are now available in the church office of your parish. Sessions begin filling in early spring, so it's not too soon to fill them out. Also available are applications for volunteers, staff and counselors, and counselors in training. Please call the church office for more information.

Announcements...

- **2000 ANNUAL BAZAAR:** It is our pleasure to present the final figures of the 2000 Annual Bazaar: Gross Income: \$63,000 with a Net Income of \$52,000. We'd like to express our deepest appreciation for all those dedicated, hardworking parishioners who worked diligently during the Bazaar. Our Bazaar is all about parishioners working together for a common goal...our parish. As an additional FYI, the profit from Feast Day 2000 was \$4,300. Many thanks go to all who labor and sacrifice for the well being of this community.
- **SYRIAN LEBANESE WOMEN'S CLUB ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP** for high school graduates – applications are now available by

calling Laurice Kurker at (781) 643-7991 or Rose Maloof at (617) 484-3844.

- Plan ahead and save, for the Archdiocese 45th National Convention in beautiful Century City, California July 23-29, 2001. Limited rooms available. Make your reservation today at www.antiochian2001.com. Take advantage of the Earl Bird Savings! On-line registration available with VISA or MASTERCARD. Minimum of 56K connection or greater. Or, visit at www.antiochian.org and link directly to the on-line registration via the "Departments" Pull Down Menu by selecting Convention and Conferences.

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE GREAT FAST

TO PRAY

Prayer alone is very difficult. It can be almost impossible. Prayer in the community of Faith, the Church is like a mighty river: the more it rushes together the greater it becomes. When asked how to pray, Our Lord taught his disciples to say, ***OUR Father***. Hereby we are instructed to pray together.

TO FAST

Fasting alone, like praying alone, is only for the most spiritually mature. Fasting in the rhythm of the Church, her Fasts becoming our fasts, we find not only no burden but a joy.

TO DO ALMS

Doing alms, not to be seen of men, but doing them in secret, takes humility. It is the desire not to have others know the good we do which is virtuous. It has been said that one should strive so that even one's own right hand does not know what the left hand gives. That is, we should not take account of our giving at all.

HOLY WEEK SERVICES

Saturday, April 7th, SATURDAY OF LAZARUS: Divine Liturgy at 9:30 a.m. **THEME:** The fourth day rising from the dead of St. Lazarus as the pledge of the universal resurrection of all men. The Church School will host breakfast after the Liturgy.

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Sunday, April 8th, PALM SUNDAY: Matins 9:00 a.m., Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. **THEME:** The entrance of our Lord into Jerusalem before His voluntary death.

Palm Sunday Evening: Bridegroom Matins at 7:00 p.m. **THEME:** The commemoration of the noble Joseph of the Old Testament and the fig tree which was cursed by the Lord. The procession of the icon of Christ as the bridegroom takes place.

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Monday, April 9th, HOLY MONDAY: Bridegroom Matins at 7:00 p.m. **THEME:** The commemoration of the ten virgins.

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Tuesday, April 10th, HOLY TUESDAY: Bridegroom Matins at 7:00 p.m. **THEME:** The commemoration of the woman who anointed the head & feet of our Lord with myrrh & wiped them with the hair of her head, which is contrasted with the treachery of Judas & his betrayal of Christ.

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Wednesday, April 11th, HOLY WEDNESDAY: The Sacrament of Holy Unction (Holy Oil) at 7:00 p.m. This Sacrament will be administered **ONLY** to those Orthodox Christians who have had their confessions heard **BEFOREHAND**, which is also a preparation for Holy Thursday.

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Thursday, April 12th, HOLY THURSDAY: Vespertal Liturgy of St. Basil at 9:00 a.m. It is customary for all **PREPARED** Orthodox Christians to receive the Eucharist on this day in commemoration of the Last Supper. We especially encourage parents to bring their children before going to school, if at all possible (notes for the

school will be provided.) The Church School will host breakfast after the Liturgy.

The Service of the Holy Passion Gospels at 7:00 p.m. **THEME:** The commemoration of the Passion of our Lord and the confession of the thief. The priest will carry the Holy Cross in remembrance of our Lord's voluntary suffering and journey to Golgatha.

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Friday, April 13th, GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY:

- Royal Hours at 10:00 a.m.
- Great Vespers, with the unnauling of Christ from the Holy Cross, at 3:00 p.m.
- Lamentations at 7:00 p.m. **THEME:** The commemoration of the entombment of the Divine Body of our Lord and His descent into Hades. The three parts of the hymns of praise are sung and the procession of the Bier (Tomb) takes place.

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Saturday, April 14th, HOLY SATURDAY: Vespertal Liturgy at 9:30 a.m. **THEME:** The commemoration of the Blessed Sabbath, the day on which Christ rested from all His works and reposed in the tomb.

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Sunday, April 15th, PASCHA: THE FEAST OF FEASTS, THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD, GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST: Rush Matins at 11:30 p.m. (on Saturday evening), Liturgy following. **THEME:** The commemoration of the Life - giving Resurrection of our Lord. A candlelight service takes place inside and outside the church and the people sing "Christ Is Risen." The Paschal greeting is "Christ Is Risen!" "Indeed He Is Risen!"

Agape (Love) Vespers will be here at St. John's @ noon (12:00 p.m.). St. George & St. Mary will join us. An Easter egg hunt for the children will follow.

Great Lent is Coming! by Father David Barr

Once again we will enter into Great Lent, (February 26th to April 6th (Holy Week is not part of Great Lent) the season of fasting and preparation for the Feast of Feasts, our Lord's Resurrection from the dead. As Orthodox Christians, Great Lent is an important time of the year, for this is when we make an even greater effort to pursue the spiritual life. It is the time when our attention returns to repentance and self-denial. We have additional Church services, and they tend to be longer than normal. Kneeling and prostrations become a greater part of our liturgical worship. In order for you to participate in this important time of the year, perhaps it is good to look at the origins of Great Lent and how it developed into what we experience today. Knowing why we do things is often helpful in participating in the life of the Church.

What we experience today as Great Lent is the result of a long and complete development. In the middle of the second century, the Church knew a short fast before Pascha, however the length and nature of this fast varied from place to place. The fast before Pascha was probably one to three days in length. By the middle of the next century, it seems as though this fast extended in several places to the entire week before Pascha, what we call Holy Week. In the *Didascalia Apostolorum* we read: "...therefore you shall fast in the days of Pascha from the second day of the week (i.e., Monday) and you shall sustain yourselves with bread and salt and water only up to the ninth hour until the fifth day (i.e., Thursday)...But on Friday and Saturday fast wholly and taste nothing" (ed. R.H. Connolly. 1929, p. 189). The next historical information we have on the Lenten fast comes 75 years later in a brief reference to lent in Canon 5 of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicea. By the fourth and fifth centuries, it is easy to see that the pre-Paschal fast - sometimes called the *Forty Days* - was an institution within the Church.

Although there are different theories as to how Great Lent developed, we know that it is found very early in Church history. It also seems evident that there are two themes that come together in Lent: education of the catechuminate and preparation for the Resurrection of Christ. The first is seen particularly well in the Presanctified Liturgy. This

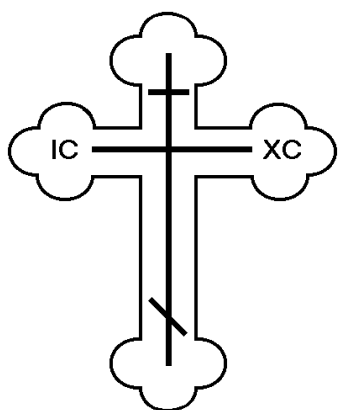
service contains several prayers for the catechumens, those who are preparing for baptism. Great Lent was an important time of preparation and education for those waiting to be baptized on Holy Saturday. Lent was the final intensive period of education (catechesis) before being initiated into the Christian community through baptism. Those preparing for this would fast and pray for a period of time before their baptism. It appears that the Church, in their support for the catechumens, would join with them in this time of fasting and prayer.

The second theme of Great Lent is found in preparation for the Feast of Feasts. Within Orthodox tradition, the concepts of preparation and fulfillment go hand in hand. Fulfillment results from intensive preparation. In the same way we find great fulfillment in a gourmet meal that has required substantial preparation, we can expect to find fulfillment in the feast of Christ's Resurrection only if we have prepared for it. One of the main reasons people find little fulfillment in the Church is that they have done little preparation. True joy and celebration come out of intense preparation. Great Lent offers each of us the opportunity to prepare ourselves to see the true and real significance of the empty tomb of Christ. The fast gives us the chance to behold things that cannot be seen with unprepared eyes. Lent enables us to rejoice and participate in Christ's Holy Resurrection in a mystical way that is beyond words.

Great Lent is much more than giving things up that we like (like chocolate, soft drinks, potato chips, etc.). Inasmuch as the Fast prepares us for the Feast of Christ's Resurrection, it also helps prepare us for our own death and resurrection as well as the great Day of Judgment because self-denial is the beginning of the Christian life. Our Lord instructed his disciples: "If any one would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Mark 8:34). To follow Christ is to practice self-denial. In fact, we cannot follow Him or take up our cross unless we first deny ourselves. It is so obvious, and yet so difficult. We cannot do whatever we want and still follow Christ. Great Lent enables us to get a grasp on this and realize the need of self-denial and discipline in our lives...

(Father David Barr is pastor of St. Peter and Paul Church, Ben Lomond, LA)

Holy Week – 1999



April 11th - Lazarus Saturday

* Matins & Confessions @
9 a.m.

* Divine Liturgy @ 10 a.m., Communion Breakfast, hosted by the Church School, to follow.

April 12th - Palm Sunday

* Matins @ 9 a.m. (**NO** Confessions)

* Divine Liturgy with procession @ 10 a.m.

* Bridegroom Matins & Confessions @ 7 p.m.

April 13th - Great and Holy Monday

* Bridegroom Matins & Confessions @ 7 p.m.

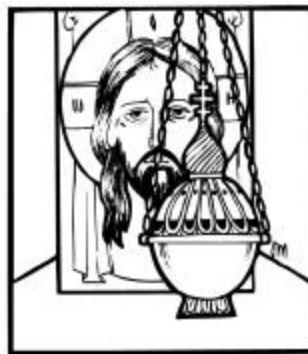
April 14th - Great and Holy Tuesday

* Bridegroom Matins & Confessions @ 7 p.m.

* **Confessions will NOT be heard after tonight**

April 15th - Great and Holy Wednesday

* Sacrament of Holy Unction @ 7 p.m. (**Note:** This Sacrament will be administered **ONLY** to those Orthodox Christians who have had their Confessions heard **BEFOREHAND**; this is also a preparation for Holy Thursday.)



April 16th - Great and Holy Thursday

* Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil the Great with washing of feet @ 9 a.m. Communion breakfast, hosted by the Church School, to follow.

* Twelve Gospels with procession @ 7 p.m.

April 17th - Great and Holy Friday

- * Royal Hours @ 10 a.m.
- * Great Vespers with unnailing of Christ from the Cross @ 3 p.m.
- * Lamentations with procession @ 7 p.m.

April 18th - Great and Holy Saturday

- * Vespers Liturgy of St. Basil the Great @ 10 a.m.
- * Rush Service @ 11:30 p.m.

Sunday, April 19th, PASCHA: The Feast of Feasts

- * Paschal Canon with Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom @ midnight - Agape Breakfast to follow.
- Agape Vespers @ noon – Church of St. John of Damascus, Dedham.

Church of St. John of Damascus
300 West Street
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A Parish of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America

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Services: Sunday-Matins 9:00 a.m.,
Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Church Office Hours...
Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.
The deadline for the Sunday bulletin is Thursday at 10 a.m..
Please plan accordingly.

DEADLINE for the
May/June, 2001 Torchbearer
will be April 16th . This will be the final Newsletter until September 2001.
Please consult the Weekly Sunday Bulletin for any changes, corrections, etc.