



Let us come, on this day,  
and bow down and reverence  
this Symbol of our Faith . . .

# **Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church**

**24 BURKE ROAD**

**FREEHOLD, NJ 07728**

**Third of the Great Fast**

**April 3, 2016**

**Father Robert E. Lucas, Pastor;  
Subdeacon Daniel J. Korba and Nikitas Tsokris,  
Cantors**

**Rectory 215-862-9227; Parish Center 732-780-3158**

## **We Are A Stewardship Parish Of Time, Talent and Treasure**

The mission of our parish faith community is to teach the Gospel message in the rich tradition of the Orthodox Church; to enable people to reflect the image of Jesus Christ in every day activities of life; to offer spiritual formation through changing times; and to celebrate community among Orthodox believers in our Freehold area.

We of St. Paul the Apostle Parish dedicate ourselves to maintaining the sanctity of worship and spiritual enlightenment in a family environment that reaches and involves all ages and unifies all people.

We believe in the spirit of ecumenism in which we share our faith by word and example and extend our spiritual insights to all people.

We accept the responsibility of Christian Stewardship that through generous giving we may all experience a faith communion with Christ as the Center of our lives.

We dedicate ourselves to insuring the well-being of all people so that we may truly experience the message of Christ's salutary gospel.

We are a beacon on a hill with the eyes of many upon us; that beacon is the inspired Light of Christ which must shine brightly in our lives.

*It is not ourselves we preach but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts, that we in turn might make known the glory of God shining on the face of Christ. This treasure we possess in earthen vessels to make it clear that its surpassing power comes from God and not from us. We are afflicted in every way possible, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in us 2 Corinthians 4: 5 - 8.*

## **GLAD TIDINGS**

**+++ This Saturday is the fourth All Souls Day. The Divine Liturgy and Memorial Service are celebrated at 9:00 AM. Please come and join us in prayer and praise.**



+++ May this season of the Great Fast be an encouragement to all of us in growth of the soul in our advancement towards heaven. Come early for Confessions are heard before the Divine Liturgies.

+++ The next Pirohi Sale is April 23.

+++ Please keep the intentions of these members of our parish intercession community in your daily prayers: Barbara, Betty, James, Yevlogia, Nicholas, Maria, Cynthia, Patricia, Pani Anna Marie and Andrea.

+++ The sign-up sheet for both the Web Site and Bulletin sponsors is on the bulletin board in the kitchen. Please sign up as soon as possible. Do NOT make payment until your sign-up month has arrived. This will make it easier for Father to keep track of payments. Thanks in advance to all who support the parish in this way.

+++ We offer thanks to the Blessed Trinity for inspiring generosity in the souls of our faithful and the blessing of abundant grace in our midst with the offering received last Sunday: Tithe Offering, \$335.00; Candles, \$20.00; Kitchen, \$105.00; Food Coupons, \$520.00; Self – Sacrifice, \$85.00; Web - Site, \$25.00; Bulletin, \$26.00; Holy Day, \$45.00, for a total of \$1160.00. We express our profound gratitude to the parishioner communicants who offer their God-given treasure and labored for the sake of the Lord and the good of our parish. God bless and reward you good and faithful souls!

+++ As faithful believers, we intercede and associate ourselves in prayer with the following who have prayed and offered seven day lights for their intentions: Father Lucas, Maria Idronmenos, Anna Zacharyczuk, Bob Gorbich, Marilyn Korba and Pani Buletza.

+++ We make a PENNIES FROM HEAVEN Canister available for our faithful to bring in pennies for our altar and its appointments. We are already in receipt of \$1860.00 from this apostolate. Even your pennies can help and are a blessing to our parish.

+++ Please be certain to see a member of the Parish Council if you would like to help our parish by using Shop Rite Food Coupons available in \$20.00 denominations. We invite ALL to be caring and supportive and use Grocery Coupons for food shopping as we have gratefully realized \$6750 on this project to date!

+++ The Clothing Drive is a permanent on-going project in our parish. Please bring any type of clothing and fabrics along with stuffed animals and shoes for the benefit of our parish. The bags can be left in the vestibule or on the front porch of the rectory. Please invite your friends and neighbors to assist us in disposing of unwanted clothing, shoes and fabrics.

+++ We invite all pray the Lord our God grants us the grace of enrichment of our spiritual lives for his glory.



### Christ And The Cross

*Pilate's move was to take Jesus and have him scourged* John 19: 1.

*They pierced my hands and my feet* Psalms 22: 16.

*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* Psalms 22: 1.

*All who see me scoff at me; they mock me with parted lips, they wag their heads. He relied on the Lord; let him deliver him; let him rescue him if he loves him* Psalms 22: 7, 8.

*Rather they put gall in my food and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink* Psalms 69: 21.

*They crucified him* John 19: 18.

*...in his hand the prints of the nails* John 20: 25.

*Jesus cried out 'My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?'* Matthew 27: 46.

*People going by kept insulting him, tossing their heads and saying....The chief priests joined them....He relied on God; let God rescue him if he wants to* Matthew 27: 39 - 44.

*They gave him a drink of wine flavored with gall, which he tasted, but refused to drink* Matthew 27: 34.



## SHARING THE FAITH

If our parish faith community is not aggressively and zealously making evangelism a major priority, the result will be a maintenance of the status quo as our main characteristic. Do all the believers in our faith family have a burning desire to have non-believers come along with us to faith in Christ? Do we genuinely wish to share our gift of faith with others? Are we ourselves equipped to speak intelligently and persuasively about our faith-living? Are we eager to enhance our own spirit-filled life by teaching it to others? Do we readily see and recognize our own devotion to Christ will be strengthened if we espouse the cause of the Lord and contribute to the well being of others who have not discovered our treasure with an eagerness to share it with them? There is a tale told of a successful coast guard rescue post that forgot, over a period of time, its primary purpose as a life-saving and life-giving station. Eventually it evolved into an exclusive resort with a club-like atmosphere, sporting the life-saver motif in its wall decorations as a memento of its rosy past. Faithful Christian believing communities can also very easily degenerate into "clubs" and "societies", sporting trophies of a by-gone era, if they simply forget their calling to be "rescue posts" sent to lead people out of the depths and despair of hell in daily existence to the very portals of heaven. Being an Orthodox Christian does in reality mean being a missionary of Christ. The life-saver parable is a reminder what the grace of the sacramental Mystery of baptism should generate within us. Mission is an inner necessity for communicants of Orthodoxy. If we refuse it, we deny our true nature as followers of Christ. As unthinkable as it is to have a Church without a genuine inspiring liturgical life, it is even more unthinkable to have a Church without true and genuine missionary endeavor.

The great commission of our Lord to His followers is *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you...Matthew 28: 19, 20.* In all honesty, in order to strive earnestly after the fulfillment of this mandate, the individual believer must seriously and sincerely attempt to live the reality of baptism through which he is crucified to this world with Jesus Christ and raised to new life in Him. The committed Orthodox Christian must continually pick up the Cross of crucifixion and self-denial, die to sin and follow Christ. Our Lord said, *"...if anyone will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me"* Luke 9: 23. Implicit in this understanding is the serious notion of placing our Creator God first, totally in our lives. We must be people who live for Christ and seriously fulfill His commandments.

Christ's new commandment is one of enduring love. Were not His disciples taught to love one another as Jesus loved them? *"I give you a new commandment: Love one another. Such as my love has been for you, so must your love be for each other. John 13: 34.* Orthodox Christians are they who permit Christ's love to burn in their hearts. As a result, they will naturally share the Light of Christ with others who seek salvation. In reality, then we are people who love to bring disciples to the feet of the Lord. Being a missionary is part and parcel of an obedient loving follower of the Lord. Since conversion of self is vital, evangelization must begin with the individual, with turning around the individual heart. St. Seraphim of Sarov taught us, *"Acquire the peace of God, and thousands around you will be saved."* Through daily self-denial, as destructive self-love decreases, we allow room for Christ in our hearts, in the very depth of our being, bringing Him into the very center of our lives. This, in turn increases our ability to love, embrace and engage others, to be genuinely concerned for the salvation of their soul. St. John Chrysostom said it wonderfully: *"The purer the heart, the larger it becomes and the more His love encompasses us. Consequently, it finds room to love more and more. Contrarywise, as it gets more sinful, it contracts, has less room for others, and it is limited by a false love, a self-love."* The spiritual battle is the daily Cross. It is absolutely necessary that all believers, all Orthodox Christians do all that is necessary to evangelize their hearts for a true and lasting conversion. Those born to believing parents and baptized in infancy are like the fortunate man in the Lord's parable of the hidden treasure. Without a search he found the treasure of Christ's faith right in front of his face. He did not permit anything to stand in his way of fully and totally possessing it. But we must be vigilant lest we be numbered among those who do nothing and give nothing in gratitude for literally inheriting the gift of faith.

As we share our blessed gift of faith, we possess it ourselves more richly and profoundly. It assumes a deeper and richer meaning for us. We slowly come to understand the gift of faith bestowed upon us was meant to be shared and as it is shared with others, it develops and multiplies within us. We experience thereby God's love working in us can become wholly fruitful for eternity. He loves much who does much for the Lord. He loves much who does things well. He does things well who serves other souls and their eternal needs rather than following the selfish narrow self-will. If the individual believer is inspired by the love of Christ, drawing others to salvation is a better and noble labor. Our God weighs more the love out of which a man labors than the actual work which he does. Being the Instrument through which souls are drawn to the Saviour gives evidence of doing all for the glory of God.



## Weeping and Mourning

From salvation history we see that believing Hebrews of the Old Covenant Church wept and made their difficulties and troubles to appear openly in mourning and affliction. Weeping was a sign of recognizing the soul's condition as a result of alienation from God in sin. They certainly were not of the opinion that courage and greatness of soul consisted in seeming to be insensible to the pain which the absence of God in a sinner's life made evident.

Weeping was done at the death of loved ones because they would no longer be able to praise and worship God, enroute as they were to the place of the dead.

Weeping was also described as the result of unrepentant living when the time of judgment would inevitably arrive. It would also represent the too late and never expressed sorrow when Christ would come to exact an accounting for life's activity. Christ even obviates the necessity of the believer to weep and mourn a sinful life when He enunciates the Beatitudes on the Mount.

The Hebrews, at the death of a loved one, used great signs of grief and mourning. They wept, tore clothing, beat their breasts, fasted and lay upon the ground, went barefoot. The time of mourning was commonly seven days, but sometimes this was lengthened or shortened. It is from these pious practices of the predecessors in faith of Christians that the sentiment of the Great Fast is colored. Believers now utilize some forty days, in imitation of Christ in the desert, but they weep over and mourn their personal sinfulness that they be strengthened in grace to avoid it in the future.

Christ addressed the weeping and mourning and fasting as a sign of His absence in our lives because it is sin which separates us from Him. We also cry and mourn and fast to restore ourselves to His presence at His coming and return.

Weeping and mourning, then, in this holy season contribute to our development and spiritual growth. If we are serious about our own salvation and that of others, we come quickly to realize how readily we can lose it by our thoughtless sinning and willing separation from the Saviour. We recognize how we do not attend to the needs of our soul as readily as we do to the needs of our body. We see how we neglect eternal values and are pained by our pursuits. We thus weep and mourn our sins because we voluntarily delivered ourselves to death and separation from the Source of our life!

## Weeping and Mourning

During this sacred season we are asked to weep and mourn for our sins. This brings about sorrow in our soul and repentance in our hearts. God's revelation to us in Scripture is replete with instances of weeping and mourning. This sacred season is a good time to review and explore why God's people weep and mourn. Benefit then, from a journey with your Bible into these varied instances so they might beneficially be duplicated in your own life.

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|---|--|
| 1. Hagar wept for Ishmael in the desert.                  | Gen. 21:16   |
| 2. Abraham wept at the funeral of Sarah.                  | Gen. 23:2  |
| 3. Esau wept upon hearing of Jacob's treachery.           | Gen. 27:34; Heb. 12:17                                     |
| 4. Jacob wept for joy upon finding Rachel.                | Gen. 29:11   |
| 5. Esau and Jacob both wept at their reunion.             | Gen. 33:4  |
| 6. Jacob wept over the apparent death of Joseph.          | Gen. 37:35   |
| 7. Joseph wept at the reunion of his brothers.            | Gen. 45:14   |
| 8. Joseph wept at the funeral of his father Jacob.        | Gen. 50:1  |
| 9. Israel wept for freedom in Egypt.                      | Exod. 2:23; 3:7  |
| 10. The Egyptians wept over the death of their firstborn. | Exod. 12:30  |
| 11. Israel wept because of their sins.                    | Num. 11:4, 10; 14:1; Judg. 2:4; 3:9, 15; 4:3; 6:6-7; 10:10 |
| 12. Moses wept over Miriam's sin.                         | Num. 12:13   |
| 13. Israel wept at the funeral of Aaron.                  | Num. 20:29   |
| 14. Israel wept at the death of Moses.                    | Deut. 34:8   |
| 15. Joshua wept over the defeat of Israel.                | Josh. 7:6-9  |
| 16. Sisera's mother wept at his death.                    | Judg. 5:28   |
| 17. Samson's wife wept to secure a favor.                 | Judg. 14:16  |
| 18. Naomi wept as she left Moab.                          | Ruth 1:9   |
| 19. Hannah wept over her barrenness.                      | 1 Sam. 1:10  |
| 20. Samuel wept over fickle Israel.                       | 1 Sam. 7:9   |





*Wisdom Of  
The*



*Byzantine  
Fathers*

We pray morning and evening. The time between is long. However ardently we pray, if we turn to God only at these times in the whole day and night, all will become scattered again. Then, when the time for prayer comes around again, the soul will again be as cold and empty as before.

Even if we pray fervently, if we then keep cooling down and become distracted, what profit is there in it? We just create and destroy, create and destroy again. It is no more than empty labor.

But if now we put ourselves to the task not only of accomplishing our rule of prayer with attention and feeling morning and night, but of more: of practicing reflection on divine things, of turning every action to the glory of God, of frequently appealing to God from our heart with short prayerful exclamations, then these long intervals between morning and evening, and between evening and morning prayers, will be filled with frequent appeals to God accompanied by frequent praiseworthy activity. St. Theophan the Recluse

## **WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE**

*Save Your people, O Lord, and bless Your inheritance; grant victory to Your Church over her enemies, and protect Your people with Your Cross* Troparion, Third Sunday of the Great Fast.

*No longer does the flaming sword guard the gates of Eden, for on them one finds the most glorious seal, the tree of the Cross. By it, the sorrow of death and the victory of the Abyss have been conquered, for You, O my Saviour, stood up and called out to those in the Abyss: "Enter again into paradise"* Kontakion, Third Sunday of the Great Fast.

*We bow to Your Cross, O Lord, and we praise Your holy Resurrection* Hymn instead of "Holy God", Third Sunday of the Great Fast.

*Rejoice, O live-giving Cross of the Lord, Paradise of the Church and new Tree of life, who bring us the joy of unending glory. Through you, the hosts of demons are driven back; in you, the angels in heaven rejoice; and for you, the assemblies of believers are now keeping the feast. O invincible weapon and impenetrable stronghold, pride of bishops and scepter of kings, grant that we may now contemplate the Passion of Christ, and His holy Resurrection* Vesper Hymn, Third Sunday of the Great Fast.

*Seeing You, the Creator of the universe, hanging naked on the Cross, all creation was shaken with fear; the sun hid its rays and the rocks split asunder; the earth trembled and the veil of the temple was torn in two; the dead arose from their tombs, and the powers on high were struck with awe and said: O, what wonder! Behold, the Judge undergoes judgment and freely endures His passion for the salvation and restoration of the world* Vesper Hymn, Third Sunday of the Great Fast.

*Come, let us all sing a new song to celebrate the defeat of hell; for coming from the tomb, Christ has broken the power of death and saved the world. Come, let us all draw in faith, not from the fountain of corruption, but from the source of light; let us venerate the Cross of Christ in Whom we are glorified. As we venerate the Cross, which Moses formerly prefigured with his hands, we put the spiritual Amalek to flight. O Christ, our Master, and we ourselves are saved.* Matins Hymn, Third Sunday of the Great Fast.



# Did You Know That ...

...the unfortunate thing about this world is that good habits are so much easier to give up than bad ones?

...truce is better than friction?

...there is something amazing about individuals who have lived eighty years or more; many of them have a fantastic sense of humor?

...it is not for us to forecast the future, but to shape it?

...keeping score of old sores and scars, getting even and one-upping always make you less than you are?

...when we destroy an old prejudice, we recognize the need for a new virtue?

...when you rise in the morning, form a resolution to make the day a happy one for a fellow human being?

...there are two ways of exerting one's strength; one is pushing down and the other is pulling and lifting up?

...the best thing to give your enemy is forgiveness; to an opponent, tolerance; to a friend, your heart; to your child, a good example; to a father, deference; to your mother, conduct that will make her proud of you; to yourself, respect; to all men, charity?

...life is not lost by dying; it is lost minute by minute, day by dragging day, in all the thousand small uncaring ways?

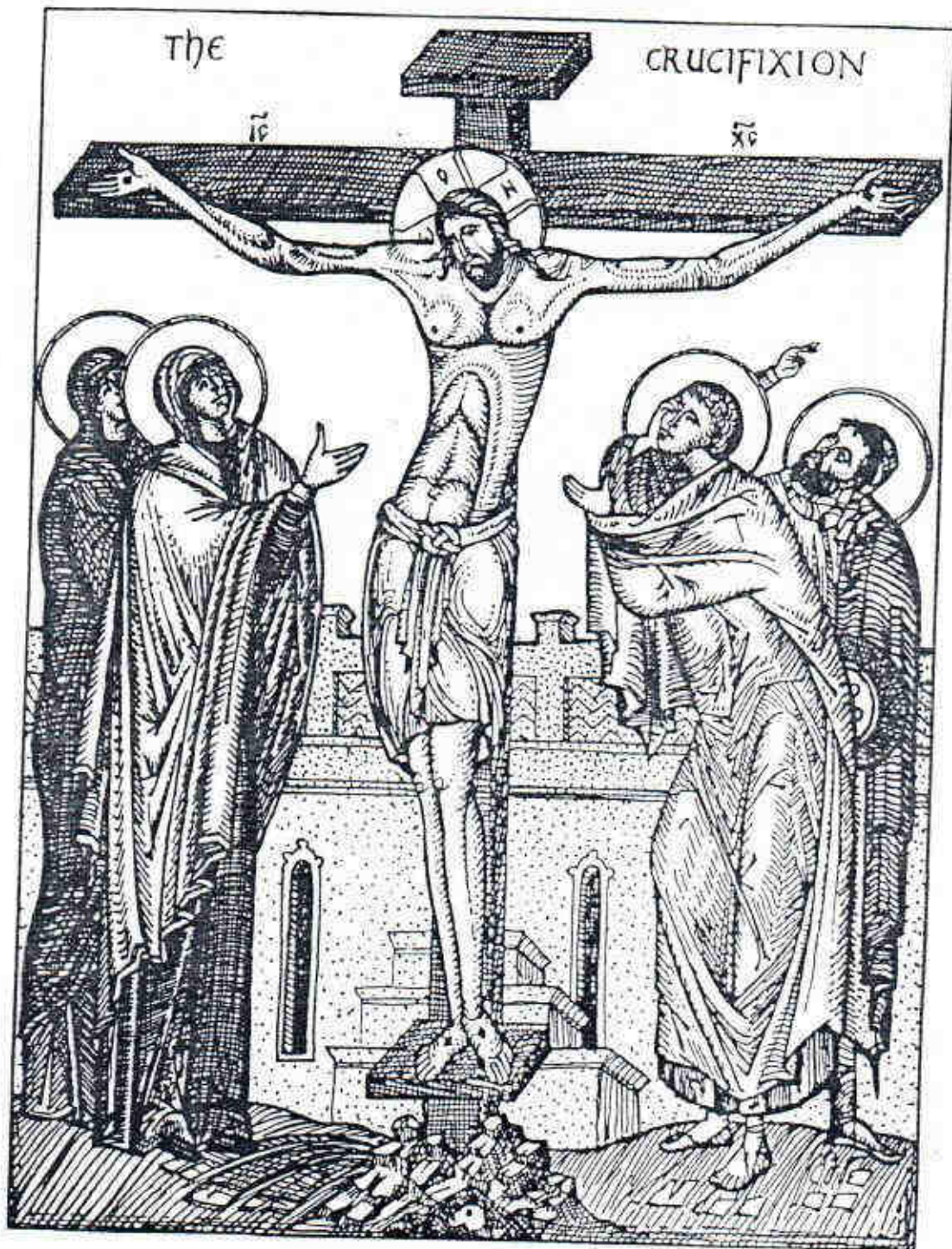
...nothing great is ever achieved without enthusiasm?

...it is much better to have a society where all of us have something than to have one in which a few of us have it all?

...profound hope is a much greater stimulant of life than any single realized joy could be?

THE

CRUCIFIXION

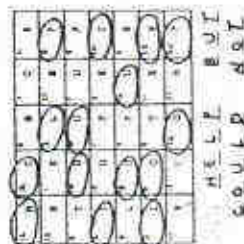




Jesus was going to be crucified. A crowd of people followed Jesus and the soldiers. Many in the crowd were Jesus' enemies, others were friends who longed to ...

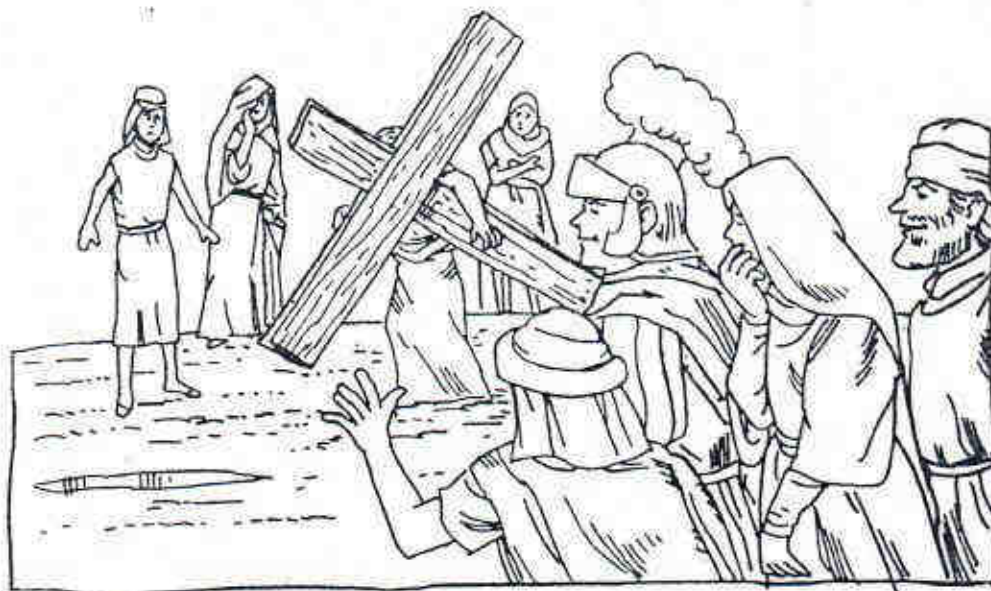
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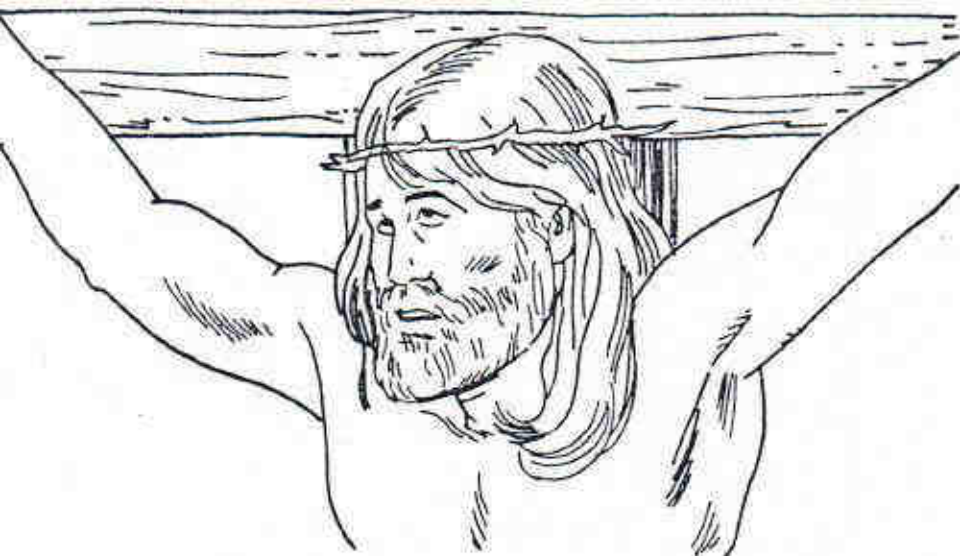
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HE MADE +  
PEACE  
through the BLOOD  
of his CROSS



THROUGH  
HIS CROSS  
HE HAS  
SAVED the WORLD.



We adore You, O Christ,  
and we praise You. +  
Because by Your holy  
Cross You have redeemed the world

OUR  
STRENGTH  
IS OUR  
GOD



BETHOLD  
HIS SAVING  
SIGN!



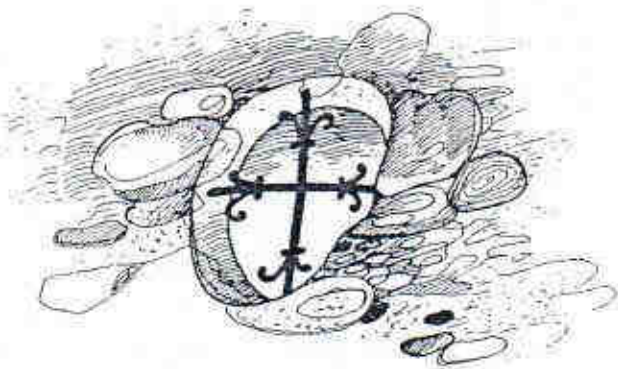
**APPRECIATING**

**WHY**

**WE**

**FAST**

CARRYING  
THE  
CROSS  
OF  
FASTING  
LEADS  
US TO THE  
EMPTY TOMB  
OF VICTORY





ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

"ON FASTING"

*The feast today is joyous and our gathering here is brighter than usual. What do you think is the reason? It is the accomplishment of the fast! I am aware of this. The fast which has not begun but which we are expecting. That is what gathered us in the house of our father. That is what has brought those who were formerly lax back into the maternal arms. If the expectation of its arrival has brought us such willingness, think of how much reverence it will bring us when it appears and comes. In the same fashion, when a city expects the visitation of a fearful ruler, it puts aside every disorder and it prepares itself.*

*But do not be scared that I paralleled the fast with a fearful ruler. It is not fearful for you but for the demon. If someone is demon-possessed, show him the face of the fast and he will remain more immovable than stones, becoming frozen out of fear, as if he were in restraints, especially when he sees that near the fast there exists its sister and inseparable companion, prayer. Because of this Christ said: "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (Math. 17:21). Therefore, since it sends away the enemies of our salvation so much, and the enemies of our life are so terrible we should love and greet it, and not be afraid of it. If there is something we should be afraid of, it should be drunkenness and gluttony and not fasting. Because on the one hand after they tie us with our hands bound behind our backs, to the tyrannic power of passions as a wicked master, they turn us over as slaves and captives. The fast, on the other hand, when it finds*

*us enslaved and tied, it loosens us from the bonds, it delivers us from the tyranny and it brings us back to the freedom which we had beforehand. Therefore, when it fights against our enemies and delivers us from slavery and brings us back to freedom, is there any need of greater evidence to show how much it loves our race? For there is no greater evidence of friendship of one man towards another than to love and hate the same persons as he does.*

*We are afraid of it, one says, because it wears out the body and it makes it sickly. "But as much as the external man, meaning the body, wears out so much does the inner man, in other words the soul, become renewed day by day" (II Corinth. 4:16); and if you want to examine it closer, you will find that fasting is the mother of bodily health. If you do not believe my words, ask the doctors about this and they will tell you better. They are the ones who call it the poor mother of health and who say that pains of the legs and headache and apoplexies and tuberculosis and water retention and inflammations and abscesses and many other countless illnesses come from luxurious diets and over eating. These two things, like two small gullies of polluted water which come from a polluted spring, destroy the body's health and the soul's prudence. ("On Repentance", Homily V).*

*When the body becomes sluggish and weak, simultaneously the soul undergoes damage, because, to a great extent the activities of the soul are determined by the condition of the body. Of course we know that during times of illness we are different because of infirmity and that during times of health we are again different. As in the case of chords of a musical instrument, when the chords are loosened and unwound and not well tuned, the beauty of the art is lost as it is forced to give way to the weakness of the chords. So it is in the case of man, in that the body is in*



need of much therapy, the subjection which the soul must undergo is bitter. Because of this, of appeal to you, let us see to it that we make our body strong and let us not care for it as if it were sick.

This word is not directed only to men but also to women. Why do you, woman, weaken your body with luxury and the love of pleasure and wither it? Why do you destroy bodily vitality with fatty greasy foods? Fatness is weakness for the body and not strength. When you inflict your body with various illnesses, neither will you have a blossoming complexion nor will your health be in good condition and you will continuously be bent over with sluggishness and depression.

You also know that, as it is with a beautiful house, when the weather is fair it makes it look superb, thus does a beautiful face look even more beautiful when there exists a merry disposition, while when it is drawn and hurts, it becomes uglier. This languishness is provoked by ailments and the pains of ailments and the weakness of the body which comes from great luxury and the love of pleasure.

If you listen to my advice it is therefore worth avoiding luxury. You will tell me though that if one lives with luxury it brings on contentment. Not as much though as the difficulties it provokes. Besides the fact, contentment reaches as far as the pharynx, as far as the tongue. Because, after we pick up the table and eat the last bite, nothing differs us from him who did not take part in the meal. Rather, we are worse off because we feel heavy from the great amount of food and our stomach hurts and our head aches and our sleep resembles death. Many times we have insomnia from being stuffed, obstruction of breathing and belching. Then we curse our stomachs, even though we should curse

## SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Probably the most popular of the church fathers, Saint John was given the title Chrysostom, which means "golden mouth", because of his rare gift of eloquence. He was born around 344 A.D. in Antioch, Syria of a noble and wealthy Christian family. Being an exceptional student he quickly learned about the teachings of the Church from the most renowned scholars. His zeal for monastic life led him to live as an ascetic in the mountains for a period of time.

After his return to Antioch he was ordained a priest in 386 A.D. and spent the next twelve years serving the church where he established his title as the greatest of the Christian pulpit orators. In 398 A.D. he was made patriarch of Constantinople much against his will as he desired a quieter life and did not consider himself fit for the position. Nevertheless, he took on the responsibility determined to reform both clergy and laity. His fiery temperament and outspoken manner gave rise to hostility among his non-supporters despite the fact that he devoted his large income to erecting hospitals and supporting the poor. Moreover his public castigation of the Empress Eudoxia for her luxury and depravity fomented growing resentment among the court.

After a series of conspiracies and Chrysostom's refusal to conform to his enemies stipulation he was exiled in August 403. Frightened by the riotous indignation of his followers he was immediately recalled by the empress. However his continued rebuke of the activities centering around the empress and her court consequently led to his exile in Armenia where he re-



our excessiveness. Therefore let us not load our body with fat, but let us listen to Paul who says: "do not care for the flesh in order to satisfy your desires" (Rom. 13:14).

That which one does when he throws food into the waste bin is the exact same thing which one does when he puts it into his stomach. Actually, he does something worse because, in the first case he uses the waste bin without provoking impairment upon himself while, in the second case, he provokes many illnesses. That which nourishes man is to eat as much as is needed, so as to digest it. Superabundance and that which satisfies our needs, not only does not nourish, but destroys. No one sees these things when he is fooled by untimely contentment and from some preconception. Do you want to nourish your body? Cut out the unnecessary, give it whatever is necessary and as much as it can digest. Do not overload it so that you will not afflict it. The indispensable is both food and contentment. Because nothing brings on contentment as much as food which is well digested. Nothing else brings so much health, nothing also sharpens the senses, nothing else expels illnesses. So for someone to eat as much as is needed is nothing but nourishment, contentment and health, while to overeat provokes impairment and repulsiveness and illness. As much harm as is caused by hunger, so much is caused by gluttony, and even more. Because hunger absolves man within a few hours while gluttony destroys the body little by little and provokes putrefication. It gives it over to chronic illness and then to agonizing death. We, though, consider hunger to be terrible and we pursue to kill gluttony which is much worse.

From where is the sickness, from where is this craziness? I do not want you to exhaust yourselves, but to eat as much as brings contentment, which is real contentment and which

nourishes the body healthfully... And he did well in saying "let us not care for the flesh in order to satisfy our desires". (Rom 13:14). Luxury constitutes the first substance of every unreasonable desire. Even a man, who in every other thing is spiritual, will suffer from something if he eats too much or drinks wine. He will become paralyzed!

From this arises adulteries, from this, fornication. Because a belly which hungers is not inclined to desires, neither one which ate as much as needed. One which provokes unreasonable desires is one which lives as a prodigal and with luxury. That which takes place is exactly the same thing which takes place with the earth which is very wet and gives birth to worms and with manure which has a lot of moisture. On the other hand that which has been ridden from excessive moisture brings forth many crops. For even if it is not cultivated, it springs forth grass and if it is cultivated it springs forth crops. It is the same with us... Let us not diminish our body as useless nor fruitless, nor that which provokes impairment. But let us plant in it useful crops and fruit bearing plants and let us see to it that they too are not weakened by luxury and love of pleasure. For these too when they rot, produce worms rather than crops. It is also such with innate desire. When you water it more than necessary it gives birth to unreasonable pleasures and especially the most unreasonable. (On Hebrews, Homily XXIX).

Cultivate your soul and cut out the thorns. Sow the word of piety, plant the good plants of conduct and take care of them with much care. In that way you have become a good cultivator and the Apostle Paul will tell you: "the cultivator which toils is the first who should reap the crops of this hard labour". Sharpen your sickle, which became useless from gluttony. Sharpen it with the fast.



*Calm the waves of unreasonable desires, reject the confusion of evil thoughts, preserve the ship of your soul, show great experience. In this way, you will have become a good navigator. And when I say fast, I do not mean that which many people do; I mean the true fast. In other words, not only the avoidance of food but the the abstinence from sins as well. The fast, by its own nature, is not sufficient to distance those who fast from sins if it is not done as it should. "Because the athlete", says Paul, "is not crowned if he does not struggle according to the rules of the game". There is the danger that we may tire ourselves from the fast and lose the crown of the fast. Because of this, let us learn how and with what way we should fast. The Pharisee in the parable fasted, but after that fast he descended from the temple desolate, empty, without the fruits of the fast...*

*The Ninevites fasted and they attracted God's favour. The Jews also fasted, and not only did they not gain anything with their fast but were condemned and exited. Because the danger is so great for those who do not know how to fast, let us learn the rules of the fast so that we do not roam aimlessly, so that we do not waste time, so that we do not wrestle with shadow.*

*Fasting is a medicine. But medicine, as beneficial as it is, becomes useless because of the inexperience of the user. He has to know the appropriate time that the medicine should be taken and the right amount of medicine and the condition of the body which is to take it, the weather conditions and the season of the year and the appropriate diet of the sick and many other things. If any of these things are overlooked the medicine will do more harm than good. So, if one who is going to heal the body needs so much accuracy, when we care for the soul and are concerned about healing it from bad thoughts, it is necessary to examine and observe everything with every possible detail.*

Fasting is the change of every part of our life. Because the sacrifice of the fast is not the abstinence but the distancing from sins. Therefore, whoever limits the fast to the deprivation of food, he is the one who, in reality, abhors and ridicules the fast. Are you fasting? Show me your fast with your works. Which works? If you see someone who is poor, show him mercy. If you see an enemy, reconcile with him. If you see a friend who is becoming successful, do not be jealous of him! If you see a beautiful woman on the street, pass her by.

In other words, not only should the mouth fast, but the eyes and the legs and the arms and all the other parts of the body should fast as well. Let the hands fast, remaining clean from stealing and greediness. Let the legs fast, avoiding roads which lead to sinful sights. Let the eyes fast by not fixing themselves on beautiful faces and by not observing the beauty of others. You are not eating meat, are you? You should not eat debauchery with your eyes as well. Let your hearing also fast. The fast of hearing is not to accept bad talk against others and sly defamations.

Let the mouth fast from disgraceful and abusive words. Because, what gain is there when, on the one hand we avoid eating chicken and fish and, on the other, we chew-up and consume our brothers? He who condemns and blasphemes is as if he has eaten brotherly meat, as if he has bitten into the flesh of his fellow man. It is because of this that Paul frightened us, saying: "If you chew up and consume one another be careful that you do not annihilate yourselves."

You did not thrust your teeth into the flesh (of your neighbour) but you thrust bad talk in his soul; you wounded it by spreading disface, causing unestimatable damage both to yourself, to him, and to many others... (On the Statutes, Hom. III).



*If you cannot go without eating all day because of an ailment of the body, beloved one, no logical man will be able to criticize you for that. Besides, we have a Lord who is meek and loving (philanthropic) and who does not ask for anything beyond our power. Because he neither requires the abstinence from foods, neither that the fast take place for the simple sake of fasting, neither is its aim that we remain with empty stomachs, but that we fast to offer our entire selves to the dedication of spiritual things, having distanced ourselves from secular things. If we regulated our life with a sober mind and directed all of our interest toward spiritual things, and if we ate as much as we needed to satisfy our necessary needs and offered our entire lives to good works, we would not have any need of the help rendered by the fast. But because human nature is indifferent and gives itself over mostly to comforts and gratifications, for this reason the philanthropic Lord, like a loving and caring father, devised the therapy of the fast for us, so that our gratifications would be completely stopped and that our worldly cares be transferred to spiritual works. So if there are some who have gathered here and who are hindered by somatic ailments and cannot remain without food, I advise them to nullify the somatic ailment and not to deprive themselves from this spiritual teaching, but to care for it even more.*

*For there exist, there really exist, ways which are even more important than abstinence from food which can open the gates which lead to God with boldness. He, therefore, who eats and cannot fast, let him display richer almsgiving, let him pray more, let him have a more intense desire to hear divine words. In this, our somatic illness is not a hinderance. Let him become reconciled with his enemies. Let him distance from his soul every resentment. If he wants to accomplish these things, then he has done the true fast, which is what the Lord asks of us more than anything else. It is for this reason that he asks us to abstain from*



food, in order to place the flesh in subjection to the fulfilment of his commandments, whereby curbing its impetuosity. But if we are not about to offer to ourselves the help rendered by the fast because of bodily illness and at the same time display greater indifference, we will see ourselves in an unusual exaggerated way. For if the fast does not help us when all the forementioned accomplishments are missing so much is the case when we display greater indifference because we cannot even use the medicine of fasting.

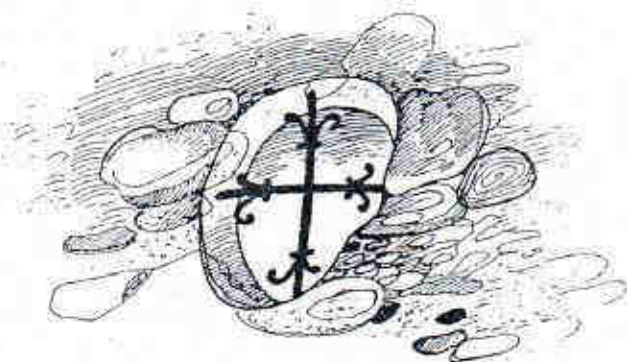
Since you have learned these things from us, I pardon you, those who can, fast and you yourselves increase your acuteness and praise-worthy desire as much as possible.

To the brothers, though, who cannot fast because of bodily illness, encourage them not to abandon this spiritual word, teaching them and passing on to them all the things we say here, showing them that he who eats and drinks with moderation is not unworthy to hear these things but he who is indifferent and slack. You should tell them the bold and daring saying that "he who eats for the glory of the Lord eats and he who does not eat for the glory of the Lord does not eat and pleases God". For he who fasts pleases God because he has the strength to endure the fatigue of the fast and he that eats also pleases God because nothing of this sort can harm the salvation of his soul, as long as he does not want it to. Because the Philanthropic God showed us so many ways by which we can, if we desire, take part in God's power that it is impossible to mention them.

We have said enough about those who are missing, being that we want to eliminate them from the excuse of shame. For they should not be ashamed because food does not bring on shame but the act of some wrong-doing. Sin is a great shame. If we commit it not only should we feel ashamed but we should cover

ourselves exactly the same way those who are wounded do. Even then we should not forsake ourselves but rush to confession and thanksgiving. We have such a Lord who asks nothing of us but to confess our sins, after the commitment of a sin which was due to our indifference, and to stop at that point and not to fall into the same one again. If we eat with moderation we should never be ashamed, because the Creator gave us such a body which cannot be supported in any other way except by receiving food. Let us only stop excessive food because that attributes a great deal to the health and well-being of the body (On Genesis, Hom. X.).

Let us therefore in every way cast off every destructive madness so that we may gain the goods which have been promised to us in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Father and the Holy Spirit. Amen (On Hebrews Hom. XXIX).



*"When many people enter the fast period they make every effort to fill their stomachs with food and drink as if their stomachs were going to endure a long siege. When the fast period ends, it is as if they went through a long period of starvation and agonising imprisonment which they barely escaped. They rush disorderly to the tables which have food and strive to forget the benefits which they gained from the fast by overindulging themselves."*

ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

*(Jacob) ate and became full... he grew sleek, he became fat, he became wide and he forsook God who made him and distanced himself from God who was his saviour.*

(PROVERBS 32, 15)

*"If a king wants to take over the enemy's city, he would hold back food and water supply so that his enemies, dying of hunger, would submit to him. The same thing happens with the passions of the flesh: if man lives with fasting and hunger the enemies of his soul grow weak."*

ABBOT JOHN KOLOVOS



# SAINT SYCLETICI

"Do not use illness as an excuse not to fast because those who did not fast many times became ill from the same ailments. Have you started doing good (by fasting)? Do not stop there where the enemy has cut you off because he is abolished with your patience. Surely those who start to sail first have a favourable wind. Then, when they spread their sails they encounter fierce wind from the opposite direction, but the sailors do not unload the ship because of the wind which they encountered. They simply wait for calmness or they encounter the storm, and then continue to sail. It is the same for us. When we are besetted of a storm let us hold out the Cross so that we can fearlessly complete our voyage.

## HYMN OF THE TRIDION

Those who in secret pursue virtue are receptive to spiritual gains, not by way of their stage triumphs but rather those things which are produced remain within the heart. He who sees all things done in secret gives us the reward of so-briefly. Let us carry out the fast, not by bending down our heads, but by praying, within the chambers of our souls.

*As Abbot Makarios was going from an oasis to his cell he was holding palm-leaves. Then, the devil met him on the road with a scythe, but when he tried to hit him, he was unsuccessful. He thus remarked.*

*"I encounter a great strength in you Makarios and I cannot win you over. Whatever you do, I do also. You fast, so do I. You keep vigil, and I do not sleep at all. There is only one thing you do in which you conquer me".*

*Abbot Makarios asked,*

*"Which is that".*

*And he responded,*

*"Your humility, and that is why I cannot win you over".*

ABBOT MAKARIOS THE EGYPTIAN

*"Many of the things men do are good by their nature but are not good because of their origin. For example, fasting, vigilance, prayer and chanting, alms-giving and hospitality are good deeds by their nature, but when they are done out of vainglory they are no longer good.*

*From all of our acts, God looks for their motive, in other words, if we do them for His sake or, if we do them for some other reason.*

MAXIMOS THE CONFESSOR

*Abba Joseph asked Abba Poimen how they should fast. Abba Poimen replied:*

*"I want someone to eat a little each day so as not to fill himself".*

*Abba Joseph said,*

*"Abba, when you were younger did you not abstain from food for two or three days?"*

*And the elder responded:*

*"Of course, for three and four days and for an entire week. All these things were tried by the fathers because they were strong and they found out that it is better for someone to eat daily, but a small amount. Thus they gave us the basic way which is light".*

ABBOT POIMEN

*Abbot Silouanos and this disciple Zacharias once visited a monastery and the brothers insisted that they eat something before leaving. And when they left the monastery, his disciple found water along the road and wanted to drink some, but the elder said:*

*"Zacharia, today is a fast." (They were not to eat or drink anything).*

*And he replied:*

*"Did we not eat, Father?"*

*The elder said:*

*"What we ate was (an expression) of love. Now, my child, let us keep our fast".*

ABBOT SILOUANOS



GREGORY OF PALAMAS

"When you fast and are nourished with abstinence, do not store the leftovers for tomorrow, but, as the Lord became poor and enriched us, feed someone who does not want to be hungry, you who hungers willingly. Then, your fast will be like the dove who brings and joyfully proclaims salvation to your soul from the flood. "If you alleviate the yoke from your waist, and do not take the law into your own hands, and do away with malevolent words", says Prophet Isaiah, "and give to the hungry with all your heart, then your light will shine in the darkness and your darkness will be like midday". And if you do not want to give your things, at least avoid things that are not yours and do not possess them as if they were yours sometimes grabbing and becoming rich from the poor unjustly».

GREGORY OF PALAMAS

"On the one hand fasting and abstinence calms the insurgence of the flesh while distancing fury, anger and desires. They bring on a clear, clean, and cloudless mind, cleaning it from the steam which comes out of the abundance of food and the melancholy it causes. With fasting and abstinence, the exterior man is wasted away, and as much as this is done, so much is the inner man renewed, according to the apostle. Someone once said, "A fat stomach does not give birth to a refined mind." A stomach which is refined by way of fasting and abstinence most surely refines the mind.

*A brother visited Abbot Silouanos on Mt. Sinai, and when he saw the brothers there working, he said to the elder: "Do not labour for the food which perishes. For Mary has chosen the good portion (John 6:27; Luke 10:42). The elder said to his disciple: "Zachary, give the brother a book and put him in an empty cell." So when the ninth hour came the visiting brother watched the door anticipating that they would send someone to invite him to eat. Because no one invited him, he got up, went before the elder and said to him: "Abba, have the brothers not eaten?". The elder replied, "Yes". "Why did you not call me?" The elder said to him, "Because you are a spiritual man and do not have need of this food. We though, being carnal, want to eat, and because of that we work; you chose "the good portion", reading all day, and do not want to eat carnal food." And when he heard these things, he prostrated before the elder saying, "Forgive me, Father." The elder told him, "Anyway, Mary has need of Martha because, through Martha, Mary is praised."*

ABBOT SILOUANOS

*Two things I ask of thee: deny them not to me before I die; remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, "Who is the Lord?"*

(PROVERBS 30:8-9)

*"It is better to eat meat and drink wine rather than to eat the flesh of one's brother through gossip."*

ABBOT HYPERECHIOS

*Once St. Epiphanius sent someone to Abba Ilarion with the message: "Let us see one another before we depart from the body."*

*When he came to see him personally, they both rejoiced between themselves. When they sat to eat together Abba Ilarion served poultry. St. Epiphanius remarked:*

*"Forgive me, but from the time I have worn the habit I have not eaten any type of slaughtered meat."*

*And the bishop replied: "And I, from the time I have worn the habit, have not allowed anyone to go to sleep if he had something against me. Neither have I gone to sleep if I had something against someone else."*

*And the elder exclaimed:*

*"Forgive me because your virtue is much greater than mine!"*

ST. EPIPHANIOS BISHOP OF CYPRUS

*Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a fatted ox and hatred with it.*

(PROVERBS 15:17)



*"Who is strong like a lion and for the sake of his stomach, falls into a trap and allows all his strength to be humiliated? Eating bread and salt, the fathers of the scete use to say, "let us not obligate ourselves to rely on salt and bread." In that way they will be strong for the work of God.*

ABBOT JOHN KOLOVOS

*Nothing else extinguishes passions so much as compassion. On the other hand, if someone struggles as a result of vainglory or with the idea that he is applying himself to virtue, he is not struggling with knowledge. He, though, who abstains with knowledge does not think he is exercising virtue, neither does he want to be commended as an ascetic, but believes that by way of abstinence prudence is obtained and that through this, comes humility.*

ABBOT DOROTHEOS

*"As we fast bodily, let us fast spiritually. Let us loosen all the bonds of injustice. Let us rip apart strangling violent interactions. Let us sever every unjust contract.*

*Let us give bread to the poor and let us bring the unsheltered in houses, so that we may receive the Great Mercy.*

(HYMN OF THE TRIODION).

## Koliva

(Wheat tray for memorial service)

15-20 servings

- $\frac{1}{4}$  kilo ( $\frac{1}{2}$  lb) wheat grain (choose cooking wheat)
- 100 grams ( $3\frac{1}{2}$  oz) blanched almonds
- 100 grams ( $3\frac{1}{2}$  oz) walnut meats
- 1-2 tablespoons sesame seeds
- 1-2 tablespoons pomegranate
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup white raisins
- 5-6 tablespoons cake flour
- 6-8 tablespoons fine breadcrumbs
- 1-2 tablespoons cinnamon
- a few parsley sprigs
- $\frac{1}{2}$  kilo (1 lb) confectioner's sugar
- Jordan almonds and silver confections for decorating

Sort wheat and soak in water for 6-7 hours. Boil in ample water until wheat is tender and grain slightly "cracks". Drain and rinse with cold water to prevent soginess. Place in colander to drain well. Spread an absorbent towel (bath towel) on flat surface (counter top or table) and spread wheat out evenly. Cover with another towel and let stand overnight. Meanwhile prepare remaining ingredients.

Cut blanched almonds in slivers. Coarsely chop walnuts. Finely chop parsley. Sort raisins and sesame seeds, and separate pomegranates. In the morning combine boiled wheat, previously mentioned ingredients, and cinnamon. Mix well. Brown flour in small pot until golden, and cool.

Heap mixture on large platter, tray or in bowl and press lightly forming a mound. Sprinkle evenly with fine breadcrumbs first and then with browned flour. Lastly, sprinkle evenly with confectioner's sugar with a napkin underneath palms. Surface should be smooth. Decorate koliva with Jordan almonds and silver confections forming a cross in centre of mound.

NOTE: Before passing out koliva mix together so that top layers and sugar blend in with remaining ingredients. Doing so earlier will cause koliva to be sticky and soggy.





**Short notes on the Church Fathers  
whose quotes are found in this book**

**ABBA DOROTHEOS**

Abba Dorotheos lived in Palestine around the middle of the sixth century. Best known for his care of the elders of the monastery and for his hospital ministry, he founded his own monastery near Gaza around 540 A.D.

**ABBA HYPERECHIOS**

Very little is known about this desert father who probably lived in the fifth century in Egypt where he attracted many followers and advised them on spiritual struggle.

**ABBA JOHN KOLOVOS (the Dwarf)**

Abba John Kolovos, or the Dwarf, was born around 339 A.D. He was a very vivid personality of the desert around Egypt and drew many disciples to his scete. In order to preserve his solitude, he dug a cave underground and lived there.

### ABBA MAKARIOS OF EGYPT

Also known as Makarios the Great, Abba Makarios was one of the pioneers of asceticism in the desert of Egypt. He was born in 300 A.D. and died in 390 A.D. Travelling from place to place as a hermit, he was well known throughout the monastic community of the desert. He was also a disciple of Anthony the Great.

### ABBA POEMEN

Abba Poemen, or the Shepherd, was a famous scete father of the desert of Egypt in the last decades of the fourth century. His sayings are among the most frequently recorded as they are detailed with stories about elders and younger monks seeking advice on dealing with temptation.

### ABBA SILOUANOS

A Palestinian by birth, Abba Silouanos, a desert father of the late fourth century, was the head of a monastic community. After a short stay in Sinai he eventually settled in the region of Gaza.

## SAINT EPIPHANIOS, BISHOP OF CYPRUS

Born in Palestine to Jewish parents in 310 A.D., Saint Epiphanius was later baptized a Christian and finally settled in Cyprus. After becoming bishop he helped spread Christianity and fought heretical groups. He died in a boat in 403 during a storm whereupon giving up his spirit the waters were calmed. He is primarily known for his sermon on the descent of Christ into Hades.

## SAINT GREGORY PALAMAS

One of the most influential Byzantine fathers, Saint Gregory was born in Asia Minor in 1296 to an aristocratic family who emigrated to Constantinople. His father was a senator of the emperor Andronicus II. When his father died Saint Gregory was educated by the emperor.

Around 1316 Saint Gregory and the rest of his family took on the monastic rule and left Constantinople. In 1347 he became archbishop of Thessalonika where he continued to uphold the doctrines of the Church despite repeated exiles and imprisonment by the Turks.

He died on November 14, 1359 after a long illness. He is primarily known for upholding the Orthodox teaching of the hesychasts (those who in silence devote themselves to inner recollection and prayer).



mained for three years. So great was the influx of followers from his former community of Antioch that his enemies feared the outcome and conspired to send him further into exile to Pityus on the Black Sea. Broken by the hardships on the way Saint John Chrysostom died on September, 14, 407 A.D. in Comana in Pontus. His remains were brought back to Constantinople in a triumphal procession in January, 438 A.D.

In addition to his orations he wrote many exegetical homilies on the Old and New Testament, sermons for liturgical feasts, moral discourses and treatises. The most common liturgy in the Eastern Orthodox Church has also been attributed to Saint John Chrysostom.

#### SAINT MAXIMOS THE CONFESSOR

Born in Constantinople in 580 A.D. to parents of noble rank, Saint Maximos was very well educated and given a high position in the court of the Byzantine emperor Heracleion. Saint Maximos' zeal for monastic life led him to leave the court and become a monk at Chrysopolis on the Bosphorus.

In 624 he left the Bosphorus, living for short periods of time in various monasteries before finally settling in the monastery of Eucrata in Carthage on the north African coast. Here he began his struggle to defend and uphold the dogmas of the church against the heresies of his time. His public confession of his faith won him the title "the confessor", but eventually led to his exile in the Caucasus where he died in 662 A.D.

## SAINT SYNGLETIKI

This female saint lived during the fifth century. She was from Macedonia but moved with her parents to Alexandria, Egypt. Possessing great beauty, she was surrounded by suitors but remained steadfast in her zeal to live a monastic life.

After her parents' death she left Alexandria, distributed her wealth among the poor and was tontured as a nun. She is primarily known for her spiritual guidance and philanthropy.

## HYMN OF THE TRIODION

The Triodion is a book of hymns used in the Eastern Orthodox church during the pre-Lenten and Lenten period (from the Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee to Holy Saturday).

## Lawrence, the third century deacon

Sometime ago, at a retreat, the leading priest made a statement, "Behind every saint stands another saint." He was making the point that in the life of the Church of Christ, no saint ever stands on his or her own. Sanctity is relational in that we are all inter-dependent in the body of Christ, the communion of saints. And this is also true in the life of the Church where deacons and priests inter - relate and both serve the spiritual needs of faithful believers.

Nowhere in the life of the Body of Christ is this more obvious than in the liturgical calendar where we have list upon list of saints whose lives are presented to us daily as an inspiration. In many instances, they encouraged each other in attaining sanctity. There is a wonderful sense of the Church traditioning itself from one generation to the next in these list upon lists of holy and glorified saints.

The Church of the present and past provides inspiration for the future, of heaven, earth and the below world that all who are gathered together in this one great sacrificial action potentially must include us. These lists include, among others, of course, Lawrence a deacon.

Lawrence was the principal deacon or archdeacon of the Church in Rome under Pope Sixtus II (257 – 258). He holds a prominent position among venerated saints among Western believers. This Pope and six of his seven deacons were captured while officiating at a service in the cemetery of Praetextatus on the Appian Way during the persecution under the Emperor (253 – 260).

Sixtus was beheaded along with his deacons two of whose names we know, Felissimus and Agapitus. Some days later, Lawrence was captured and martyred, probably also by beheading, though according to the received tradition, Lawrence was put to death by being roasted on a gridiron.

After the Edict of Toleration, Emperor Constantine, about 330, had a church built above the well known and popular Lawrence's tomb in a catacomb. This tomb became a very popular place of pilgrimage. It was a relatively small church, with stairs providing access down to Lawrence's final resting place in the catacombs.

Pope Sixtus III, due to the increasing popularity of the saint, built a large basilica on the summit of the hill where Lawrence was buried. Later, Pope Pelagius II, finding Constantine's original church in a state of total disrepair, tore it down and reconstructed a new basilica at the



level of Lawrence's tomb itself. Finally, Pope Honorius III made these two buildings of Sixtus and Pelagius into one, thus establishing the Basilica of San Lorenzo much as it is to this day.

Images of St. Lawrence were found on gold goblets discovered in the catacombs and a church was dedicated to him by Pope Damasus inside the walls of Rome, the church on his grave-site being outside the city as was the custom with Roman cemeteries. All this building in his sacred memory demonstrates the popularity he enjoyed with Roman believers. It has been said repeatedly that no saint except SS. Peter and Paul was more honored by the early Christian population of Rome from the time of Constantine forward.

The memory of this deacon was preserved, however, not only in church buildings, but also in a number of patristic texts: Cyprian of Carthage, *"Letters 80"*; Ambrose of Milan, *"On the Duties of the Clergy"*; Prudentius, *"Peristephanon."* Here we examine Ambrose's work.

In his *On the Duties of Clergy*, probably composed around 391, St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, commends Lawrence as an example to his clergy. According to the testimony of Ambrose, the prefect of Rome asked Lawrence to reveal the whereabouts of the treasures of the Church. So, Lawrence, brought together the poor and said, "These are the treasures of the Church." The poor, and indeed all the people are the treasures of the Church because in Lawrence's terms Christ lives in them as they make a sincere, serious and humble attempt to duplicate Christ's virtue in their own lives, enriched by the Eucharist.

So the life examples associated with St. Lawrence, Deacon, are plentiful and inspiring. They are an object of inspiration not only for deacons, but for priests and serious – minded laity as well. Let us consider the diaconal vocation itself, which should be an instrument of growth and richness of faith to all in the Church and how important it has always been.

*Therefore brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business* Acts of the Apostles 6: 3.

*To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons* Philippians 1: 1.

*Likewise, deacons must be reverent, not double – tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money* 1 Timothy 3: 8.

*Appoint, therefore, for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord – men who are meek, truthful and tested, and are not lovers of money. For they also render to you the service of prophets and teachers. Therefore, do not despise them, for they are your honored ones, together with the prophets and teachers* Didache.

St. Clement of Rome records for us, *And thus preaching through countries and cities, they appointed the first - fruits of their labors, having first tested them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons of those who would afterwards believe.* Ignatius of Antioch witnesses for us, *It is fitting also that the deacons, as being the ministers of the mysteries of Jesus Christ, should in every respect be pleasing to all...It would behoove you as a Church of God to elect a deacon to act as an ambassador of Christ.*

Polycarp of Smyrna testifies for posterity in the life of the Church, *Deacons should be blameless before the face of his righteousness. They must be the servant of God and Christ, not men. They must not be slanderers, double – tongued, or lovers of money. Rather, they must be temperate in all things: compassionate, industrious, walking in accordance to the truth of the Lord.* Irenaeus of Lyons bears witness that *Stephen was chosen the first deacon by the apostles.*

In the *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitus*, we see witnessed for us, *There were present there Tertius and Pomponius, the blessed deacons who ministered to us, and who had arranged by means of gratuity that we might be refreshed by being sent out for few hours in a more pleasant part of the prison.* About the practice of the early Church in times of peril, St. Cyprian makes this astounding assertion: *Those who received certificates from the martyrs...if they should be seized with a misfortune and peril of sickness...and if a priest cannot be found and death begins to be imminent, they can make a confession of their sin even before a deacon. Thereby, with the imposition of hands upon them for repentance, they can come to the Lord with the peace that martyrs have desired.*

The Apostolic Constitutions continue to re-enforce the importance of the diaconal vocation when it announces, *If a poor man or one of low birth, or a stranger, comes upon you, whether he is young or old, and there is no place for him, the deacon, will find a place for him....You who are deacons, it is your duty to visit all those who stand in need of visitation...A deacon does not bless...He also does not baptize and does not offer the Eucharist. However, when a bishop or priest has offered, the deacon distributes to the people. He does this, not as a priest, but as one who ministers to priests. But it is not lawful for any of the other clergy, that is, minor orders, to do the work of a deacon.*



## Confessing and Forsaking

*He that covers his sins shall not prosper,  
but he who confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy*  
Proverbs 28: 13.

The unconverted sinner lives in sin and loves it, or at least reluctantly tolerates it. The born-again believer hates sin and yet may often fall into it. The sinner looks for sin and pursues it; while the saints often overtaken by it even though he tries to flee from it. St. Paul admonishes us "My brethren, if someone is detected in sin you who live by the spirit should gently set him right, each of you trying to avoid falling into temptation himself" Galatians 6: 1.

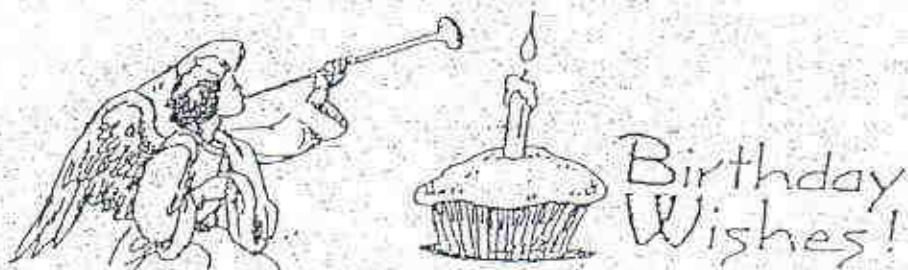
This is quite a different thing than willfully living in sin. The believer cannot continue to live in sin, "What then, are we to say? 'Let us continue in sin that grace may abound?' Certainly not! How can we who die to sin go on living in it" Romans 6: 1 – 3? As long as we are in the body and our old nature is still with us we live in constant danger of falling into sin. We should not sin. "I am writing to you to keep you from sin, but if anyone should sin, we have, in the presence of the Father, Jesus Christ, an intercessor who is just" 1 John 2: 1. So we see that provision has been made for us in case we do sin. "He is an offering for our sins and not for our sins only, but for those of the whole world" 1 John 2: 2.

We must be careful; not to judge those who fall into sin and conclude they do not belong among the saved. We can always make change. Think of Noah, Abraham, David, Solomon and Peter. There is a simple test which we may apply to determine whether it is a Christian falling or a sinner planning his sin. How can we distinguish? Suppose a pig is so cleverly clothed with the wool of a sheep that we cannot tell the difference. Let both fall into the same mud hole and become so besmeared with mire that you cannot tell the one from the other. The swine will be perfectly content and put up a loud squeal when any attempt is made to extricate it, and when pulled out, will go right back in. The sheep, on the other hand, will cry, struggle and bleat for help and when delivered will make every effort to never go near that slough again. The genuineness of a man's repentance and confession of sin is proven by the forsaking of them.

The sin that rises to memory is your bosom sin; confess and forsake and abandon it.

"Indeed, in guilt was I born and in sin my mother conceived me" Psalms 50: 7.





We are pleased to greet those of our faithful communicants who celebrate their birthday this month. Our Lord has offered these souls yet another year of blessed life. The most obvious way He blesses us and participates in our life is by sharing his divine life with us in the Eucharist at the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Thus we gather together and offer thanks for yet another year of life blessed by his most gracious hands. Today, we prayerfully remember in the Divine Liturgy the following souls who celebrate their birthday during this month:

**April 9 Maria Garcia**  
**April 16 Sophia Idromenos**  
**April 19 Kyra Choti**

With a prayerful heart and grateful soul, our parish faith community asks the Lord to continue to bless these birthday celebrants with good spiritual and physical health for the coming year. We invite all to add their personal intercessory prayers so that with one voice and one heart we may also participate in the grace and joy of their celebration. As we wish them a happy and blessed celebration of their birthday, our ardent prayer resounds that the Lord our God will continue to bless them for

**Many and Blessed Years!**



## WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

The Byzantine Fathers of the Church were wont to emphasize how ancient and how venerable marriage is in the sight of our God because it was established yet in paradise before the fall of Adam and Eve and brought to blessed perfection by Christ in Cana of Galilee. Its grace survived the sin of our first parents and it remains a sign of the presence of the Holy Trinity in our midst. It is a living symbol of the deep and abiding love between Christ and His Bride, our blessed Church. It is characterized in the liturgical life of the Church as a happy martyrdom. And it is precisely for this reason the sacramental Mystery of Marriage is such a joyous event. On the third Sunday of this month, we honor those of our good parishioners who observe their marriage anniversaries this month. They are specially remembered in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and subsequently receive an individual and personal blessing of the Lord at its conclusion. Celebrating this month are:

**APRIL 26 Stephen & Mary Demyan**

We gratefully give thanks to the Blessed Trinity for having guided and strengthened the marriages of these believers, and their cooperation with sacramental grace to remain faithful to one another over the years. Like all who are faithful to Christ, they recognize the presence and necessity of the Holy Spirit not only in the marriage, but in subsequent family life as well. As we praise our God for their witness in our midst, let us also join them with our prayers and thanksgiving before the throne of the Lord. May they continue to praise His Holy Name by their love and devotion to one another for

**Many and Blessed Years**

## † VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS †

**O**n this Third Sunday of the Great Fast, we focus on a symbol that has made such a transformation in meaning and significance. Let the Holy Cross spur us on and inspire us to even a greater dedication to Jesus Christ!

**THE CROSS!** The very word cuts deeply into our minds and sets our thoughts on Mt. Golgotha where Jesus was crucified. It brings to mind our own trials and difficulties, for we, too, are cross-bearers in imitation of our Lord.

**THE CROSS!** Once the symbol of shame, but now the sign of glory. Men once shuddered at the very mention of the word, for it was the most disgraceful and painful of deaths. But now it is the emblem of dedication, love and sacrifice.

**THE CROSS!** Once the instrument of punishment and death, now the mark of mercy and life. It is no accident that one of the international organizations of help in times of disasters bears this title.

**THE CROSS!** Once the curse of mankind, but now the form of blessing. When it comes time to pronounce the blessing of God upon His people, the priest traces the form of this sacred sign. And the faithful, too, day in and day out, make the sign of the Cross on their bodies in all that they do.

**THE CROSS!** Once the cry of despair, but now the light of our hope. No wonder the Church calls it the "hope of sinners" and the "secure help" of the believer. Where better can we place our hope in this life and in the one to come? Any Christian cemetery will testify to the trust we place in this symbol of Christ's death and His victory over death.