



**St. Nicholas
Orthodox Church**

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Orthodox Church
in America

Diocese of the West

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*Make peace with yourself,
and heaven and earth make
peace with you... Cast off the
burden of sin and you will
find within you the upward
path that will make your
ascent possible.*

*Nothing happens accidentally
or in such a way that you
cannot learn from it; you
must understand this at once,
for this is how your trust
grows in the Lord whom you
have chosen to follow.*

*If you wish to save your soul
and win eternal life, arise
moment by moment from your
dullness, bless yourself with
the sign of the Cross: Let me
Lord, make a good beginning,
in the name of the Father,
and of the Son, and of the
Holy Spirit. Amen.*

- Tito Colliander
Way of the Ascetics



ST. NICHOLAS NEWS

April 2024

Great Lent – Part II

*Having reached the middle of the sea of abstinence, let us look towards
the haven of salvation, the season of Thy voluntary Passion, O Lord.
In Thy lovingkindness and Thy mercy, grant us also to behold in peace
the day of Thy glorious Resurrection!*

We sing this verse on April 10, the “mid-point” between Forgiveness Sunday and Pascha. The first part of Lent was aimed chiefly at our purification. On Wednesday night, April 17, this effort reaches its final summation at the reading of the Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete. After this, the tone of the lenten services begins to change. We are made to realize that this purification was not an end in itself. It must lead us ultimately to the *contemplation*, the *comprehension* and finally the *appropriation* of the mystery of the Cross and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

On the Way to Bethany and Jerusalem

On Sunday, April 21, we hear the words of Jesus, “Now we are going up to Jerusalem...”

The entire week (April 22-27) is spent in the contemplation of the forthcoming encounter between *Christ* and *Death*—first in the person of His friend Lazarus, then in His own death.

On Friday April 26, Lent comes to an end as we sing, “Grant us to behold the week of Thy Holy Pas-

sion, for we have completed the forty days of the Fast.”

A Power in My Life

On Lazarus Saturday (April 27), we enter into the special and sacred time of Holy Week and Pascha. Each and every one of us is called to truly “lay aside all earthly cares,” i.e., all activities and concerns that distract from the great mystery which is happening **for** us and **to** us. It must be an experience which transcends the fulfilling of an annual religious obligation or custom. It is more than a beautiful “tableau” which emotionally uplifts us.

Holy Week and Pascha must make present a power which affects everything in my life – my self-perception, my relationships with others, the world around me, my calling in life, my possessions, my body and my health, and finally my own impending death.

This is none other than “*the power of God unto salvation for everyone who has faith.*” (Romans 1:16)

Pastoral Reflections concerning Confession during Lent

One of the essential aspects of the Lenten journey is the Sacrament of Penance. This is the season of repentance and therefore **every** Orthodox Christian prepares to make a good confession during these days. I'm addressing this again because so many of us tend to procrastinate, not realizing the tremendous pressure this puts on the parish priest during the busiest time of the year.

So...once again: **Please make every effort to come to confession during the 40 days of Lent which end this year on April 26, the eve of Lazarus Saturday. Holy Week is reserved only for emergencies, catechumens and students and pilgrims returning home for Pascha.**

Now, some practical considerations. When I do come during these days, what should I say? What should I not say? When is the best time to come?

First of all, a good rule of thumb is to confess your **own** sins without elaborate explanations or rationalizations. Another very important consideration is if there is a need to discuss anything at length, it would be better to schedule a time when there is not a queue of penitents. We all need that venue at certain times, but it's better to request a confession by appointment which is convenient both for you and the priest. These few weeks are definitely not the time to ruminate on various problems of the past week or to have a "spiritual chat."

I can't stress enough how important it is to actually set aside time to prepare for this Sacred Mystery. Actually, Great Lent itself should be a huge part of this process. Personally I find it helpful to first look at a printed "examination of conscience" in order to prepare myself for this Holy Sacrament. I highly recommend two booklets: *Preparing for Confession* by L. Joseph Letendre and *If We Confess Our Sins* by Fr. Thomas Hopko. They are both available in the parish bookstore. I can provide you with an electronic copy of the latter if you email me at svyatnikolai@yahoo.com.

However, just reading something from someone else's list is not the best alternative. Making your own list as a reminder can be a very helpful tool, ever mindful that true repentance comes from the depth of one's heart and said in one's own words.

Community Corner

During these Holy Days of Great Lent and Pascha we are reminded by our Lord Himself to "first clean the inside of the cup" (Matt. 23:26.) As a part of our Lenten tithe to increase prayer, fasting and almsgiving, an absolute priority is given to worship. Nevertheless, the "outside of the cup" has to be cleaned as well.



We will need all our ministry volunteers this month to help with cleaning, decorating, general preparations and "after the party" clean-up.

Thursday, April 25th - 9am - 3pm

Volunteers will meet in the Parish Hall
to receive assignments.

Bright Sadness

Throughout Lent it is imperative that we give at least one evening to attend the Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts with the spiritual experience it implies—that of total fasting, that of the transformation of at least one day into a real expectation of judgment and joy. No references to conditions of life, lack of time, etc., are acceptable at this point, for if we do only that which easily 'fits' into the conditions of our lives, the very notion of Lenten effort becomes absolutely meaningless. Not only in the 20th (or 21st) century, but in fact since Adam and Eve, 'this world' was always an obstacle to the fulfillment of God's demands. There is, therefore, nothing new or special about our 'modern way of life.' Ultimately it all depends on whether or not we take our religion seriously, and, if we do, eight or ten additional evenings a year at church are only a minimal effort. Deprived of those evenings, however, we are depriving ourselves not only of the beauty and the depth of the Lenten services, not only of a necessary spiritual aspiration and help, but of that which makes our fasting meaningful and effective."

From Fr. Alexander Schmemmann's *Great Lent*

Holy Week and Bright Week Schedule of Services

Lazarus Saturday, April 27

Divine Liturgy, 9:30 am

Palm Sunday Vigil- blessing of palms and willows, 6:00 pm

Palm Sunday, April 28

Divine Liturgy, 9:30 am

Vespers and Bridegroom Matins, 6:00 pm

Great and Holy Monday, April 29

Bridegroom Matins, 7:00 pm

"Behold the Bridegroom comes at midnight..."

Great and Holy Tuesday, April 30

Lenten Hours and Gospel, 5:15 pm

Presanctified and lenten meal, 6:00 pm (*Hymn of Cassia*)

Great and Holy Wednesday, May 1

Matins 7:00 pm

Great and Holy Thursday, May 2

Divine Liturgy (Institution of the Eucharist), 10:30 am

Matins (12 Passion Gospels), 7:00 pm

Great and Holy Friday, May 3

Royal Hours, 9:00 am

Vespers and bringing out of the Holy Shroud, 2:00 pm

Jerusalem Matins with Lamentations and Procession, 7:00 pm

Great and Holy Saturday, The Great Vigil of Pascha, May 4

Reception of Catechumens, Vespers and Divine Liturgy of St. Basil, 11:00 am

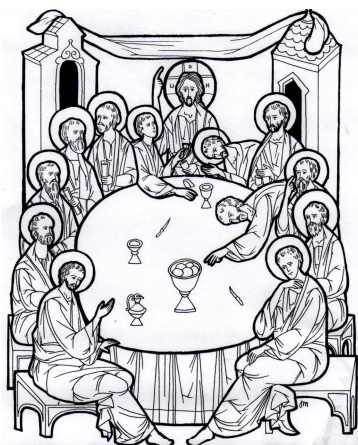
Nocturns and removal of the Holy Shroud, 11:15 pm

Great and Holy Pascha - The Feast of Feasts, May 5

Procession, Paschal Matins and Divine Liturgy, 12:00 midnight

(followed by blessing of foods now permitted to be eaten and parish Agape Festal Meal)

Vespers of Pascha, 1:30 pm



Holy Communion

To truly celebrate Pascha is to partake of Holy Communion at the Divine Liturgy that blessed night. Christ Himself is the *Paschal Lamb* who was slain for the sins of the world. To "eat of the Pascha" then is not to eat of blessed bread or cheese (kulich and syrnaya pascha) but to receive the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. If you have made a sincere confession and repented of your sins during Lent, then abstain from all food and drink from sunset on Holy Saturday, hear the sermon of St. John Chrysostom and prepare to receive.