



**St. Nicholas
Orthodox Church**

102 Ross Avenue
San Anselmo, CA
94960

(415) 454-0982
www.stnicholasmarin.org

Diocese of the West

Orthodox Church
in America

Fr. Stephan Meholick,
Pastor

Protodeacon George
Golitzin

**IMPORTANT
DATES**

March 2

Forgiveness Sunday

March 3-7

Pure Week

March 24-25

Annunciation

BAY AREA

LENTEN RETREATS

Saturday, March 15

Holy Trinity Cathedral, SF
Fr. Alexander Rentel

Saturday, March 29

Pan-Orthodox
Intergenerational Retreat
Resurrection Greek Church
Castro Valley

Sunday, March 30

Vespers followed by
OCMC Mission Awareness
Dinner
Nativity of Christ, Novato

ST. NICHOLAS NEWS

March 2025

Tried and True Recipes for Lent?

Planning for Great Lent is a lot like making a New Year's resolution. Goals and activities should be deliberate but realistic, and parents should make an effort to explain to their children *why* these practices are being adopted, rather than merely forcing them upon them.

After setting our individual and/or family goals, we need to arrange our schedules, plan the different events and make adjustments to our life to put these resolutions into practice. Our daily life doesn't stop just because Lent is here. The challenge is to observe the *spirit* of Lent and perform the works of Lent while living in a secular culture, to remain "*in* the world but not *of* the world."

The Three Elements of a Lenten Program

There are three principal works for Lent, as taught to us by Christ: prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Of course, more categories can be added such as good works and education. All are linked to each other.

1. Prayer

"Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God" (St. John Damascene). We communicate with God and work on our relationship with God. It is through prayer that we know God and understand God's will for us. Through our prayers we open ourselves to charity, generosity towards others and self-denial to ourselves. There are many forms of prayer that we can and should practice, both privately and corporately.

- Ideally, we should make a strong commitment to participate in the week-day services whenever possible, especially during Pure Week and the Presanctified Liturgies. The liturgical priorities of Holy Week, of course, go without saying. Remember, Lenten worship, with its special "key" in the chanting, its "bright sadness," Prayer of St. Ephraim and prostrations, etc., can **only** be experienced Monday through Friday. (Saturday evening and Sunday mornings are always Resurrectional, i.e. Paschal.)
- When this is not possible, as a bare minimum, the scripture readings from the calendar and selections from the Psalms should be read and meditated upon daily. This could be done as a family, perhaps at the dinner meal.

Included in this category we might add **education and reading**. During Lent (and throughout the year) we need spiritual instruction.

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We need something for the mind, something for the soul, and something for the heart. During the daytime weekday services in church we'll be reading Tito Colliander's *Way of the Ascetics*. I also highly recommend *Great Lent* by Fr. Alexander Schmemmann and *The Lenten Spring* by Fr. Thomas Hopko. See me (Fr. Stephan) if you would like some other suggestions.

2. Fasting

All of us are called to fast and abstain from certain foods and beverages during Great Lent. However, there are other forms of abstaining and fasting which also are an **essential** part of our discipline. We are called to fast with our eyes, our ears, our hands and feet and our tongue. Here are some examples of these forms:

- Refrain from complaining, gossiping, grumbling or losing your temper.
- Reduce or eliminate time surfing the Internet or playing video games.
- Curb forms of entertainment such as TV, dining out, movies, **especially** during Pure Week and Holy Week.
- Eat less at meals, or eat fewer snacks between meals.
- Eat without complaining. Make simple meals that are healthy.

3. Almsgiving and Good Works

Without almsgiving, the Holy Fathers teach, our fasting is ultimately barren. Whatever we give up, the money we save should be given away to the needy. It helps to make this a visual practice by, for example, having a jar or box in the center of the table as a reminder and measure of progress.

It is also considered "almsgiving" to give one's time and goods to those who are in need, i.e., donating time for a soup kitchen, giving clothes to charity, visiting the shut-ins and elderly, driving those without transportation and other similar practices.

Our Daily Duty with Personal Time

At the end of our life, we will be held accountable for how we have used our time. Where is there

room for improvement **now**? Are morning and evening prayers in our routine? Preparation for Confession and Communion? What **do** you do on Saturday at 6pm if for some reason worthy of a blessing you're not at vigil? Can we spend more personal time for prayer, or discipline ourselves to get the right amount of sleep (in order to be less irritable and more fruitful)? NOW is the time to make the best of our daily duty.

During the Daytime before Presanctified

by Fr. Alexander Schmemmann

In the light of the approaching encounter with Christ (in the Holy Eucharist,) how serious and how grave becomes the day I have to spend in the usual occupations; how the most trivial and insignificant things, which fill my daily existence and to which I am so accustomed that I pay no attention to them, acquire a new significance. Every word I say, every act I perform, every thought passing through my mind becomes important, unique, irreversible, and either each is "in line" with my expectation of Christ or in opposition to it.

During those special days, time itself, which we usually "waste" so easily, is revealed in its true meaning as the time of either salvation or damnation. Our whole life becomes that which it was made by Christ's coming into this world – ascension to Him, or running away from Him into darkness and destruction.

Nowhere indeed is the true meaning of fasting and Lent revealed better or fuller than on the days of the evening Communion – the meaning not only of Lent but of the Church and of Christian life in their totality. In Christ, all of life, all of time, history, the cosmos itself have become expectation, preparation, hope, ascension. Christ has come; the Kingdom is yet to come!

In "this world" we can only anticipate the glory and joy of the Kingdom, yet as Church we leave this world in spirit and meet at the Lord's table where in the secret of our heart we contemplate His uncreated light and splendor.

Lent and Confession

One of the most important aspects of the Lenten journey is the Sacrament of Penance. This is the season of repentance and therefore **every** Orthodox Christian should prepare to make a good confession during these holy days.

It is the teaching of the Orthodox Church that sacramental penance is necessary for those receiving Holy Communion when they have committed grave sins or when they have failed to prepare to receive the Eucharist regularly.

There are three main elements to the act of formal penance:

1. **sincere sorrow for sin** and for the breaking of communion with God
2. an open and heartfelt **confession** in the presence of the priest who stands on behalf of the whole community
3. the **prayer of absolution** by the priest through which the forgiveness of God is sacramentally bestowed upon the repentant sinner

Fr. Stephan will hear confessions before or after the weekday Lenten services or at any other time by appointment. Confessions will be heard on Sunday mornings at 9:00 a.m. **only** for those who are elderly, sick, or live a great distance from the church. If you absolutely must come on Sunday morning, please let Father know by Saturday evening so that Proskomede can be completed and Liturgy will not be delayed.

NOTE: After Palm Sunday, confession times must be reserved for shut-ins, people who have traveled to be with us for Holy Week, Catechumens, and for genuine emergencies. (Procrastination does not constitute an emergency.)

N.B. The anointing on Holy Wednesday is the renewal of our Lenten repentance, not a substitute for the Sacrament of Confession.

Charitable Works

Global, Local, and Parish

St. Leo the Great

“There is no more profitable practice as a companion to holy and spiritual fasting than that of almsgiving. This embraces under the single name of mercy many excellent works of devotion, so that the good intentions of the faithful may be of equal value, even where their means are not. The love that we owe both God and our neighbor is always free from any obstacle that would prevent us from having a good intention. The angels sang: Glory to God in the highest, and peace to His people on earth. The person who shows love and compassion to those in any kind of affliction is blessed, not only with the virtue of good will, but also with the gift of peace ... Those who are unequal in their capacity to give can be equal in the love within their hearts.”

Sunday Special Collections

March 9 - (Sunday of Orthodoxy) - IOCC

March 16 - Ukraine & Middle East War Relief

March 23 - St. Nicholas Paschal Flowers

March 30 - Orthodox Christian Mission Center

April 6 - Holy Assumption Monastery

April 13 - Raffle for Church Camp Scholarships

Presanctified Liturgy Collections

Wednesday, March 12 - St. Vincent de Paul of San Rafael

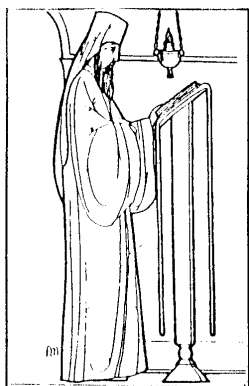
Wednesday, March 19 - Postpartum Support Center

Tuesday, March 25 - Marin Pregnancy Clinic

Friday, March 28 - The Africa Fund

Wednesday, April 9 - The Street Chaplaincy

Pure Week March 3 - 7



The first week of Great Lent is a very special time of renewal and rededication of our lives to God. It is the most perfect and natural time for a personal retreat.

If at all possible, attend matins at daybreak – at least on the very first day. If you are at home during the daytime, there will be services also scheduled at mid-day. In the evenings, make an effort at **least** once or twice to attend Great Compline with the Canon of St. Andrew of Crete, which sets the whole tone of our Lenten effort. Finally, the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts with the reception of Holy Communion and the blessing of kutia (boiled wheat) is the climax of the weekday services.

Remember, services this week are held many times during the morning, mid-day and evening. Not everyone can attend **all** of them, but most of us can attend **some** of them.