

How To
Live
a
Holy Life

Fasting and Prayer Program
The Holy Great Fast
2018

Introduction

As Christians we are called to be saints. The Greek word translated 'saint' is 'agios', 'holy one' or 'set apart one' or 'consecrated for His purpose.'

"To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints" (Rom 1:7)

"To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor 1:2)

"...but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy.'" (1 Pet 1:15)

'Be holy, for I am holy.....' Our question should not be 'is it possible?' Rather, it should be 'HOW is it possible?' This year's Fasting and Prayer Program, entitled 'How to Live a Holy Life,' aims to help us to strive towards holiness by focusing on the How?

In the next seven weeks leading up to the Holy Pascha we will be focusing on seven characteristics of holy people. Each week we will look at one characteristic in depth, with particular focus on how to live this characteristic in our daily lives.

Before we begin our journey we leave you with these words from St Philaret of Moscow to inspire you on your path to holiness:

"Every Christian should find for himself the imperative and incentive to become holy. If you live without struggle and without hope of becoming holy, then you are Christians only in name and not in essence. But without holiness, no one shall see the Lord, that is to say they will not attain eternal blessedness. It is a trustworthy saying that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners (1 Tim 1:15). But we deceive ourselves if we think that we are saved while remaining sinners. Christ saves those sinners by giving them the means to become saints."



7 characteristics of holy people

Week 1 – Holy people are filled with the love of God

Week 2 – Holy people love others

Week 3 – Holy people are humble, willingly and lovingly attributing to God all that they have and all that they will ever be

Week 4 – Holy people are people of prayer

Week 5 – Holy people are not perfect, they are always striving for repentance

Week 6 – Holy people struggle in their spiritual life to obtain virtues

Week 7 – Holy people love and live the commandments of the Lord

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” (Matt 22:37)



“What does to ‘love God with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our mind, and with all our strength’ mean? This means to be steadfastly devoted to God with our whole hearts and souls; that is, with all the strength and fullness of love that is possible for the human heart, not sharing our love in the same measure with any other being, however, beloved, needed, and dear that being may be to us.

To love God with all [our] heart, and so forth, means to think more often and more readily about God and what is pleasing to God, because in general it is an attribute of the love of our heart that the one whom we sincerely love is constantly with us in our thoughts. We are often separated from the one we love, but are always with that one in our thoughts: looking at, listening to, and speaking with him or her.

To love God with all [our] heart means to speak about the Lord God, as often, as long, and as readily as we can. Because it is an attribute of the love of our heart that we speak as often, as long and as willingly as possible about whom we sincerely love, for you speak of whatever lies deepest in your heart; ‘for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.’ (Matt 12:34).”

Metropolitan Gregory (Postikov) of St Petersburg

1st Monday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-		
Prophecies:	Ex 2:23-3:5; Is 1:2-18		
Matins:	Ps 6:1-2	Matt 12:24-34	
Mass:	Rom 1:26-2:7 Ps 22:26	James 2:1-13 Mark 9:33-50	Acts 14:19-28

“Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight.” (Exo 33:13)



“To love God with all [our] heart means to try to the greatest extent possible to learn the will of God, or that which is pleasing to God and that which offends Him, and then as readily, diligently, and joyfully as possible to do what is pleasing to the Lord God, and as attentively and thoughtfully as we can to avoid what offends Him. For it is an attribute of the love of our heart that we try to the greatest extent possible to know the will of whomever we sincerely love and to fulfil it with all diligence and pleasure, no matter how difficult that may be.

To love God with all [our] heart means to fulfil the will of God readily and with joy, even when this is sure to demand great self-sacrifice of us. For it is an attribute of the love of the human heart that we try to fulfil the will of whomever we sincerely love, regardless of any obstacles, difficulties or unpleasantness, to fulfil it regardless even of clear danger to our lives. Love overcomes all obstacles; for it, everything difficult is easy, everything unpleasant is pleasant, and everything heavy is light.

To love God with all [our] heart means to glorify the Lord God with the greatest zeal and to try with all our power to put a stop to or prevent anything that [calls into question] His glory. For it is always an attribute of our love that we everywhere praise whomever we sincerely love and at any unpleasant mention of our beloved we try our utmost to defend the honour of our beloved and his or her good name. For we are always gratified when our beloved is held in respect by all and displeased when he or she is not loved or respected.

Such should be our love for the Lord God, and it is entirely fitting that we should love Him with all the fullness of our love.”

Metropolitan Gregory (Postikov) of St Petersburg

1st Tuesday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-		
Prophecies:	Is 1:19-2:3; Zech 8:7-13		
Matins:	Ps 23:1,3	Matt 9:10-15	
Mass:	Rom 9:14-29	1 Pet 4:3-11	Acts 5:34-42
	Ps 25:16-17		
	Luke 12:41-50		

“Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.”
(Jer 29:12-13)



“We pray as a response to love, and we pray in order to love....

For Christians, love is action, not feeling. Christian love is not the warm rush of desire and joy that can be experienced in a love affair, political rally, or charismatic power meeting. That is romanticism, not Christianity. So responding to God with warm feelings is not what prayer should be about...

Love experienced on the deep level of reality results in a conscious decision to act toward someone in a caring way and to communicate with that person. So God acts by sending His Son, the Eternal Word, to us. This is the ultimate declaration of love. We respond to the sending of His word with our words. We pray.

Prayer is more than just our response to the way God loves us. It is part of how we love Him. Love breaks down separation because we want to be with the person we love. If we love God we want to become one with Him. St Dimitri of Rostov wrote: ‘No unity with God is possible except by an exceedingly great love.’ Loving and joining go together.”

St Dimitri of Rostov continues: “To kindle in your heart such divine love, to unite with God in an inseparable union of love, it is necessary for you to pray often, raising the mind to Him. For as a flame increases when it is constantly fed, so prayer, made often, with the mind dwelling ever more deeply in God, arouses divine love in the heart. And the heart, set on fire, will warm all the inner person, will enlighten and teach you, revealing to you all its unknown and hidden wisdom, and making you like a flaming seraph, always standing before God within your spirit, always looking at Him within your mind, and drawing from this vision the sweetness of spiritual joy.”

Very Rev Michael Keiser

St Dimitri of Rostov

1st Wednesday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-
Prophecies:	Is 2:3-11; Joel 2:12-27
Matins:	Ps 25:6-7 Luke 6:24-34
Mass:	Rom 14:19-15:7 2 Pet 1:4-11 Acts 10:9-20 Ps 25:20,16 Luke 6:35-38

HOW? SEEK TO GROW IN THE LIKENESS
OF GOD

“As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.” (Ps 17:15)



“Christ did not come to destroy the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfil them. He called His followers, and He calls us, to exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees. That doesn’t mean that we will follow more laws than they did, but that the meaning and purpose of the Law will be fulfilled in us: that we will grow in the likeness of God, that we will be united fully with Him through love; that His love will overflow into every relationship that we have and will become present in the world through us. In other words, we will become holy through the love of God and neighbour; indeed, that’s what true holiness means, to be purified in love and union with God and with one another.

Though we may not yet have the eyes to see it, our entire life in the Church—and every bit of our life in the world as Christians—presents an opportunity to grow in holiness through the love of God and neighbour. Indeed, that’s the point of it all: of our services, our prayers at home, our fasting, our feasting, our generosity to the poor, our forgiveness of others, our marriages and family life, our recreation, and all our work on the job or at school. They are all part of fulfilling our most fundamental calling: to grow in the likeness of God, to become partakers of the Divine Nature, to grow in loving union with the Holy Trinity and with one another.

When we make the time to pray daily and to come to Liturgy on Sundays and Feast days; when we confess our sins and prepare conscientiously to receive Communion; when we wrestle with our passions through fasting or other forms of self-denial; when we humble ourselves to serve others and to ask for their forgiveness when we offend them; when we live faithfully—though imperfectly—as Christ’s followers, we grow in the love of God and neighbour, and we shine a bit more brightly with the holy light of Christ. Then we grow in union with the Lord and His righteousness and, despite our unworthiness, we share in Christ’s fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets. That is what our life as human beings is about, and it is possible because the Son of God really has become one of us so that we may become more like Him, being truly perfected in love.”

Fr. Philip LeMasters

1st Thursday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-		
Prophecies:	Is 2:11-19; Zech 8:18-23		
Matins:	Ps 24:1-2	Luke 8:23-25	
Mass:	1 Cor 4:16-5:9	1 John 1:8-2:11	Acts 8:3-13
	Ps 118:14,18	Mark 4:21-29	

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’”
(John 14:6)



“Why do I pray? Why do I fast? Why do I seek seclusion? And why do I read? Is it in order to be a man of prayers, or fasting or to be known as a lover of seclusion or a man of knowledge?

Do I really love God Himself or the way which leads me to Him? For example, do I love prayers or love God to whom I pray? Sometimes I notice many imperfections in me: When I recite all the psalms required from me, I feel happy not because I was talking with God but because this proves that I am successful in performing my worship duties as a monk!! On the other hand when I fail to recite all the required psalms I feel sorry, not because I did not enjoy talking with God but because I am unsuccessful monk. I feel the same regarding my fasting, my watching and my readings.

It is absolutely a personal matter, it is an evident selfishness which fills me with the desire to be exalted in my own eyes irrespective of my relation with God! When will the time come when I do not pray even one psalm, yet I feel happy because in spite of this I am abiding in God through other means of worship?

Do I pray to feel the pleasure and enjoyment of talking with You and to feel the happiness of being in Your presence? Or do I pray so that I may acquire a virtue by which I attain eternal life? Perhaps I do pray to talk with You and ask You to give me that life? Is the prayer from my own point of view an objective or just a means? For example when one interrupts my privacy and my prayer I rage against him, I lose my inner peace with people. Consequently I feel disturbed within me and lose my peace with God also. This means that the prayer is an objective not a means and in order to attain this objective I must deviate and behave in a wrong way!!

Worship is just a way that leads to God but God is the aim. Love is a way, ministry is a way but the aim is one i.e. God. Why then do we lose God in order to keep Him! And the way that leads to Him is in the form of desire! Let us then love the way not because it is desirable for it is indeed so but because it leads us to God. Let us hurry along the way and cross it quickly to arrive to Him. It is perfection to make God Himself our way because He Himself is the way as He said (John. 14:6).”

His Holiness Pope Shenouda III

1st Friday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-		
Prophecies:	Deut 6:3-7:26; Is 3:1-14		
Matins:	Ps 30:1-2	Luke 5:12-16	
Mass:	Rom 12:6-21	3 John 1:1-14	Acts 2:42-3:9
	Ps 13:5-6		
	Luke 11:1-10		

“My son, give me your heart, And let your eyes observe my ways.” (Pro 23:26)



“Love simply is God.

For the [Bible] says: ‘God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.’

‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind and with all your strength.’

It needs to be from all your heart, [therefore] your whole heart has to be given for the love of God. And there is no one else in the heart apart from God alone.

One of the monks, was once praying and walking and in his prayer, his heart was in communion with God. Then he saw two angels walking beside him, one on his right and the other to his left, and he didn't allow himself to turn to look at one of them! He used to say to himself: ‘Nor angels nor principalities shall be able to separate me from Christ.’ ‘I am busy with the Lord now, I am not going to be preoccupied with the angels!’ The whole heart is given to God...

The whole heart is given to God. Why? Because the song says: ‘My beloved is mine, and I am his.’

‘My beloved is mine, and I am his.’ An amazing mutual love between man and God. It doesn't give him a chance at all to love something else! But I tell you honestly, if you love God with a complete love, the whole world becomes nothing in your sight. ‘I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him.’ The whole world becomes rubbish. Why do we love things in the world? Because the love of God hasn't completely taken over us.

You shouldn't think that God wants you as a religious person to fulfil duties or obligations...Not at all. God doesn't give you duties or obligations...but wants you to love Him in the same way as He loves you. So how does He love you? The [Bible] says: ‘Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.’

‘He loved them to the end.’ Do you, love our Lord like that ? To the end? He loved them and died for them. Do you love the Lord till you die for Him? He loved them and said to them: ‘That where I am, there you may also be.’ So are you, where God is?”

His Holiness Pope Shenouda III

1st Saturday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-		
Prophecies:	-		
Matins:	Ps 119:57-58	Matt 5:25-37	
Mass:	Rom 12:1-21	James 1:1-12	Acts 21:27-39
	Ps 5:1-2	Matt 5:38-48	

19 “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;

20 “but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

21 “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

22 “The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.

23 “But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great [is] that darkness!

24 “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

25 “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?

26 “Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

27 “Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?

28 “So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin;

29 “and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

30 “Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, [will] [He] not much more [clothe] you, O you of little faith?

31 “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’

32 “For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

33 “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

Matthew 6:19-33

1st Sunday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Ps 17:1-2	Matt 6:34-7:12	
Prophecies:	-		
Matins:	Ps 18:1-2	Matt 7:22-29	
Mass:	Rom 13:1-14	James 1:13-21	Acts 21:40-22:16
	Ps 25:1-2,4	Matt 6:19-33	

Day 8Monday, 19 February
2018**HOW? THROUGH YOUR LOVE FOR GOD**

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.” (1 John 4:7-8)



“Love is to be directed first to God .

If we wish to understand love in its true scriptural foundations, we must set before us (and understand) the following truth:

Love should be directed to God, before anyone or anything else. This is what God revealed to us in the Book of Deuteronomy: ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.’ (Deut 6:5)

So then, if this love to God is from the whole heart, is there any room left for any other love? How can we love anything else, if the whole heart is for God?! The only answer is that our love for everyone and everything is through our love for God.

When we have given the whole heart to God, within our love to God, we love everyone. That is why when asked about the greatest commandment, Christ replied, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ (Matt 22:37-39)

Why did He say, “The second is like it”? Because it is through the love of God... It is part of it... It is not separate from the first commandment...”

His Holiness Pope Shenouda III

2nd Monday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-		
Prophecies:	Ex 3:6-14; Is 4:2-5:7		
Matins:	Ps 40:11	Mark 9:25-29	
Mass:	Rom 1:18-25	Jude 1:1-8	Acts 4:36-5:11
	Ps 29:1-2	Luke 18:1-8	

Day 9Tuesday, 20 February
2018**HOW? LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS
YOURSELF (I)**

“If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself,’ you do well.” (James 2:8)



“[Our Lord Jesus Christ], whilst giving His last instructions to His Disciples before His suffering, entrusted them with this love, namely: ‘These things I command you, that you love one another.’ (John 15:17) The measure of this love is clearly defined by the Lord Himself. He demands that we all love our neighbour as ourselves, for He said: ‘You shall love... your neighbour as yourself.’ (Luk 10:27) ... ‘Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them.’ (Matt 7:12). Therefore my reader, take note and fulfil the following instructions:

1. You want the best for yourself and are satisfied when everything works out for the best. On the other hand you are not pleased when for some reasons things fail. Therefore wish the best for all your neighbours; rejoice when they are happy and commiserate when they fall into misfortune.

2. It is unpleasant when people react to you poorly and suspect you of some evil doing. Therefore do not speak poorly of anyone and without sufficient cause do not be suspicious of anyone. ‘Love thinks no evil.’ (1 Cor 13:5)

3. It is pleasant for you when people speak well of you. Therefore you should speak well of all your neighbours. Be especially careful not to slander your neighbour. Slander is the work of Satan, let it belong to him alone (Rev 12:10). You speak only good of your neighbour.

4. When someone speaks poorly about someone outside your circle, try, if at all possible, to defend or excuse him. Besides this, never repeat that which you have heard. For it frequently happens that things are said about people because of malice or out of revenge, and to repeat that which was said can cause enmity. Enmity is described in the Word of God as one of those vices which can prevent one from entering the Kingdom of Heaven (Gal 5:20).”

Metropolitan Gregory (Postikov) of St Petersburg

2nd Tuesday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-		
Prophecies:	Job 19:1-27, Is 5:7-16		
Matins:	Ps 41:4,13	Luke 12:22-31	
Mass:	2 Cor 9:6-15	James 1:1-12	Acts 4:13-22
	Ps 41:1	Mark 10:17-27	

Day 10Wednesday, 21 February
2018**How? LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELF (II)**

“And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.” (Luke 6:31)



5. “It is unpleasant for you when people divulge your shortcomings and especially your vices. Therefore when you see the weaknesses and vices of others do not announce them to everyone for ‘[Love]... bears all things,... endures all things.’ (1 Cor 13:4-7).

6. You do not like it when others treat you roughly and offend you in some way. Therefore you should treat everyone kindly without exception. Be especially careful not to use swear words or offensive ones. If it so happens that someone treats you crudely, angrily, and says unpleasant things to you, then answer him meekly, for, ‘a soft answer turns away wrath.’ (Prov 15:1). If it happens that because of an offence you become angry with your neighbour, then say nothing for immediately your anger will flame up, and in an impassioned state you are likely to consider it necessary to say something that later [you’ll] sorely regret, but will be incapable of correcting. While angry say nothing but wait until you have completely calmed down. If your neighbour is for some reason very angry with you, do not attempt to talk him out of it, even if it seems very necessary, for while he is in the heat of anger the passion is in control of him and not his reason, therefore you must not try to dissuade him - it is impossible to speak convincingly to someone out of his mind, your words will only make him more angry and force him to do something possibly harmful to you.

7. You are pleased when people help you when you are in need. Therefore, strive yourself, as much as you can, to help your neighbour in all of his needs, For almsgiving delivers from death, and it will purge away every sin. Those who perform deeds of charity and of righteousness will have fullness of life.’ (Tobit 12:9), the Word of God tells us.”

Metropolitan Gregory (Postikov) of St Petersburg

2nd Wednesday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-		
Prophecies:	Ex 2:11-20; Is 5:17-25; Mal 1:6-3:6		
Matins:	Ps 18:17-18	Matt 5:17-24	
Mass:	Rom 3:1-17	2 John 1:8-13	Acts 5:3-11
	Ps 18:1-2	Matt 15:32-38	

Day 11**Thursday, 22 February
2018****HOW? SERVE OTHERS**

“For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” (Gal 5:13)



“After every Liturgy, [St Pope Kyrillos VI] would stand for hours upon hours as the multitudes embraced him for his blessings. The Metropolitan and Bishops witnessing his evident fatigue and sweat, urged him, in their pity, to take rest. However, St Kyrillos, in his selfless love, would not even dare to upset a single member of his congregation by turning them away. Furthermore, the Pope opened his doors to anyone and everyone that needed him, placing no restrictions on time; there was no such thing as ‘after hours’ in this Patriarch’s schedule. Even when St Kyrillos himself had been asleep, he would be awakened by his patron Saint and informed of the matter of the one who seeks him, before even speaking a word to that very person in the first place.”

2nd Thursday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-		
Prophecies:	Deut 5:15-22; Is 6:1-12; Josh 2:1-6:27		
Matins:	Ps 28:9	Matt 11:20-30	
Mass:	Rom 16:17-27	James 3:1-12	Acts 12:12-23
	Ps 48:10-11	Matt 19:16-30	

Day 12Friday, 23 February
2018**HOW? SERVE OTHERS WITHOUT
PARTIALITY**

“My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, “You sit here in a good place,” and say to the poor man, “You stand there,” or, “Sit here at my footstool,” have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?” (James 2:1-4)



“Once a youth was coming home, and recognised the car of Father Pishoy Kamel parked outside his block of flats. Having entered the house he greeted his father and said, ‘Father Pishoy is visiting a family nearby.’

His father answered, ‘No he is visiting a family in this block of flats.’

The son said, ‘Really, who is he visiting’ for he did not know or remember any other Christian families who lived in the block of flats.

His father seeing his son’s puzzlement smiled and replied, ‘The family of (el-bowab) the gatekeeper* to the block of flats, come and see...’

The youth looked out of the small window to see Father Pishoy [sitting] on an old mat on the floor with a low table before him. He was surrounded by the gatekeeper, his wife and their children. He prayed on the simple food they had put before him to eat, and then they ate with him with joy and happiness.”

*Gatekeepers lived at the bottom of the stairwell and only had basic necessities. Their children were usually left on the streets.

2nd Friday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-		
Prophecies:	Deut 8:1-9:4; 1 Sam 17:1-18:4; Is 7:1-14; Job 11:1-20		
Matins:	Ps 116:7-8l	Matt 15:39-16:12	
Mass:	Heb 12:28-13:16	1 Pet 4:7-16	Acts 15:22-31
	Ps 29:10-11	Luke 6:39-49	

Day 13**Saturday, 24 February
2018****How? LOVE YOUR ENEMY**

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you?”
(Matt 5:43-46)



“The purer the heart is, the larger it is, and the more able it is to find room within it for a greater number of beloved ones; whilst the more sinful it is, the more contracted it becomes, and the less number of beloved can it find room for, because it is limited by self-love, and that love is a false one; we love ourselves in objects unworthy of the immortal soul — in silver and gold, in adultery, in drunkenness, and such like.

We stand before the altar of love in the presence of Incarnate Love Itself, but we have no love to each other. How strange it is! And we do not even care about this. But love will not come of itself without our zeal, efforts and activity.

Up till now you have not learned to love your neighbour. You answer men’s dislike towards you by dislike on your part. But do the contrary; answer others’ dislike by heartfelt goodwill and love; the more dislike you see towards you, the more you should love. Dislike is a malady, and a sick person should be more pitied, should be shown greater care and greater love, exactly because he is ill. Do you not know that the bodiless enemy uses his craftiness against all, infects all with the poison of his hatred? And you, too, are not exempt from his craftiness. Do not serve him, then, the spirit of enmity, but serve the God of love with the utmost zeal. Remember that God the Word died for your brethren.

Love your enemy, and you will be wise. O, if only you knew what a triumph, what blessedness it is to love your enemy, and to do good to him! So did the Son of God, so did God in the Holy Trinity, triumph, and still triumphs, through His love, over the ungrateful and evil-natured human race; so also did God’s saints triumph over their enemies, by loving them and doing good to them.

Our love for God or for our neighbour will especially show itself, and its purity, strength, and constancy will be revealed when there is a contrary power (of the Devil) struggling and acting like fire in our hearts, and endeavouring to implant aversion, antagonism, contempt, hatred, and enmity in our hearts. Love is strengthened within us when the opposing forces endeavour, so to say, to uproot it, whilst we struggle in every way against these opposing forces, and by our struggle with the enemy purify, raise, and strengthen our love. It is in reward for this constant battle out of love for God and our neighbour, for this firmness, for this fiery, stubborn, constant, invisible war against the sub-celestial spirits of evil, that God weaves the shining heavenly crowns for the wrestlers of love for God and their neighbour.”

St John of Kronstadt

2nd Saturday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-		
Prophecies:	-		
Matins:	Ps 25:7-8,11	Mark 9:43-50	
Mass:	Rom 14:1-18	James 1:22-27	Acts 22:17-30
	Ps 118:19-20	Matt 7:13-21	

2ND SUNDAY
OF THE HOLY GREAT FAST

1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

2 And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.

3 Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."

4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.' "

5 Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple,

6 and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written:

'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and,

'In [their] hands they shall bear you up,

Lest you dash your foot against a stone.' "

7 Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.' "

8 Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.

9 And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me."

10 Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.' "

11 Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.

Matthew 4:1-11

2nd Sunday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Ps 51:1,9	Mark 1:12-15	
Prophecies:	-		
Matins:	Ps 57:1	Luke 4:1-13	
Mass:	Rom 14:19-15:7	James 2:1-13	Acts 23:1-11
	Ps 27:8-9	Matt 4:1-11	

Day 15

Monday, 26 February

2018

HOW? DON'T BE DECEIVED BY PRAISE (I)

“And He said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.” (Luke 16:15)



“When people praise you, be very circumspect because then you are in a dangerous situation.

Many people do not know the true value of things and of actions, and therefore they value and praise things that in the sight of the Lord God and of sensible people are worth nothing. And because praise is pleasing to our self-esteem and vainglory, and self-esteem and vainglory are gullible, we eagerly accept another's false praise as true praise, put a halt to seeking perfection, become more imperfect, die unreformed and perish. Therefore, consider as impartially as possible whether what others praise in you deserves praise from the Lord and from prudent people, because only that which is worthy of praise from the Lord God and from people devoted to Him should be important for us. What does praise from people matter when we are unworthy of praise from the Lord God?

People who want to deceive us in something or get from us some earthly benefit always approach us with obsequiousness, that is, with some degree of praise for us. They often quite intentionally praise in us something that we do not at all have, or that we do have, but not yet at such a high degree to justify so much praise. And if we are a bit puffed up, it will be almost impossible to tell that he who praises us is a flatterer and a liar, because he tells us exactly what pleases us. We easily accept his cunning praise as truth, and the person himself as one who likes us and is well disposed towards us. But such a deception is very harmful for us, because with such a deception we receive a false understanding of ourselves and become confirmed in this false understanding of ourselves. And with a false understanding of ourselves, our reform, and consequently our salvation, is quite impossible.”

Metropolitan Gregory (Postikov) of St Petersburg

3rd Monday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-		
Prophecies:	Prov 1:20-33; Is 8:13-9:7		
Matins:	Ps 32:1-2	Luke 19:11-28	
Mass:	1 Cor 5:9-6:5	1 Pet 1:3-12	Acts 17:10-14
	Ps 32:5	Luke 11:33-36	

Day 16

Tuesday, 27 February

2018

HOW? DON'T BE DECEIVED BY PRAISE

(II)

“Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, But to Your name give glory.” (Ps 115:1)



“That you may not fall into pride, vainglory, carelessness or other ruinous delusion in the face either of deserved or, especially undeserved praise, as unfortunately so often happens:

a) Try to look with distrust on the praise given you, and if the praise is continued for a long time, then it is best to interrupt the conversation politely and turn it to another topic.

b) Remember well what is what is worthy of praise in you is not yours, but God's. It was, indeed, something we acquired because we tried to acquire it, but who gave us the disposition, ability, strength, desire and opportunity to obtain it, if not God? ‘For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?’ the Holy Apostle Paul tells the man with self-esteem (1 Cor 4:7). So when you perceive in yourself something worthy of praise, immediately ascribe it not to yourself, but to the Lord God saying with the Psalmist ‘Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Your name give glory.’ (Ps 115:1)

When you perceive in yourself something worthy of praise, and you feel a desire to tell others about it, try immediately to destroy this desire with the thought that you will not receive any benefit from relating it, but only harm. People are very fickle in their opinions: what they praise today, they forget or even condemn tomorrow. And of course, by telling of what is praiseworthy in you, you are making yourself unworthy of praise from God, because you are receiving your reward from people. ‘Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward,’ said the Lord of people of this type (Matt 6:5). Also, try always to remember these important words of the Lord: ‘Woe to you when all men speak well of you.’ (Luke 6:26)”

Metropolitan Gregory (Postikov) of St Petersburg

3rd Tuesday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-		
Prophecies:	Prov 2:1-15; Is 10:12-20; Josh 7:1-26		
Matins:	Ps 32:10	Luke 12:54-59	
Mass:	Rom 4:1-8	1 John 2:1-11	Acts 27:9-12
	Ps 32:2-3	John 8:31-39	

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.”
(John 15:4-5)



“When your heart inclines to evil, and the evil one begins to undermine your heart, so that it is completely removed from the rock of faith, then say to yourself inwardly:

‘I know of my spiritual poverty, my own nothingness without faith.

I am so weak, that it is only by Christ’s name that I live and obtain peace, that I rejoice and my heart expands, whilst without Him I am spiritually dead, I am troubled, and my heart is oppressed; without the Lord’s Cross I should have been long since the victim of the most cruel distress and despair.

Only Christ keeps me alive: and the Cross is my peace and my consolation.’”

St John of Kronstadt

3rd Wednesday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-		
Prophecies:	Ex 4:19-6:13; Joel 2:21-26; Is 9:9-10:4; Job 12:1-14:22		
Matins:	Ps 27:4	Luke 13:18-22	
Mass:	2 Thess 2:9-17 Ps 27:7-8	2 Pet 2:9-15 Luke 4:1-13	Acts 28:7-11

Day 18

Thursday, 1 March
2018

HOW? ASK GOD TO STRENGTHEN YOUR WEAKNESS

“Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” (2 Cor 12:8-10)



“When St. Anthony entered to the internal desert, the demons watched him dauntingly, saying, ‘O You young of age and mind, how did you dare to enter our territory, as we have never seen a human before you.’ And they all started to fight him. He said to them, ‘O strong ones, what do you want from me, the weak; And who am I so that you all gather to fight me. Don’t you know that I am ashes and dust, and unable to fight the smallest in you.’

And he lay on the ground, shouting to God, ‘O God, help me, and strengthen my weakness. Have mercy on me, as I sought after You. Do not leave me; and do not let those who think that I am something overcome me. O God, You know that I am unable to fight the smallest of these.’ When the demons heard this prayer full of life and humility they fled away, and did not dare to approach to him.”

3rd Thursday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-		
Prophecies:	Gen 18:17-19:29; Prov 2:16-3:4; Is 11:10-12:2		
Matins:	Ps 9:11-12	Luke 20:20-26	
Mass:	Rom 4:6-11	James 4:1-10	Acts 28:1-6
	Ps 9:7-8	John 12:44-50	

Day 19

Friday, 2 March
2018

HOW? PLACE YOURSELF IN THE HAND OF GOD

“... and be clothed with humility, for ‘God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.’” (1 Pet 5:5)



“The Lord sees your need and your efforts, and will give you a helping hand. He will support and establish you as a soldier, fully armed and ready to go into battle. No support can be better than His. The greatest danger lies in the soul thinking that it can find this help within itself; then it will lose everything. Evil will dominate it again, eclipsing the light that as yet flickers but weakly in the soul, and it will extinguish the small flame which is still scarcely burning.

The soul should realize how powerless it is alone; therefore, expecting nothing of itself, let it fall down in humility before God, and in its own heart recognize itself to be nothing. Then grace - which is all powerful - will, out of this nothing, create in it everything. He who in total humility puts himself in the hand of the merciful God, attracts the Lord to himself, and becomes strong in His strength.”

St Theophan the Recluse

3rd Friday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-		
Prophecies:	Deut 9:7-10:11; 1 Sam 23:26-24:22; Job 15:1-35; Is 13:2-13; Sirach* 2:1-3:4 [* Second Canonical Book]		
Matins:	Ps 16:10-11	Luke 20:27-38	
Mass:	Heb 11:1-8	Jude 1:17-25	Acts 23:6-11
	Ps 16:1-2	Luke 11:14-26	

Day 20

Saturday, 3 March
2018

HOW? ATTRIBUTE ALL GOOD THINGS TO GOD

“For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.” (Rom 12:3)



“Nothing is more opposed to God than pride, for self-deification is concealed in it, its own nothingness or sin. Thus more than anything humility is acceptable to God, which considers itself nothing, and attributes all goodness, honour, and glory to God alone. Pride does not accept grace, because it is full of itself, while humility easily accepts grace, because it is free from itself, and from all that is created. God creates out of nothing. As long as we think that we can offer something of ourselves, He does not begin His work in us.

Humility is the salt of virtue. As salt gives flavour to food, so humility gives perfection to virtue. Without salt, food goes bad easily, and without humility, virtue is easily spoiled by pride, vainglory, impatience - and it perishes. There is a humility which a man gains by his own struggles: knowing his own insufficiency, accusing himself for his failings, not allowing himself to judge others. And there is a humility into which God leads a man through the things that happen to him: allowing him to experience afflictions, humiliations, and deprivations.”

St Philaret of Moscow

3rd Saturday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-		
Prophecies:	-		
Matins:	Ps 130:1-2	Mark 10:17-27	
Mass:	2 Cor 7:2-11	James 2:14-26	Acts 23:12-35
	Ps 27:6-8	Matt 18:23-35	

3RD SUNDAY
OF THE HOLY GREAT FAST

11 Then He said: "A certain man had two sons.

12 "And the younger of them said to [his] father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls [to] [me].' So he divided to them [his] livelihood.

13 "And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living.

14 "But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want.

15 "Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16 "And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him [anything].

17 "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

18 'I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you,

19 "and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants." '

20 "And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.

21 "And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

22 "But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put [it] on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on [his] feet.

23 'And bring the fatted calf here and kill [it], and let us eat and be merry;

24 'for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry.

25 "Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing.

26 "So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant.

27 "And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.'

28 "But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him.

29 "So he answered and said to [his] father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends.

30 'But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.'

31 "And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours.

32 'It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.'"

Luke 15:11-32

3rd Sunday of the Holy Fast

Vespers:	Ps 88:1-2	Matt 15:1-20	
Prophecies:	-		
Matins:	Ps 55:1-2,16	Matt 20:1-16	
Mass:	2 Cor 6:2-13	James 3:1-12	Acts 24:1-23
	Ps 79:8-9	Luke 15:11-32	

Day 22**Monday, 5 March
2018****HOW? PRAY WITH HUMILITY, HOPE,
LOVE...**

“Hear my prayer, O Lord, Give ear to my supplications!
In Your faithfulness answer me, And in Your righteousness.”
(Ps 143:1)



“To pray in a God-pleasing way, always do these things:

1. When you pray, always imagine that the Lord God is standing invisibly right in front of you and is watching you. As the holy apostle says, ‘He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being.’ (Acts 17:27-28).

2. Always pray only for what is pleasing to the Lord God or what is in agreement with God’s will... The holy Apostle John says, ‘if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.’ (1 Jn 5:14). The holy Apostle James adds, ‘You ask and do not receive not because you ask amiss, that you spend it on your pleasures.’ (Jam 4:3)

3. In prayer, freely tell the Lord God all your needs, with perfect humility and reverence, with firm hope of being heard, with complete love, with warm sincerity and if your prayer is not answered quickly, with grateful patience.

Pray with perfect humility and reverence because we are dependent on the Lord God for everything and because ‘He shall regard the prayer of the destitute, and shall not despise their prayer (Ps 102:17) ‘but gives grace to the humble.’ (Pro 3:34)

Pray with a firm hope that you will be heard because the Lord God, being All-Good, readily gives a full hearing to everything that His children tell Him and because the holy Apostle says, ‘he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord.’ (Jam 1:6-7)

Pray with complete love because there is no one more worthy of our love than the Lord God.

Pray with warm sincerity because God is an omnipresent and omniscient Spirit, ‘For the Father is seeking such to worship Him.... In spirit and truth.’ (John 4:23-24) and because all who pray truly to Him always pray with their whole heart. The holy King David prayed to the Lord God like this: ‘I cry out with my whole heart; Hear me, O Lord.’ (Ps 119:145)

Pray with grateful patience because we are usually not very far-seeing and little know ourselves, while the Lord God knows well all the circumstances surrounding us and lying ahead of us, and He knows us incomparably better than we know ourselves. Therefore He does not always immediately answer our prayers. Sometimes He does not answer them at all, but instead in His wisdom and goodness, grants us something that we did not ask for, but which in our situation is more beneficial for the salvation of our souls.”

Metropolitan Gregory (Postikov) of St Petersburg

4th Monday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-
Prophecies:	Gen 27:1-41; Is 14:24-32; Job 16:1-17:16
Matins:	Ps 55:1, 27:7-8 Luke 14:7-15
Mass:	Rom 8:12-26 James 5:16-20 Acts 11:2-18 Ps 55:16-17 Luke 16:1-9

Day 23Tuesday, 6 March
2018**HOW? MEET GOD EARLY IN THE
MORNING**

“So be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself to Me there on the top of the mountain.” (Exo 34:2)



“In the morning, long before dawn, [Jesus Christ] got up and left the house, and went off to a lonely place and prayed there.’ In the middle of sentences loaded with action – healing suffering people, casting out devils, responding to impatient disciples, travelling from town to town and preaching from synagogue to synagogue – we find these quiet words: ‘In the morning, long before dawn, He got up and left the house, and went off to a lonely place and prayed there.’

In the centre of breathless activities we hear a restful breathing. Surrounded by hours of moving we find a movement of quiet stillness. In the heart of much involvement there are words of withdrawal. In the midst of action there is contemplation. And after much togetherness there is solitude. The more I read this nearly silent sentence locked in between the loud words of action, the more I have the sense that the secret of Jesus’ ministry is hidden in that lonely place where He went to pray, early in the morning, long before dawn.”

Henri Nouwen

4th Tuesday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-		
Prophecies:	Gen 28:10-22; Is 25:1-26:8; Job 18:1-21, Sirach* 8:1-10:1		
Matins:	Ps 17:1	Matt 21:28-32	
Mass:	Eph 4:1-16	2 Pet 2:2-8	Acts 27:1-3
	Ps 17:6	Luke 9:57-62	

* Second Canonical Book

Day 24**Wednesday, 7 March
2018****HOW? PRAY WITHOUT CEASING**

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thes 5:16-18)



“Often people who come to the Orthodox Church for the first time are quite amazed at the number of times they will hear us pray “Lord have mercy” at every service and especially at the Divine Liturgy. This is no accident but a purposeful habit that the Church, our mother, is trying to form within us.

This prayer is not simply to be said with our mouths, but with our hearts. It is not to be said only on Sundays during the Divine Liturgy, but every day and if possible, every waking moment of the day. This prayer... is foundational for our understanding of the Jesus prayer. This prayer is often spoken of by the early fathers of the Church as simply “the prayer.” The full Jesus prayer is said as follows “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, the sinner.” Often this will be shortened to “Lord Jesus, have mercy on me.” An even shorter form is simply what we are already saying here every day “Lord have mercy.”

This prayer needs to be foundational in our lives. We build a life of prayer upon these words which are short, sweet and go directly to the point. The repetition of the Jesus prayer allows us to fulfil the teaching of St. Paul who tells us to “pray without ceasing.” So it is possible to pray in such a way, and this practice gives us a prayerful disposition, and connects us to Christ. This prayerful disposition makes it easier for us to pray at other times and to keep a warm connection with God as we go through our day.

Many of the fathers of the Church tell us that the ultimate power of the prayer comes from the repetition of the name of Jesus Christ. It is for us the holiest of all words. It is the very name of the word of God made flesh. It is the name above all names, and it is extremely powerful.

Through the prayer we acknowledge that Jesus Christ is our master and the lord of our life. We acknowledge His true identity as the divine Son of God. Finally, we also recognize our fallenness, our sinfulness. It is both a prayer of acknowledging the Lord for who He really is, and for acknowledging who we really are.”

Fr James Guirguis

4th Wednesday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-		
Prophecies:	Ex 7:14-8:18; Joel 2:28-32; Job 1:1-22; Is 26:21-27:9		
Matins:	Ps 18:37,40	Luke 14:16-24	
Mass:	Eph 4:17-32 Ps 18:17-18	James 3:13-4:4 Mark 4:35-41	Acts 11:26-12:2

Day 25**Thursday, 8 March
2018****HOW? GIVE YOURSELF TO PRAYER**

“But I give myself to prayer.” (Ps. 109:4)



“Pope Kyrillos VI and the Life of Prayer

+ The life of Pope Kyrillos VI was full of good deeds, but his attachment to prayer topped all of his good deeds. Whenever we saw him was during prayer because prayer was his first priority.

+ He organized his daily life according to a schedule of continuous prayers, after midnight he prayed the midnight hymns and continued with the Divine Liturgy at dawn. Then he met his children and prayed for them until the afternoon, during which time he continued with the Vespers prayers, etc. In him we saw the practical fulfilment of the commandment, “Pray without ceasing” (Thess. 5:17)

+ We also never saw him without the blessed bread (ologja) which is a sign Liturgical prayers and offerings which he offered on the altar with vehement prayers and tears.

+ Whenever he prayed for his children who asked for his personal prayers, he always used parts of the Psalms while he placed his hand on their heads for blessing and absolution. He kept the Psalms in his heart and the Psalms also kept him and his children.

+ Whenever we heard him giving advice to his flock he always used to command them to pray, to the point that some people were not satisfied with this advice and answered him saying, “Will prayer buy us bread? Will prayer solve our problems?” but Pope Kyrillos used to answer telling them he has nothing but prayer. What is amazing is that through prayer those people’s problems were solved and they returned to him regretful, thankful, and asking for more prayers.

+ During his sleep and during his waking hours, and even when he was unconscious-under general anaesthesia for an appendectomy, all those who were around him heard him praying the Psalms. In him the words of the Holy Bible which said, “But I give myself to prayer” were fulfilled.

+ Whenever he visited any place, prayer was the main purpose of his visit. He used to visit the churches very early in the morning and pray the Morning Praises and Matins, or in the evenings praying the Vespers.

+ He tried to reach the heaven with prayer, and he did reach it, bringing it even to earth. We have seen saints visit us on earth, for example St. Mary’s apparition in Zaytoon and St. Mark’s relics returned back to Egypt. His strong relationship with St. Mina is proof of his relationship with the heavenly and a way through which we can reach them-through prayer “You reconciled the earthly with heavenly and made the two one.” (from the Gregorian Liturgy)”

Fr. Marcos Gírgis

4th Thursday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-		
Prophecies:	Gen 32:1-30; Is 28:14-22;		
	Job 20:1-29; Dan 6:1-27		
Matins:	Ps 12:7	Mark 3:7-12	
Mass:	1 Cor 12:31-14:1	James 4:11-5:3	Acts 4:19-31
	Ps 48:10-11	Luke 18:35-43	

“Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart” (Luke 18:1)



“[Fr Pishoy Kamel] told a story which happened to him several years ago: One of the ladies who used to confess to him was very bitter and broken hearted. Her husband was alien from God. He did not bare to go to church and did not accept visits of any priest. Furthermore, if he found a religious picture, he would tear it apart. Father used to tell her to keep on praying on his behalf.

Days passed and nothing changed. However, our beloved father was always giving her hope assuring her of the power of prayer. Suddenly her husband fell sick and he asked her if she had a picture of the crucified Jesus. She was reluctant to give it to him lest he might tear it; but, she realized his good intentions this time.

So she gave him the picture and he put it on his chest and started to cry heavily. He asked her to call a priest fast. He confessed and the following day took communion. Shortly thereafter, he passed away. This was the work of prayer in this family and many other families.”

4th Friday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-		
Prophecies:	Deut 10:12-11:28; Is 29:13-23; Job 21:1-34; Dan* 14:1-42 [* Second Canonical Book]		
Matins:	Ps 28:6-7	Luke 4:31-37	
Mass:	Heb 13:7-16 Ps 28:2	1 John 4:7-16 Matt 15:21-31	Acts 22:17-24

Day 27**Saturday, 10 March
2018****HOW? PRAY BEFORE SLEEPING**

“Let my prayer be set before You as incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.” (Psa 141:2)



“When you begin to feel that sleep is near, turn to the Lord God with your evening prayers, either using the prayers assigned by the holy Church or in your own words, different from those of the assigned prayers. But make sure that your prayers are without fail holy and thorough.

a) First of all thank the Lord God for every blessing that He has afforded you and everyone, for the Incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, for His sufferings and death, for our being given the holy Faith, for the holy Mysteries, and for all His internal and external, natural and supernatural guidance.

b) Pray that the Lord God may forgive you all your sins committed both this day and in the past days as you forgive all those that have sinned against you. Pray especially fervently that He not allow you to die in your sins.

c) Pray that it may be His pleasure not to allow into your habitation our chief enemy with his malicious snares--dreams that are harmful to the soul and body--but may send you your guardian angel, who always prays for you, teaches you, and protects your soul and body from every evil.

d) Pray that the Lord may bless all those close to heart: your parents, your brothers and sisters, all your family, your relatives, acquaintances, benefactors, friends and enemies and that He may bless all your spiritual and secular superiors.

e) Pray that the Lord may help the poor, those cast down in grief, travellers, the ill, and the aggrieved, that He may comfort the unfortunate, give shelter to orphans, strengthen the dying with hope and give rest to the dead, that He may bless all children, guide all young people towards good deeds, strengthen in holy life all those of a mature age, and make all the elderly a model of holy life, that He may lead all sinners to repentance, [eradicate] the darkness in which the...unbelievers, heretics and schismatics live, that He may enlighten them with His light, bring them all to a knowledge of His truth, guide them all onto the true path of salvation and save them.

Finally, put yourself entirely into the Lord God's hands, as you would if the present evening were the last in your life and if on rising in the morning you would have to stand before the judgment seat of God. Then make the sign of the cross on yourself and get into bed.”

Metropolitan Gregory (Postikov) of St Petersburg

4th Saturday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-		
Prophecies:	-		
Matins:	Ps 142:5,7	Luke 16:19-31	
Mass:	Phil 4:4-9	James 3:13-4:6	Acts 24:24-25:12
	Ps 61:1,5	Matt 21:33-46	

4^T SUNDAY
OF THE HOLY GREAT FAST

1 Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John 2 (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples), 3 He left Judea and departed again to Galilee. 4 But He needed to go through Samaria. 5 So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. 6 Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from [His] journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. 7 A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." 8 For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. 9 Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. 10 Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." 11 The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? 12 "Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?" 13 Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, 14 "but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." 15 The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw." 16 Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." 17 The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I have no husband,' 18 "for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly." 19 The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. 20 "Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you [Jews] say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship." 21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. 22 "You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. 23 "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24 "God [is] Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." 25 The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When He comes, He will tell us all things." 26 Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am [He]." 27 And at this [point] His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why are You talking with her?" 28 The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, 29 "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" 30 Then they went out of the city and came to Him. 31 In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." 32 But He said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know." 33 Therefore the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought Him [anything] to eat?" 34 Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. 35 "Do you not say, 'There are still four months and [then] comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! 36 "And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. 37 "For in this the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps.' 38 "I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors." 39 And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all that I [ever] did." 40 So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. 41 And many more believed because of His own word. 42 Then they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard [Him] and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world."

John 4:1-42

4th Sunday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Ps 28:9	Luke 12:22-31	
Prophecies:	-		
Matins:	Ps 32:11	Matt 22:1-14	
Mass:	Eph 6:10-24	James 4:7-17	Acts 25:13-26:1
	Ps 105:3-5	John 4:1-42	

Day 29

Monday, 12 March
2018

HOW? RETURN TO GOD, TO ONE'S SELF, TO LIFE.

“Now, therefore,” says the Lord, “Turn to Me with all your heart, With fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.” So rend your heart, and not your garments; Return to the Lord your God.” (Joel 2:12-13)



“As sin is separation from God, repentance then is returning to God. God says: “Return to me, and I will return to you” (Mal 3:7). When the prodigal son repented, he returned to his father (Luke 15:18-20). True repentance is a human longing to the origin from which it was taken. It is the desire of a heart that stayed away from God, and felt that it cannot go any further away.

Repentance is also a spiritual awakening. The sinful person is unaware of his state. The Bible says to him: “that now it is high time to awake out of sleep” (Rom 13:11). By this context, repentance is the return of a person to himself. Or the return of one's self to its original sensitivity, the return of the heart to its fervour and the return of the conscience to its work. It is justly said about the prodigal son in his repentance: “He came to himself” (Luke 15:17). He then came back to his alertness, to his correct thinking and to his spiritual understanding.

For as sin is regarded as spiritual death, just as the Bible says about sinners that they are: “dead in trespasses” (Eph 2:5), then repentance is transfer from death to life according to the expression of St. John the Evangelist (1 John 3:14). St. Paul the apostle says about this: “Awake, you who sleep; Arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light” (Eph 5:14). St. James the apostle confirms the same meaning by saying: “he who turns a sinner from the ‘error’ of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins” (James 5:20).

Repentance is resurrection for the spirit, because the death of the spirit is separation of the spirit from God, just as St. Augustine said: ‘Repentance is a new pure heart, which God gives to the sinners to love Him with’. It is a divine act performed by God inside the person, according to His divine promise which says, “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, I will cleanse you from all your filthiness....I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you....and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgements and do them” (Ezek 36:25-27).”

His Holiness Pope Shenouda III

5th Monday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-		
Prophecies:	Prov 3:5-18; Is 37:33-38:6; Job 22:1-30		
Matins:	Ps 88:2-4	Luke 12:16-21	
Mass:	Phil 2:1-16	1 Pet 3:10-18	Acts 10:25-35
	Ps 86:3-4	Luke 9:12-17	

“We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair.” (2 Cor 4:8)



“I [Pope Shenouda III] remember a letter which I received from a youth 22 years ago.

When I read it I was deeply affected by it to the stage that I wept. I replied to his letter, in which I said to him: ‘I have received your letter, O beloved brother, and I imagined that I had read it many times before I had actually seen it, it is the picture of a life that I know, and the story of many hearts’. Yes, it is a war which tires many. Its thoughts are known, and repeated in the people’s confessions and in their spiritual questions. Here we will try to deal and answer each of these thoughts about despair.

A. The first complaint: I have lost hope. I am useless.

Know my brother, that every thought of despair, is warfare from the devil. He wants you to despair from repentance, either from its capabilities or its acceptance, so that you feel that there is no use in struggling and you give in to sin and remain in it until your soul perishes. So do not listen to the devil, no matter what he says to you. When you are struggling with one of the thoughts of despair, answer it with the saying of Micah the prophet: “Do not rejoice over me, my enemy; When I fall, I will arise” (Mic 7:8).

Know that if you despair from repentance, that this is more dangerous than falling into sin. Through despair Judas perished and died. Despair leads into deeper involvement in sin and the sinner progresses from bad to worse. In despair the devil battles with the sinner to keep him away from his Confession Father, from every spiritual advice and from all of the church, so that he will be alone with him, leaving the sinner without any help. The prophets and saints were in warfare with the battle of despair, and so the prophet David said: “Many are they who say of me, there is no help for him in God” (Ps 3). He answers this saying: “But You, O Lord, are a shield for me, My glory and the One who lifts up my head” (Ps 3:5). David did not despair at his falling but he wept for it and repented. So God returned him to his original rank. God performed many good things for numerous people and He said: “For the sake of My servant David” (1 Kin 11:32,34,36). So do not despair but remember those who previously repented.

If you have lost hope in yourself, the Lord has not lost hope in your salvation. He has saved many and you are not more difficult than all of them. When grace works in you, there is no room for despair. Enter into repentance with a courageous heart and do not belittle yourself.”

B. He says: ‘How can I repent while I am completely unable to arise from my fall?’

Do not be afraid. God will fight for you, for the battle is the Lord’s (1 Sam 17:47). Your resistance, whether it is weak or strong is not important. God can save with much or with little. God is more powerful than the devil who fights with you and He can drive the devil away. So do not look at your power, but at the power of God. Cry and say if you allow me, I will repent for you are the Lord my God (Jer 31:18).”

His Holiness Pope Shenouda III

(This is the beginning of a beautiful and thorough narrative about despair. To read further please go to The Life of Repentance and Purity pp36-39)

5th Tuesday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:

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Prophecies:

Num 10:35-11:34; Prov 3:19-4:9; Is 40:1-8; Job 25:1-6;
Job 26:1-14

Matins:

Ps 86:5-6 Mark 9:14-24

Mass:

Phil 2:22-26 1 John 3:2-11 Acts 24:10-23

Ps 86:17

John 8:12-20

“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.” (Rev 3:19)



“For every person there is a way which leads him to repentance as grace sees is suitable to him or suitable to his circumstances.

There are general principles along the path to repentance which are suitable for everyone. The most important of these principles are given in the following steps:

1. Be with yourself, examine it and come out with a conclusion regarding your need for repentance.
2. Do not give excuses and justifications for yourself.
3. Do not delay repentance, start now and grab the chance.
4. Be concerned with your salvation, and discover what God asks of you.
5. Avoid the first step which leads to sin.
6. Do not harden your heart, when grace works in you.
7. Reassess your behaviour and keep away from sins.
8. Depart from the small foxes which destroy the vines and proceed with precision.
9. Be concerned with confession and Holy Communion.
10. Be concerned with the treatment of your weak points and especially your loved sins.
11. Be concerned with the love of God, to cast out the loved sin from you.
12. Wrestle with God and obtain power from Him to help you repent.”

His Holiness Pope Shenouda III

(To read further and mediate on each of these points please go to The Life of Repentance and Purity pp148-318)

5th Wednesday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-
Prophecies:	Ex 8:20-9:35; Is 41:4-14; Joel 3:9-21; Job 28:12-28; Prov 4:10-19; 1 Sam 1:1-2:21
Matins:	Ps 55:1-2 Mark 10:1-12
Mass:	Rom 4:14-5:5 1 Pet 4:12-19 Acts 11:12-18 Ps 86:13-14 Luke 13:6-9

“How many are my iniquities and sins? Make me know my transgression and my sin.” (Job 13:23)



“Then I understood that only through constant and never-ending vigilance over myself and never-ending prayer could I fight against this hidden and unremitting foe; I began to try, as deeply as possible, to know myself, i.e., my soul, my nature, my infirmities and failings. So that this vigilance after myself should be constant, I began to keep a diary from the very first days of my service.

To the present time I set myself as a rule to write down everything (outstanding in my spiritual life) — and that inner battle, which I wage with myself— and the bitterness of defeat from the side of the prince of darkness, and the sweetness of victory, and that blessed aid which the Lord gives me in the battle. At times, as I read through my diary and, as it were, look back upon myself, I can clearly see whether I am moving forward, have stopped in my advance, or have even retreated.

Consequently, I consider the keeping of the diary of such importance, that I try not to miss even a single day without making at least the briefest of remarks. By always watching after myself and coming to know myself more and more, I also come to realize my own helplessness in all respects without the aid of God’s grace, especially in the defeat of evil, and through this you arrive at humility, at submission to God’s will, which is blessed and perfect always and in everything, and you also learn to regard other people as well with love, with sympathy, with a readiness to help them always and in everything.”

St John of Kronstadt

5th Thursday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-		
Prophecies:	Is 42:5-16; Prov 4:20-27; Job 29:2-20; 1 Sam 3:1-20		
Matins:	Ps 86:14	Luke 9:37-43	
Mass:	1 Cor 10:14-11:1 Ps 86:17	1 Pet 1:2-8 Luke 13:10-17	Acts 21:5-14

“For a righteous man may fall seven times and rise again, but the wicked shall fall by calamity.” (Prov 24:16)



“During the first years of my ordination, Father Pishoy Kamel was angry once at one of the servants of the church and after two days he came to me and said, ‘Can you imagine that the mistake I made by yelling at the servant was spread quickly among the people.’

He commented by saying that, ‘The people request ultimate idealism from the priest. We have to be calm so as not to hurt others.’ And this was the first and last time I saw him angry at someone. He had set the foundation of love among the workers in the church through his love and kindness.”

5th Friday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-		
Prophecies:	Deut 11:29-12:27; 1 Kin 17:2-24; Prov 5:1-12; Is 43:1-9; Job 30:9-32:5		
Matins:	Ps 86:9-10	Mark 12:28-34	
Mass:	Heb 12:5-16	1 Pet 4:15-5:5	Acts 15:36-16:3
	Ps 138:1-3	John 8:21-27	

“You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.” (Heb 12:4)



“When a man is given over to the passions, he does not see them in himself and does not fight against them, because he lives in them and by them. But when the grace of God becomes active in him, he begins to discern the passionate and sinful in himself, acknowledge them, and to repent and decide to guard against them. A struggle begins.

At first, the struggle begins with deeds, but when is released from shameful deeds, then the struggle begins with shameful thoughts and feelings. And here the struggle encounters many steps ... The struggle continues. The passions increasingly are torn out of the heart. It even happens that they are entirely torn out ... The sign that the passions are torn out of the heart is that the soul begins to feel repulsion and hatred for the passions.”

St Theophan the Recluse

5th Saturday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-		
Prophecies:	-		
Matins:	Ps 65:2-3	Luke 15:3-10	
Mass:	Gal 5:16-6:2	James 5:7-11	Acts 26:1-18
	Ps 143:1-2	Matt 23:14-39	

1 After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

2 Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep [Gate] a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches.

3 In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water.

4 For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had.

5 Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years.

6 When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been [in] [that] [condition] a long time, He said to him, "Do you want to be made well?"

7 The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me."

8 Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk."

9 And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath.

10 The Jews therefore said to him who was cured, "It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry [your] bed."

11 He answered them, "He who made me well said to me, 'Take up your bed and walk.'"

12 Then they asked him, "Who is the Man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk'?"

13 But the one who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, a multitude being in [that] place.

14 Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, "See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you."

15 The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

16 For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath.

17 But Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working."

18 Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God. John 5:1-18

5th Sunday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Ps 39:12	Luke 18:1-8	
Prophecies:	-		
Matins:	Ps 102:1-2,12	Matt 21:33-46	
Mass:	2 Thess 2:1-17	2 Pet 3:1-18	Acts 26:19-27:8
	Ps 33:5-6	John 5:1-18	

“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.” (Phil 4:8-9)



“We are made in God’s image and likeness. The image is like God’s stamp on us as a human person. It cannot be changed. The likeness, on the other hand, can change and grow. It is the potential to grow evermore godlike... acquiring virtues [is] a way to grow evermore Godlike. The virtues are specific, [as are] the rungs on St. John Climacus’ ladder. We can choose one, and with prayer, proceed to discipline ourselves so as to acquire it. When our lives are not focused on a major struggle with evil, we need to struggle in the positive direction by seeking to attain the virtues.

.. may we all be encouraged to focus in on at least one virtue and struggle towards it with all of our heart. And as we struggle, let us remind ourselves...that we are struggling against sin not just by fleeing/fighting from the passions, but also by actively struggling towards virtues.”

His Holiness Pope Shenouda III

6th Monday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-		
Prophecies:	Prov 8:1-11; Is 43:10-28; Job 32:6-16		
Matins:	Ps 38:9	Mark 12:1-12	
Mass:	1 Thess 4:1-18	James 4:7-12	Acts 18:9-18
	Ps 35:1-2	Luke 13:1-5	

“Therefore, putting away lying, ‘Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbour,’ for we are members of one another.”
(Eph 4:25)



“The wise man who has knowledge lives according to the truth through a totally honest life. Honesty means first of all, to speak the truth and never to “bear false witness” (Ex 20:16). Honesty also means to act truly and openly, without pretense, or the presentation of a false image of oneself. It means, in a word, not to be a hypocrite.

Above all things, Christ the Lord hated and condemned hypocrisy, lying and deceit. He accused the devil himself, first and foremost, of being a deceiver and liar, pretending to be other than he is, presenting himself and his teaching as totally other than the falsehood and wickedness that they actually are (Jn 8:44-47).

In His fierce condemnation of the evil of the scribes, pharisees and lawyers, Christ was most violent against their hypocrisy. Of all the evils of men, the most vile in the sight of the Lord is undoubtedly hypocrisy. ‘Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you cleanse the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside you are full of extortion and rapacity. You blind Pharisee! first cleanse the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead men’s bones and all impurity. So you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but within are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.’ (Mt 23:25-28).

The spiritual person is not a hypocrite. He shows himself honestly for what he is, and does not pretend to be what he is not. He reveals himself to all exactly as he actually is. He does not say or do anything that would lead people to have a false impression of him or of anyone or anything. He is utterly honest and pure in all that he thinks, says and does, knowing that God sees all and judges with righteousness all those who “walk in integrity” (Ps 26:1,11).”

6th Tuesday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-
Prophecies:	Prov 8:12-21; Is 44:1-8; Job 32:17-33:33; 2 Kin 5:1-27
Matins:	Ps 35:13 Luke 4:22-30
Mass:	1 Cor 14:18-28 James 1:22-2:1 Acts 19:11-20 Ps 42:1 Luke 9:18-22

“And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.” (Rom 5:3-4)



“To be patient literally means to suffer and endure. It means to wait on the Lord through all tribulations and trials with courage and hope... Too often people embarking on the spiritual life forget that patience is a virtue, and that, because of man's freedom, the effort to cleanse one's life from sin is tiresome and long. Everything is expected at once, with little striving and small effort.

Too often, also, people who wish to be patient forget that the virtue is a grace of God and a fruit of the Spirit. They think that they can attain patience with themselves and with others by will power alone; by rationalizations and human considerations. Such people never find peace for their souls.

The virtue of patience is found in the steadfast endurance given by God. It is the power to “stay on the cross” no matter what, doing only the will of the Lord. Patience is united with faith, hope, love, humility and obedience, which alone brings the strength to go on. It must be renewed daily through fasting, prayer and communion with God in the Church. It is found when one trains oneself to remember God, to abide in Christ and to see all things in the light of the Kingdom of God. If one wishes to be patient, one must be united with Christ and live by the power of the Spirit. According to the spiritual teachers, there is no other way.

‘No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it (1 Cor 10:13).’

‘Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He will sustain you; He will never permit the righteous to be moved (Ps 55:22; 1 Pet 5:7).’”

6th Wednesday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-
Prophecies:	Ex 10:1-11:10; Is 44:21-28; Prov 8:22-36; Job 34:1-37; Sirach* 10:1-31 [* Second Canonical Book]
Matins:	Ps 102:17,21 Mark 7:1-20
Mass:	Rom 2:12-24 2 Pet 1:20-2:6 Acts 26:1-8 Ps 9:11-12 Luke 11:45-52

HOW? STRUGGLE TO ATTAIN
FAITHFULNESS

“Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” (Rev 2:10)



“According to the scriptures, one of the main characteristics of God is His absolute faithfulness. This virtue in man is also considered to be one of the ‘fruits of the Holy Spirit’ (Gal 5:22).

To be faithful means to be absolutely true to one’s word, to be totally loyal in one’s devotion, to be completely steadfast and unswerving in one’s own calling and vocation. It also means to remain in humble service, in truth and in love, no matter what the conditions or consequences. To be faithful means to be courageous and to be and to do that which one must be and do by God’s will, regardless of any rejection by others and in spite of any lack of recognition or appreciation. God Himself is perfectly faithful. . . . ‘if we deny Him, He will deny us; if we are faithless, He remains faithful for He cannot deny Himself’ (2 Tim 2:12–13).

The spiritual person is the one who is faithful to his calling, fulfilling every good resolution, and bearing fruit patiently with the gifts and talents given by God. The spiritual person is faithful in every little thing—every thought, every word, every deed—‘according to the measure of faith which God has assigned him’ (Rom 12:3), ‘according to the measure of Christ’s gift’ which is ‘given to each’ (Eph 4:7). Such faithfulness is the main teaching in Christ’s parable of the talents. The one who faithfully and without fear develops and grows with that which the Lord has provided is the one who hears the voice of the Master.

‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little’ (Lk 19:17); I will set you over much, enter into the joy of your master (Mt 25:23).

The only way to receive the ‘crown of life’ is to be ‘faithful until death’ in the place where God has put us (Rev 2:10). The only way to find joy, wisdom and peace is to be faithful to one’s own uniqueness, knowing that each person has his own specific life and vocation from God which no one else has; his own specific mission which no one else can perform. The spiritual person develops his own life in faithfulness, without envy or fear, and so accomplishes and becomes that which God has willed for him before the dawn of creation.”

6th Thursday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-		
Prophecies:	2 Kin 4:8-41; Is 45:1-10; Prov 9:1-11; Job 35:1-16;		
	Sirach* 11:1-10 [* Second Canonical Book]		
Matins:	Ps 9:13	Luke 20:9-19	
Mass:	1 Tim 2:1-3:4	Jude 1:19-25	Acts 27:16-20
	Ps 9:13-14	John 6:47-71	

“Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.” (Eph 4:32)



“The spiritual person is kind. He never practices cruelty in any of its forms, but is always gentle in his relations with others. Kindness, according to the Apostle Paul, is also a ‘fruit of the Spirit’ (Gal 5:22).

According to the scriptures, God Himself is kind. For all of His anger and wrath over the sins of men, the Lord is ‘kind to the ungrateful and selfish’ (Lk 6:35). ‘For great is His merciful kindness toward us; and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever’ (Ps 117:2; Ps 31:21, 119:76).

Christians are urged to follow God in His kindness and to do all things gently and with tenderness.

Very often it happens that people can be kind to strangers and to those with whom they have but a passing and casual relationship, but with persons with whom the relationship is longer and deeper—family, relatives, co-workers, fellow members in the same church community—it is sometimes assumed that they may be unkind, and that they even have a certain right to act carelessly and with harshness. This is a great temptation. Familiarity and everyday contact do not give one the right to act unkindly or to behave crudely. To those closest and nearest, the need for continual gentleness, tenderness and kindness in every action and word is especially necessary. There can be no excuse for insensitivity and harshness, whatever the relationship. Spiritual persons must ‘do good to all, and especially to those who are of the household of faith’ (Gal 6:10).

Kindness does not mean overlooking people’s sins; it means forgiving them. Kindness also does not mean ‘being nice’ to everyone, whoever they are and whatever they do. It does not mean ‘going along’ with others in every way. A kind person will correct others, if need be, and his very kindness will be shown by his care and concern for the well-being of his fellow creature ‘for whom Christ died’ (Rom 14:15).

‘If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother’ (Mt 18:15). The correction by a kind person is never with contempt or cruelty. It never ridicules, demeans or condemns. It always encourages and edifies with gentleness and understanding.”

6th Friday of the Holy Fast

Vespers:	-		
Prophecies:	Gen 22:1-18; Is 45:11-17; Prov 9:12-18; Job 36:1-33; Job 37:1-24; Tobit* 1:1-3:23; Tobit 3:24-9:12; Tobit 10:1-14:15		
Matins:	Ps 51:7-8	John 3:14-21	
Mass:	1 Cor 10:1-13	1 John 2:12-17	Acts 8:9-17
	Ps 34:5,4	John 3:1-13 [* Second Canonical Book]	

“...in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thes 5:18)



“The spiritual person is the one who is grateful for everything. He is the one who receives everything with thanksgiving, and who knows that he has nothing except what he has received from God (Jn 3:27).

In the Old Testament, thanksgiving was central in the life of God’s people. The temple liturgy offered sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise, and psalms sang continually of thanksgiving to God.

In the New Testament, thanksgiving is the very essence of the Church’s life. The word eucharist means thanksgiving, and the very centre of the Church’s liturgical worship of God is when, in remembrance of all His saving acts in Christ, the faithful ‘lift up their hearts’ and ‘give thanks unto the Lord.’ The apostolic scriptures and the lives of the saints abound with thanksgiving to God for all things.

The spiritual person has thanksgiving and gratitude in all circumstances, in everything and for everything. This thanksgiving is rooted in the firm conviction of God’s merciful providence and care in all things, in the steadfast faith that ‘everything works together for good to those who love God’ (Rom 8:28).

The spiritual man does not thank God only for what he considers to be good. Rather, he thanks God for everything, even for what appears to be bad, knowing that God’s tender care is over all, and that the evil in this world—which is always present and inevitable—can itself be the vehicle for spiritual growth and salvation if rightly understood and overcome by the grace of God.

The opposite of gratitude is bitterness and complaining; it is bemoaning one’s lot in life because of pride and covetousness. It is caused by the absence of humble trust in the Lord.

To thank God in everything and for everything is the result of faith and faithfulness in God. It is the result of absolute trust in the Lord who knows best what we need for our salvation and does all that He can within the evil conditions of the world to bring us to eternal life, to peace and to joy.”

6th Saturday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-		
Prophecies:	-		
Matins:	Ps 79:8-9	Matt 9:1-8	
Mass:	Eph 4:1-7	1 Pet 1:13-21	Acts 27:9-26
	Ps 32:1-2	Mark 10:46-52	

SUNDAY'S HOLY GOSPEL
HEALING THE MAN BORN BLIND

Day 42

Sunday, 25 March
2018

6TH SUNDAY
OF THE HOLY GREAT FAST

1 Now as [Jesus] passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. 2 And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3 Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. 4 "I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; [the] night is coming when no one can work. 5 "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." 6 When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. 7 And He said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing. 8 Therefore the neighbors and those who previously had seen that he was blind said, "Is not this he who sat and begged?" 9 Some said, "This is he." Others [said], "He is like him." He said, "I am [he]." 10 Therefore they said to him, "How were your eyes opened?" 11 He answered and said, "A Man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed, and I received sight." 12 Then they said to him, "Where is He?" He said, "I do not know." 13 They brought him who formerly was blind to the Pharisees. 14 Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. 15 Then the Pharisees also asked him again how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." 16 Therefore some of the Pharisees said, "This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." Others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them. 17 They said to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him because He opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet." 18 But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind and received his sight, until they called the parents of him who had received his sight. 19 And they asked them, saying, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" 20 His parents answered them and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; 21 "but by what means he now sees we do not know, or who opened his eyes we do not know. He is of age; ask him. He will speak for himself." 22 His parents said these [things] because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had agreed already that if anyone confessed [that] He [was] Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue. 23 Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him." 24 So they again called the man who was blind, and said to him, "Give God the glory! We know that this Man is a sinner." 25 He answered and said, "Whether He is a sinner [or] [not] I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see." 26 Then they said to him again, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?" 27 He answered them, "I told you already, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear [it] again? Do you also want to become His disciples?" 28 Then they reviled him and said, "You are His disciple, but we are Moses' disciples. 29 "We know that God spoke to Moses; [as] [for] this [fellow], we do not know where He is from." 30 The man answered and said to them, "Why, this is a marvelous thing, that you do not know where He is from; yet He has opened my eyes! 31 "Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him. 32 "Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind. 33 "If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing." 34 They answered and said to him, "You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?" And they cast him out. 35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, "Do you believe in the Son of God?" 36 He answered and said, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?" 37 And Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you." 38 Then he said, "Lord, I believe!" And he worshiped Him. 39 And Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind." 40 Then [some] of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, "Are we blind also?" 41 Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, 'We see.' Therefore your sin remains. John 9:1-41

6th Sunday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	Ps 17:3,5	Luke 13:22-35
Prophecies:	-	
Matins:	Ps 26:2-3	Matt 23:1-39
Mass:	Col 3:5-17	1 John 5:13-21 Acts 27:27-37
	Ps 143:7,1	John 9:1-41

“This is love, that we walk according to His commandments.” (2 John 1:6)



“I deeply believe in God and I have built all my life according to His commandments. I bequeath you to dedicate your entire life to God and to build everything and all on the commandments of Christ.

For a long time and with great persistence I swam against the tide and you my children, I bequeath you to swim against the tide, as difficult as that may be.

You must turn your eyes and your heart away from the vast majority of humanity, who seeks not the lofty goals, but those that are easier to achieve.

Do not proceed into this great majority, who lives not by their own mind, but by the minds of the leaders and build their life, not by the Holy Commandments of Christ, but with the instructions of those who have the power, to guide people only in the areas where they consider people should go, not because of the kingdom of heaven, but for the sake of achieving the goods of the earthly kingdom.”

St Luke the Doctor and Archbishop

7th Monday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-		
Prophecies:	Prov 10:1-16; Is 48:17-49:4; Job 38:1-38		
Matins:	Ps 32:10-11	Luke 16:19-31	
Mass:	Rom 14:10-15:2 Ps 86:12-13	James 2:5-13 John 5:31-47	Acts 9:22-31

HOW? EXAMINE YOURSELF AGAINST
THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (I)

“And keep the charge of the Lord your God: to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn.” (1 Kin 2:3)



“I am the Lord your God, and you shall have no other gods before me.

Has God been the source, centre and hope of my life? Have I put myself, others or things before God? Have I failed to trust in God’s existence, love and mercy? Have I failed to pray to God, to worship Him and to thank Him for His blessings? Have I tried to serve God and keep His commandments faithfully? Have I murmured or complained against God in adversity? Have I praised and glorified God through my words and deeds?

You shall not make for yourself a graven image in order to worship it.

Have I valued anyone or anything above God? Have I given to anyone or anything the love, honour and worship that belongs to God alone? Have I made an idol of any person, idea, occupation, or thing?

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

Have I blasphemed God’s holy name in any way? Have I sworn a false oath? Have I broken any solemn vow or promise? Have I entered into an agreement, promise or contract against God’s law? Have I cursed or used foul language? Do I speak of God to other people? Have I spoken negatively about the church or the clergy with others?

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

Have I worshiped regularly on Sundays and major feast days and have I helped others to do the same? Do I come regularly late to the holy services? Does my attention wander during church? Have I worked unnecessarily on Sundays or major feast days or caused others to do so? Have I spent the Lord’s Day in a wholesome and edifying ways? Do I use my time wisely or do I waste a lot of it? Have I contributed a sacrificial share of my time, talent and treasure to the church? Have I discouraged others from attending church or participating in the sacraments? Have I kept the prescribed fasts of the church?

Honour your father and mother

Have I loved and respected my parents as I should? Have I neglected them or failed to help them? Have I disobeyed them, deceived them or caused them pain by my words or deeds? Have I treated all my family members with patience and love? Have I disrespected any member of the clergy?”

7th Tuesday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-		
Prophecies:	Prov 10:17-32; Is 49:6-10; Job 38:37-39:30; Sirach* 5:1-15		
Matins:	Ps 38:18-19	Luke 17:1-10	
Mass:	1 Cor 14:5-17	2 Pet 3:8-15	Acts 22:17-24
Psalm	Ps 51:2-3	John 12:36-43	

[* Second Canonical Book]

**HOW? EXAMINE YOURSELF AGAINST
THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (II)**

“I thought about my ways, And turned my feet to
Your testimonies. I made haste, and did not delay To
keep Your commandments.” (Ps 119:59-60)



“You shall not kill.

Have I caused the harm, injury or death of anyone?
Have I wished my own or anyone’s harm or death?
Have I been cruel to animals or destroyed any life
unnecessarily? Have I spoke badly about other
people or harmed the self-esteem of others? Have I
done things that are harmful to my own body such as
excessive eating, drinking, smoking, drug abuse? Have
I tried to prematurely end my life?

You shall not commit adultery.

Have I committed any immoral acts alone or with
others? Have I caused others to commit immoral acts?
Have I committed immoral acts in my heart? Have I
honoured my spouse? Have I been faithful to my
spouse? Have I read or viewed inappropriate materials?

You shall not steal.

Have I taken anything that was not mine from anyone
or from anywhere? Have I cheated anyone? Have I
caused others to steal or cheat? Have I tried to find the
owners of lost things I have found? Have I damaged or
destroyed anything that belonged to another? Have I
defrauded anyone of rightful wages? Have I paid my
debts? Have I given to the poor and to philanthropic
causes in proportion to my means?

You shall not bear false witness.

Have I given false testimony against anyone? Have I
spoken evil, told lies or spread rumors about anyone?
Have I disclosed to anyone the sins and faults of
another? Have I made careless statements or done
anything else to harm the name and reputation of
another? Have I engaged in idle gossip?

You shall not covet.

Have I looked with envy, jealousy or hatred toward
the possession talents or achievements of others?
Have I desired the downfall or loss of others out of evil
intent that I might benefit? Have I grieved that God has
bestowed greater blessings on others than on me?”

7th Wednesday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-		
Prophecies:	Prov 10:32-11:13; Is 58:1-11; Job 40:1-41:34		
Matins:	Ps 57:1	Luke 14:28-35	
Mass:	Rom 10:4-13 Ps 51:2-3	James 1:13-21 John 6:35-45	Acts 19:23-26

HOW? LIVE ACCORDING TO THE
BEATITUDES (I)

“Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, Who seek Him with the whole heart! They also do no iniquity; They walk in His ways.” (Ps 119:2-3)



“Beatitude... is translated now as ‘blessed’ and means ‘supreme blessedness or extreme happiness.’ The Orthodox Study Bible tells us that the word ‘blessed’ ‘indicates heavenly, spiritual exaltation rather than earthly happiness or prosperity.’ There are nine specific beatitudes in the [Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:1-12)] and it should be noted that nine is three times three, so it is a trinity of trinities and thus symbolic of perfection and fulfilment. Some commentators note that Jesus is presenting a new law that fulfils and completes the old Law summarized in the Decalogue/Ten Commandments.

First, Jesus says that the ‘poor in spirit’ are blessed (v.3) and that the kingdom of heaven will be theirs. A Church Father says that ‘poor in spirit’ is when one has repented and become humbled like a child. If we have ever been materially poor or destitute, we know how vulnerable, needful and helpless we can feel. We are extremely dependent on the generosity of others and especially God, very thankful whenever assistance comes our way. This is the attitude of being ‘poor in spirit.’

Second, mourning (v.4) is sadness that results from several sources: our own suffering, the suffering of others, the state of the world, and our own sinfulness. According to St. John Chrysostom, this fourth type--mourning over our sins--is truly what the Evangelist Matthew is talking about. This type of sorrow leads to repentance, conversion, and virtuous action. It is contrasted with ungodly sorrow that leads to despair, hopelessness and inaction. Jesus promises that we will be comforted if our mourning is appropriate.

Third, blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth (v.5). Meekness is an attitude of being content with both honour and dishonour. It is an imitation of Christ, who said, ‘Learn from Me, for I am gentle (meek) and humble in heart’ (Matt 11:29). The meek are God-controlled and have mastery over their passions, especially anger. However, meekness is not passive weakness, rather it is strength directed and under control. The ‘earth’ that the meek will inherit is not power or possession in this world, but the new earth, which is everlasting (Rev 21:1).”

Fr Rick

7th Thursday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-		
Prophecies:	Prov 11:13-26; Is 65:8-16; Job 42:1-6; 2 Kin 6:8-7:20		
Matins:	Ps 63:1	Matt 20:20-28	
Mass:	2 Cor 4:5-18	1 John 3:13-24	Acts 25:23-26:6
	Ps 122:1-2	Mark 12:18-27	

HOW? LIVE ACCORDING TO THE
BEATITUDES (II)

“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.” (John15:9-10)



“Fourth, (v.6) we know that when we are physically hungry or thirsty, all we can think about is getting some food and/or drink to satisfy us. This is the way we should desire and seek righteousness. Chromatius said hungering and thirsting is ‘to do nothing else but think of righteousness and search for it.’ Jesus promises that we will be fulfilled. If our desire is for someone or something else, then we will never be satisfied. In fact, St. Augustine says: ‘Nothing can satisfy one who would not be satisfied with God.’

Fifth, if we wish for mercy, we must be merciful (v.7). This connection--how we treat others is how we will be treated by God--is noted in several scriptures. ‘Love your neighbour as yourself’ (Mt 19:19; 22:39). ‘If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.’ (Mt 6:14). ‘Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’ (Mt 25:40). ‘Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful’ (Lk 6:36). God has forgiven us for our sins. He is extremely patient and kind despite how we treat Him and other people. That is mercy.

Sixth, blessed are the pure in heart (v.8). We must remember that purity simply means a singular substance with no mixture or contamination. The pure in heart are completely devoted to the worship and service of God and accept no compromises.”

Fr Rick

7th Friday of the Holy Great Fast

Vespers:	-		
Prophecies:	Gen 49:33-50:26; Prov 11:27-12:22; Is 66:10-24; Job 42:7-17		
Matins:	Ps 32:10-11	Luke 16:19-31	
Mass:	2 Tim 3:1-4:5 Ps 98:8-9	James 5:7-16 Luke 13:31-35	Acts 15:1-18

Day 48

**Saturday, 31 March
2018**

**HOW? LIVE ACCORDING TO THE
BEATITUDES (III)**

“And that you may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy for your God.” (Num 15:40)



“Seventh, blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God (v.9). Jesus is the Prince of Peace (Is 9:6) and the Son of God. He says several times to His disciples: ‘Peace to you!’ We traditionally think of peacemakers as policemen, war protestors and neighbourhood watchperson. Yet, we forget that the most powerful peacemaking begins from within, emanating outwardly. When in the company of a true saint the sense of peace, calm and joy is palpable. Another important form of peacemaking is shared by Chromatius, ‘the peacemakers are those who guard the peace of the church under the unity of the apostolic teaching.’ Cyril of Alexandria adds, ‘The peacemaker is one who demonstrates the harmony of the Scriptures, where others only see a contradiction.’ Thus, peacemakers are those who help preserve unity and harmony within the Church and Her teachings. When we make peace, we become a son/child of God.

Eighth, blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake (v.10). The world that we live in is under the sway of the devil. Therefore, he opposes everything that is good, holy, righteous and true. Satan uses subtle means to get others to do his dirty work. Jesus says, ‘If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you’ (John 15:18-19). Thus, one sign that we might be doing the right thing, which the devil wants stopped, is that we meet opposition and endure poor treatment in return.

The ninth builds upon the previous one. Jesus says that we are blessed when we are reviled, persecuted and falsely slandered (v.11). That seems odd because we don’t feel blessed or happy when this happens. We are often angry and bitter when we suffer and it is compounded if it is unjust. But instead of feeling this way, Jesus tells us to rejoice and be exceedingly glad, not just glad, but exceedingly glad (v.12). Why? Because we shouldn’t focus on rewards in this life but rather on those of our future life in heaven. It reminds us of the rulers in John 12:42-43, who ‘because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.’ They were focused on rewards of this earth, not heaven.

A saint is a holy person, set apart, godly. God Himself tells us, ‘Be holy, for I am holy’ (Lev 11:44-45; 1 Peter 1:16). The Beatitudes of Jesus, given during the Sermon on the Mount, provide us a map, a diagram and a set of instructions on how to be a saint. If we want to be holy as God is holy we must be poor in spirit, mournful and repentant, meek and gentle, hungering and thirsting for righteousness, merciful and forgiving, pure in heart, full of peace, endure unjust persecution, revilement and slandering. We strive to be saints for no other reason than we love God because He first loved us. And wish to share godly love with each other because we know that our reward is in heaven and it is great. Amen!”

Fr Rick

Lazarus' Saturday

Vespers:	-		
Prophecies:	Gen 49:1-28; Is 40:9-31; Zeph 3:14-20; Zech 9:9-15		
Matins:	Ps 88:2-4	Luke 12:16-21	
Mass:	1 Cor 2:1-8	1 Pet 1:25-2:6	Acts 27:38-28:10
	Ps 129:8,2	John 11:1-45	

7TH SUNDAY
OF THE HOLY GREAT FAST

Gospel of the Palm Sunday Liturgy

Mark 11:1-11

1 Now when they drew near Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples; 2 and He said to them, "Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you have entered it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat. Loose it and bring [it]. 3 "And if anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it,' and immediately he will send it here." 4 So they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door outside on the street, and they loosed it. 5 But some of those who stood there said to them, "What are you doing, loosing the colt?" 6 And they spoke to them just as Jesus had commanded. So they let them go. 7 Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it, and He sat on it. 8 And many spread their clothes on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread [them] on the road. 9 Then those who went before and those who followed cried out, saying:

"Hosanna! 'Blessed [is] He who comes in the name of the Lord!"

10 Blessed [is] the kingdom of our father David That comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" 11 And Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve. Glory be to God forever. Amen.

Palm Sunday

Events:

Our Lord Jesus Christ entered Jerusalem as a King, sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Rites:

- Procession of the Cross during the prayers of Raising of Incense (Matins)
- The Liturgy of Palm Sunday in which the four Gospels relating to the entry of Our Lord Jesus Christ into Jerusalem are read and the praises of the children 'Hosanna to the Son of David' and a hymn 'Evlogemenos' is chanted.
- The funeral service for the departed is conducted after the completion of the Holy Liturgy and Communion. Funerals are not performed during Passion week as the focus is on the pains and sufferings of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Monday Eve

Events:

Our Lord Jesus Christ returned to Bethany.

Rites:

- The Pascha prayers begin in the second chorus of the Church (outside the camp – Jerusalem) and the Church is decorated with black cloths suitable for the Passion of Christ.
- Every hour includes:
 - The Prophecies
 - 'Thok Te Ti-Gom' ('To You is the Power and the Glory') 12 times
 - The Psalm, the Gospel's introduction and the Gospel in the sad tune
 - Commentary introduction and conclusion
 - The Litanies
 - The Blessing
- 5 hours at night and 5 hours during the day of the Pascha prayers (1st, 3rd, 6th, 9th and 11th hour prayers).

Gospel of the First Hour of Monday of the Holy Pascha - Mark 11:12-24

12 Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry. 13 And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. 14 In response Jesus said to it, "Let no one eat fruit from you ever again." And His disciples heard [it]. 15 So they came to Jerusalem. Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. 16 And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple. 17 Then He taught, saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it a 'den of thieves.'" 18 And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching. 19 When evening had come, He went out of the city. 20 Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. 21 And Peter, remembering, said to Him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away." 22 So Jesus answered and said to them, "Have faith in God. 23 "For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. 24 "Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive [them], and you will have [them].

Glory be to God forever. Amen.

Monday of the Holy Pascha

Events:

- Our Lord Jesus Christ cursed the fig tree that had no fruit, while on His way from Bethany to Jerusalem. He spent the rest of the day cleansing the Temple and teaching.

Rites:

- 5 hours of the Pascha prayers (1st, 3rd, 6th, 9th and 11th hour prayers).

Tuesday Eve

Events:

- In the evening, Our Lord Jesus Christ returned to Bethany.

Rites:

- 5 hours of the Pascha prayers (1st, 3rd, 6th, 9th and 11th hour prayers).

Gospel of the Eleventh Hour of Tuesday Eve of the Holy Pascha - Mark 13:32-14:2

32 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

33 "Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is.

34 "[It] [is] like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch.

35 "Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming--in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning--

36 "lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping.

37 "And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!"

14:1 After two days it was the Passover and [the] [Feast] of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him by trickery and put [Him] to death.

2 But they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar of the people."

Glory be to God forever. Amen.

Gospel of the Third Hour of Tuesday of the Holy Pascha - Matthew 23:37-24:2

37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under [her] wings, but you were not willing!

38 "See! Your house is left to you desolate;

39 "for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed [is] He who comes in the name of the Lord!'" "

24:1 Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple.

2 And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not [one] stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

Glory be to God forever. Amen.

Tuesday of the Holy Pascha

Events:

- On the way from Bethany to Jerusalem, the disciples saw that the fig tree was withered.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ spent the day with the disciples in the temple, teaching them by parables, telling them about the destruction of Jerusalem and the second coming

Rites:

- In the 'Thok Te Ti-Gom' praise of the 11th hour, the words 'My Good Saviour' are added after 'My Lord Jesus Christ.'
- Psalm 45:6 'Pek-ethronos' ('Your throne O God is forever and ever') is chanted.
- 5 hours of the Pascha prayers (1st, 3rd, 6th, 9th and 11th hour prayers).

Wednesday Eve

Events:

- Our Lord Jesus Christ returned to Bethany to spend the night there.

Rites:

- The Church prohibits the exchanging of a kiss from Tuesday evening, so as not to share with Judas Iscariot the sign of the delivery of the Lord.
- 5 hours of the Pascha prayers (1st, 3rd, 6th, 9th and 11th hour prayers).

Gospel of the Ninth Hour of Wednesday of the Holy Pascha - Matthew 26:3-16

3 Then the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people assembled at the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas,

4 and plotted to take Jesus by trickery and kill [Him].

5 But they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people."

6 And when Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper,

7 a woman came to Him having an alabaster flask of very costly fragrant oil, and she poured [it] on His head as He sat [at] [the] [table].

8 But when His disciples saw [it], they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste?

9 "For this fragrant oil might have been sold for much and given to [the] poor."

10 But when Jesus was aware of [it], He said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a good work for Me.

11 "For you have the poor with you always, but Me you do not have always.

12 "For in pouring this fragrant oil on My body, she did [it] for My burial.

13 "Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her."

14 Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests

15 and said, "What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?" And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver.

16 So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him.

Glory be to God forever. Amen.

Wednesday of the Holy Pascha

Events:

- Our Lord Jesus Christ spent the day in Bethany.
- A woman poured fragrant oil on Our Lord's blessed head.
- The betrayal of Judas Iscariot who agreed on a price with the chief priests, to deliver Our Lord Jesus Christ to them with the sign of a kiss.

Rites:

- No exchanging of a kiss.
- 5 hours of the Pascha prayers (1st, 3rd, 6th, 9th and 11th hour prayers).

Holy Thursday Eve

Events:

- Our Lord Jesus Christ spent the night in Bethany.

Rites:

- No exchanging of a kiss.
- 5 hours of the Pascha prayers (1st, 3rd, 6th, 9th and 11th hour prayers).
- In the 3rd hour, Psalm 55:21,1 'Av-etchee-non' ('His words were softer than oil') is chanted.

Gospel of the Covenant Thursday Liturgy

Matthew 26:20-29

20 When evening had come, He sat down with the twelve.

21 Now as they were eating, He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me."

22 And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to Him, "Lord, is it I?"

23 He answered and said, "He who dipped [his] hand with Me in the dish will betray Me.

24 "The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born."

25 Then Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, "Rabbi, is it I?" He said to him, "You have said it."

26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke [it], and gave [it] to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."

27 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave [it] to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you.

28 "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

29 "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."

Glory be to God forever. Amen.

Holy Thursday

Events:

- Our Lord Jesus Christ celebrated the Passover with His disciples. The word 'Passover' is Hebrew which means 'to cross over,' indicative of the passing of the destroying angel from the Israelites to kill the first born of the Egyptians.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ washed the feet of the disciples.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ established for us the Lordly Supper, the Eucharist, with His disciples.

Rites:

- The prayer of the Morning (1st) hour, the Raising of Incense. Procession of Judas from the southern side to the northern side (the opposite direction) and Psalm 55:21,1 'Av-etchee-non' ('His words were softer than oil') is chanted.
- The 3rd, 6th and 9th hours of the Pascha prayers are prayed as usual.
- The service of the 'Lakan' which contains readings concerning Our Lord washing the feet of His disciples.
- The service of the Divine Liturgy (The Catholic Epistle, Acts, Synaxarium, Prayer of Reconciliation, Commemoration of the Saints are not prayed).
- The 11th hour of the Pascha prayers are prayed instead of Psalm 150.

Good Friday Eve

Events:

- Our Lord Jesus Christ prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ is arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Rites:

- The words, 'My strength and my praise is the Lord who became my Holy Salvation,' are added to the praise of 'Thok Te Ti-Gom.'
- In the 1st hour of the Pascha prayers, the Paraclete chapters are read.
- The 3rd, 6th, 9th and 11th hours of the Pascha prayers are prayed as usual. The four Gospels are read in each hour.

Gospel of the Sixth Hour of Good Friday of the Holy Pascha - Matthew 27:27-45

27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole garrison around Him. 28 And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. 29 When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put [it] on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" 30 Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head. 31 And when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His [own] clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified. 32 Now as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. Him they compelled to bear His cross. 33 And when they had come to a place called Golgotha, that is to say, Place of a Skull, 34 they gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink. But when He had tasted [it], He would not drink. 35 Then they crucified Him, and divided His garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet:

"They divided My garments among them,
And for My clothing they cast lots."

36 Sitting down, they kept watch over Him there. 37 And they put up over His head the accusation written against Him: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. 38 Then two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and another on the left. 39 And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads

40 and saying, "You who destroy the temple and build [it] in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross." 41 Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, 42 "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. 43 "He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.' " 44 Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing. 45 Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land.

Glory be to God forever. Amen.

Good Friday

Events:

- The trial of Our Lord Jesus Christ, condemning Him to be crucified.
- The Crucifixion of Our Lord Jesus Christ at the 6th hour.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ's words on the Cross.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ's death on the Cross at the 9th hour.
- The piercing of Our Lord Jesus Christ with a spear, water and Blood flowed from His side. The body of Our Lord was taken down from the Cross at the 11th hour.
- The burial of Our Lord Jesus Christ in a new tomb at the 12th hour.

Rites:

- The 1st, 3rd, 6th, 9th and 11th hours of the Pascha prayers are prayed in the second chorus.
- In the 6th hour, 'Tay-sho-ree' ('This is the pure golden censor') & 'Fay etaf enf' ('He who lifted Himself') are chanted before the Pauline Epistle. The priest prays the segments of the 6th hour from the Agpia, then the 'O-mo-no-ge-nees' hymn is chanted. After the 6th hour is prayed, the Right thief's creed is read.
- In the 9th hour, 'Te-sho-ree' ('This is the golden censor') & 'Fay etaf enf' ('He who lifted Himself') are chanted before the Pauline Epistle. The priest prays the segments of the 9th hour from the Agpia, then continues as usual.
- The prayers of the 12th hour are prayed in the first chorus, when the veil of the sanctuary is opened and the Altar is decorated with white cloths suitable for the Joyous Saturday.
- In the 12th hour, the prophecies are read, Lamentations 3:1-66 and Jonah 1:10-2:7. Psalm 45:6 'Pek-ethronos' ('Your throne O God is forever and ever') is chanted.
- After the 12th hour, once the litanies are prayed, 'Lord have mercy' is recited 100 times on each side (East, North, West, South), ending with 12 times towards the East.
- The procession with the icon of the Cross is performed followed by the hymn of Golgotha and the burial.

Gospel of the Joyous Saturday Liturgy - Matthew 28:1-20

1 Now after the Sabbath, as the first [day] of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. 2 And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. 3 His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. 4 And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead [men]. 5 But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. 6 "He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. 7 "And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you." 8 So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word. 9 And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, "Rejoice!" So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. 10 Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go [and] tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me." 11 Now while they were going, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. 12 When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, 13 saying, "Tell them, 'His disciples came at night and stole Him [away] while we slept.' 14 "And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will appease him and make you secure." 15 So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day. 16 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. 17 When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, [even] to the end of the age." Amen.

Glory be to God forever. Amen.

Joyous Saturday (The Apocalypse)

Events:

- Our Lord Jesus Christ descended to Hades and restored the souls of the righteous to Paradise.

Rites:

- The hymns are chanted, half in sad tune and half in joyous tune.
- Many praises are read.
- The Book of Revelation is read.
- The Liturgy of Joyous Saturday (The Pauline Epistle, Catholic Epistle and Acts are read but not the Synaxarium).
- The Psalm and Gospel are prayed, half in sad tune and half in joyous tune.
- The Prayer of Reconciliation is not prayed, the Commemoration of the Saints is prayed, and at the end of the Liturgy, Psalm 150 is not chanted.

EASTER SUNDAY

Ekchristos Anestee
Alithos Anestee

Christ is Risen
Indeed He is Risen



Icon from
St Mary & St Mina's
Coptic Orthodox Cathedral
Sydney - Australia

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The Fasting and Prayer Program for the Holy Great Fast is designed to enrich you on your spiritual journey by providing daily readings for your contemplation.

The theme of this Fasting and Prayer program is, 'How To Live a Holy Life.'

Each day consists of:

- * Daily Bible Readings
 - * A Verse
 - * A Practice
 - * Commentary

The Program concludes with the events and rites of the Holy Pascha week – “a week full of holy memories of the most crucial stage of salvation and the outstanding chapter in the story of redemption.”

We pray that this Fasting and Prayer Program will be of benefit to your spiritual life.