

The Saint Andrew Bugle

VOLUME 25 ISSUE 2
MARCH/APRIL 2016

A Bi-Monthly Publication of St. Andrew Orthodox Church
4700 Canyon Crest Drive, Riverside, California 92507

Dear Parishioners,

Blessings! The Great Lent is upon us! The market-days of the soul! We Christians are supremely blessed to participate in Lent. Lent itself is the fruit of the Cross of our Savior. Without Jesus' mighty defeat of sin on the Precious Cross, and His victory over the devils and the passions of this world, we would never be rejoicing in abstinence, and triumph over earthly-mindedness. Lent is a shining witness to the Death and Resurrection of our Savior.

This reality is born witness to in our liturgical hymnody.

"Before Christ's death upon the saving Cross, sin ruled supreme and ungodliness prevailed. Men were counted blessed because of sensual pleasures, and only a few despised the appetites of the flesh. But once the mystery of the Cross was brought to pass, the tyranny of the demons was quenched by the knowledge of God, and heavenly virtue came to dwell upon the earth. So fasting is now held in honor, abstinence is glorified, and prayer is offered up. As a testimony to these things, the present season has been given to us by the crucified Christ our God, for the salvation of our souls."

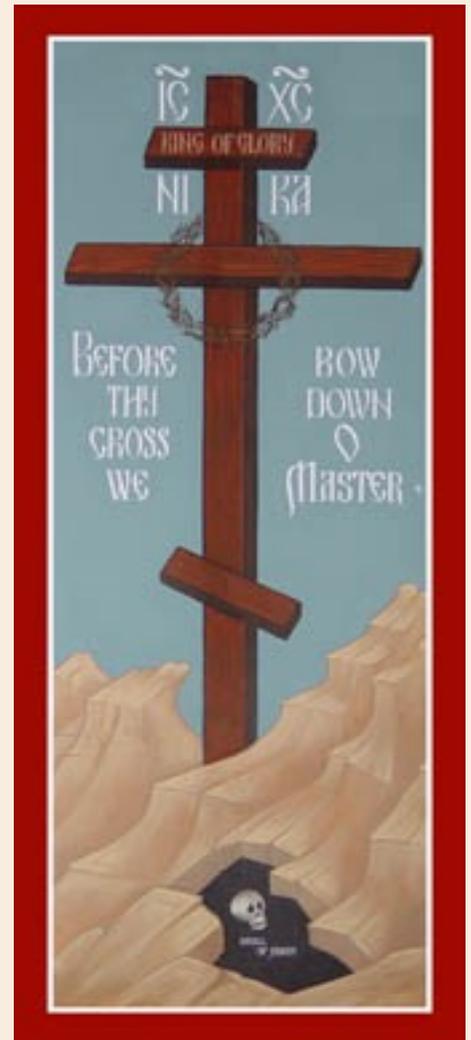
Aposticha from Orthros on Friday of Cheese Week.

I have a suggestion to make. Try incorporating your relationship to your cell phone into your abstinence routine. Make a resolve not to surf the internet during Lent on your phone but only to use it for phone calls. Try detaching from social media altogether for the remaining weeks of Lent. Clear your mind, and re-establish a right relationship with the phone.

May God grant each of you a prosperous and blessed Great Lent.

Sent with much love,

Fr Josiah



Please note that the Bugle is now published bi-monthly. Six issues per year.
Help is needed to collect material and assist the publisher.
If you can assist, please contact Lucy Hanna at her email address below.

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Ten Suggestions for Lent

By His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios, *Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America*

Archbishop Demetrios offered these ten suggestions for each Orthodox Christian to strive for during the Lenten season in his homily at the annual Hellenic College Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology Clean Monday Retreat, March 14, at the Holy Cross Chapel in Brookline, Mass. Below is an edited excerpt of these ten suggestions.



Meditate on the History of Salvation

Think of the Lenten period as a time of meditating on the history of salvation. Think about the creation of the universe and of Adam and Eve as the beginning of human life on earth. Think about the fall of Adam and the entrance of sin in humanity. We see in the hymnology of the liturgical book of Lent, the Triodion, constant references to the tragedy of the fall of the first human beings. For example, in the Oikos of the Matins on yesterday's Cheesefare Sunday, we read: "Adam sat and cried in those days across from the delights of Paradise; beat his hands upon his face, and said: Merciful One, have mercy on me who have fallen."

The memory of what happened through the fall of Adam and Eve continues on in us to this day. Think of the current condition of the world with its chaotic situation, confusion, violence, poverty, injustices, oppression, sickness and death, and remember it all started way back with Adam and Eve as a consequence of their sin and fall. But then contemplate the course of history and how the amazing, unimaginable, and unpredictable act of God Himself to become a human being radically changed everything. So in the course of Lent remember the history of salvation: From the fall of humankind, to the promise of redemption, the Incarnation of God as the new Adam, His Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Ascension into Heaven, and the Second Coming. Take time to reflect on God's divine actions through history.

Review the understanding of fasting

Take fasting seriously as a very important aspect of Lent. Think of fasting not simply as an item of diet, but as something related to the fall of humankind, and at the same time as a victory through Christ. We fast for forty days in Lent before Holy Week not merely as an exercise, an *ascesis*, but also because there is an important Christological significance attached to fasting. We have forty-day fasting models from both the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament, Moses fasted for forty days on Mount Sinai before receiving the Ten Commandments (Exodus 34:28, Deut. 9:9, 9:18) and Prophet Elijah fasted for forty days on Mount Horeb (3 Kingdoms 19:8). Both of these instances are connected with an encounter with God at the end of their fasting. In the New Testament, we have the forty-day fasting in the desert by our Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 4:1-11, Mark 1:12-13, Luke 4:1-13). At the end of the forty-day fasting by Christ in the desert, there are the well-known "Temptations" of Christ, the first of which is related to eating: *And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he [Christ] answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God'"* (Matt. 4:3-4). Is this event in the life of Christ in any way connected to the Fall of Adam? Indeed, the Fall of Adam was caused by an eating situation, yet the victory of Christ also happened through an eating situation. While Adam said "yes" to the temptation and ate (Genesis 3:1-6), Christ said "no" to the temptation and did not eat. This is why the fasting of the forty-days during Lent is not simply a matter of abstinence or an issue of diet, but is a major Christological and soteriological situation; the fall of humankind, and then the restoration through the victory of Christ. So let us take fasting seriously and prepare ourselves for a blessed encounter with God.

Reconsider our life of prayer

Great Lent is a special time to pray. But what is the content of our prayer? What is our praying language? For several people, their prayer is still on the same level of that when they were ten or fifteen years old; it has stayed undeveloped. Why when speaking to God are we using a poor language? What efforts are we making to improve and enhance our prayer in terms of content and expression? Looking at the Triodion, we see many examples of different types of prayer language and content. Try to pray and study the prayers that the Church has given us which are superb examples of conversing with God and try especially to prayerfully read the Psalms, the standard and universal book of prayer.

During Lent we find an increased number of opportunities for community prayer and worship. The Church

invites us each week to pray the services of the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil, the Presanctified Liturgy, the Salutations to the Theotokos, the Great Compline, and others. So try to pray more frequently this Lent and develop through constant praying a more refined language of prayer.

Be conscious of the gravity of sin

Sometimes we don't take sin seriously. Yet Scripture offers a very strong and unequivocal picture of the gravity of sin. The hymnology of the Triodion is replete with occurrences of the word "sin" or variations of it. Sin is a very serious issue. In the Hebrew Old Testament, there are fourteen different words to describe sin, but chiefly four: sin as a matter of human weakness, sin as a distortion or perversion, sin as a rebellion (borrowed from the political realm), and sin as an error or mistake related to ignorance.

If we believe in God becoming a human being and willingly being crucified on the Cross for the sins of the world, then we must understand the seriousness of sin. Let's reflect on how sin has control in our lives, and how it has distorted the divine image within each of us. Let us deal seriously with our sins with an understanding that they are part of the huge amount of sins and evil that led Christ to the Cross. But then remember that God has given forgiveness as the perfect antidote through the very same Cross. Forgiveness, however, is inseparably connected to repentance.

Make Lent a season for repentance

Along with sin, we are called to reflect upon repentance. Repentance is a very important aspect in our lives and is a dominant theme throughout the Triodion. We should not forget that Jesus Christ our Lord began His public ministry with the words, "*Repent [change your mind], for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*" (Matt. 4:17). The whole Sermon on the Mount is a commentary on this fundamental declaration on repentance. The writings of St. Paul and the other New Testament writings are permeated by calls to repentance. Repentance is not merely a shallow or superficial act, but a radical change of mind, soul, will and mentality. It is a central issue and an essential component of the Lenten period. God is always ready to forgive, but first we must repent.

Reflect on our reading the Bible

Lent is a time to reflect on our relationship with the Holy Scriptures, because the Bible is central in the texts of the Triodion. We must always keep the biblical element at the forefront in our worship and in our life. How close are we to the Bible? Most people think about the Bible only at the reading of the Epistle and Gospel on Sunday at the Divine Liturgy. It is unthinkable that we as Christians do not have the Word of God as a central guide in everything we do. The Lenten period assists us to come closer and more frequently to the Bible and encourages us to reflect upon the Scripture. We should try to make reading from the Holy Bible a daily practice during this Lenten season and beyond.

Be aware of the Christocentric focus

Of course, the greatest focus of Lent should be on Jesus Christ Himself. Sometimes we can get caught up in fasting, in saying prayers, in going to Church, on our sins, or in all the rituals of this holy season; yet in the midst of all we do, we forget about Jesus Christ Himself. Lent is above all else a time to draw closer to Christ! Christ is the center of this Lenten period and should be the center of our lives. As we go through Lent and arrive at Holy Week with the Crucifixion and Resurrection, Christ must be at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of all things. This Lenten period is a tremendous opportunity to come closer to Christ, and to be Christocentric in all that we think, say, or do.

We remember that the fall of Adam and Eve occurred through eating in disobedience to the commandment of God (Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-24), and that the restoration and victory in Christ was realized through His overcoming the temptation of eating (Matt. 4:1-11, Mark 1:12-13, Luke 4:1-13). But what does our incarnate God offer to us as the ultimate possibility of union with Him? He gave us His Body and His Blood to be eaten. He said to us, "*He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him*" (John 6:56). Here is the ultimate paradox: During Lent, abstinence from food, i.e. fasting, is accompanied by partaking of the imperishable food, i.e. the Body and Blood of Christ. Adam and Eve fell away from paradise and from their connection to God through eating, and we are restored and united to God in the highest way through the Holy Communion by eating the Body and drinking the Blood of Christ. This is much more than being Christocentric. This is having Christ dwelling in us in a palpable way.

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Cultivate human relationships

The season of Lent is also an opportunity to cultivate our human relationships in more authentic ways. Looking again at the hymnology of the Triodion, we clearly ascertain that there is an emphasis on loving and caring for each other, on moving away from evil and wrong things, on forgiving one another, and on being reconnected with our fellow human beings. The Book of Isaiah, read in its entirety during Lent, begins with a condemnation of the people of Israel because they had abandoned God, and then continues with an admonition to the Israelites to return to God and to be fair and to establish proper relationships with their fellow human beings. So we are called to think of any relationships that are not in the proper condition and make every effort to remedy them. This is a very integral part of living our lives during Lent.

Practice almsgiving

Almsgiving is a vital aspect of the Lenten period. On one of the multiple occasions speaking about the need to be a person who takes care of others, St. John Chrysostom said that we are all called to give alms. He continued to say that even those who claim to be poor are not free from offering alms. Poverty is a poor excuse not to give. Indeed there are poor people who give the half of what they have (see Mark 12:41-44). It could be said that almsgiving is a requirement for living our life as Christians. Christ said, “*when you give alms*” (Matt. 6:3), not *if* you give alms. Almsgiving is especially emphasized during this Lenten period, evidenced again by the hymnology of our Church.

Make this Lent a time for transformation

Ultimately, our Lenten season is a time of having a transformative experience. We are challenged to resolve that at the end of the Lenten period, when we celebrate Pascha, we are different from what we are today. The transformative aspect of Lent is an absolute necessity for spiritually enjoying this season. We are in the process of transformation if we steadily become Christocentric in all things, through the grace and power of our Lord Jesus Christ. This Lenten season provides us with a tremendous possibility to prepare spiritually, to be constantly transformed, and to be with Christ in His Passion and Resurrection.

TREASURES OF OUR FAITH

Personal Reflections by Judy Alsop



For me, coming into the Orthodox faith was like entering an enormous, ancient and majestic cathedral full of unimaginable treasures. Even the treasure-filled cave of Tolkien’s dragon Smaug could not compare to these riches of the soul, both small and great. And, I still feel very small as I stand in worship just inside the doors of the towering Church, mother and guardian of the “true faith.”

To reflect on the myriad of precious jewels in Orthodoxy would take a couple of millennia, for the Church has been gathering those gems to her bosom for that long. But, a few precious stones stand out to me at this point in my journey. They give me pause, and continually change the way I think and act: worship, prayer, confession, beauty and truth, community, and, above all else, the Eucharist. How could I have been so unaware, for so long, of these life-giving treasures? Could it be that God in His wisdom prepared me all my life for this rich discovery? I believe so. And, from my limited knowledge and experience this far, I want to share some personal thoughts on each one of these pearls of great price.

Orthodoxy is all about worship. Worship is not about me or anyone else. It’s about the one and only true God and Creator of the universe. It is about honoring Him, adoring Him, surrendering to Him and offering to Him all we are and have. As I enter the nave of my local Orthodox church during Matins or the Divine Liturgy on any given Sunday, worship washes over me. Both my body and soul are saturated with the sights and sounds, the bells and smells, songs, prayers, Scriptures, and theological proclamations of the 2,000 year old Church Christ Himself established. I find myself deeply touched by the communal singing of the words “Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.” These expressions of true worship bring me restoration, healing and salvation. Even if I come into the church a little disgruntled, or perhaps not as peaceful as I should be, the atmosphere of worship soon engulfs me. It refocuses my attention on the living, loving triune God. It restores my sense of belonging and safety – I’m home.

My “home” is a house of prayer. Orthodoxy is all about prayer. Prayer is what we do. Prayer is our life line to God. We pray standing, sitting, kneeling, prostrating, with metanias, and very, very often with the sign of the cross.

Hopefully, through diligent practice and over time we begin to live and breathe our prayers. Of course, Orthodoxy provides prayers for everything imaginable – just take a look at the prayer menu in the little red “Pocket Orthodox Prayer Book”! Not to mention the volume of prayers handed down through the centuries, both oral and written, by wise, spiritual athletes of the faith – men and women skilled in worship and praise and disciplined in every kind of intercession and spiritual warfare. Most importantly, we can learn to turn our thoughts toward Christ every moment of every day through “The Jesus Prayer,” a prayer recited by Orthodox Christians for centuries. These simple words can be repeated aloud or silently, continuously or intermittently: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” They are life and peace to the soul – like breathing is to the body.

Through this life of continuous prayer comes a keener sense of our shortcomings and the need for confession, forgiveness and the cleansing of our souls. Orthodoxy is all about accountability. The Sacrament of Confession keeps us accountable. It is a sacrament preserved through the centuries by the Orthodox Church, as a means of healing and restoration. It is therapeutic. The Church, after all, is a hospital for the soul. And, if approached with sincerity and honesty, regular confession of sin keeps the soul clean and the heart open to the sweet ministry of the Holy Spirit, Whose work it is to make us more like Christ – *theosis* is the Greek word for that process. Our parish priest is simply a witness of our confession to God Himself. With the wisdom of the Spirit, he offers counsel to help us correct our errors and grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord. He prays over us a beautiful prayer, concluding with the petition that we would have “grace to go and sin no more.” That old, often quoted conventional proverb is certainly true: “Confession is good for the soul.”

It is good for our souls because that continual cleansing enables us to be fully influenced by the beauty and truth of the Church. Orthodoxy is all about beauty – beauty which reveals truth in a unique and sensory way. It speaks to us in the elaborate jewel-toned vestments of the clergy, ornate and fragrant censers, opulent chandeliers, handcrafted altar, holy tabernacle, and altar furnishings. And, most loudly, in the brilliant Byzantine icons of our Lord, the holy angels, and Orthodox saints covering walls, ceilings, and display stands. The changing colors of the clerical vestments and altar trappings have deep meaning, announcing both seasons and saints: most prominently, red for our Lord; purple for His passion; white for His resurrection; green for Pentecost, blue for Our Lady Theotokos; and gold for seasons in between the great feasts. All this beauty draws us to Christ. And Christ is Truth. Beauty and Truth dance together in harmony throughout the Liturgy – one complimenting the other. It never ceases to amaze me.

I’m not the only one that often stands in awe and holy reverence in the midst of the swirling, majestic theological beauty of an Orthodox Liturgy. In a very real sense it is a community experience. Orthodoxy is all about community. We believers worship together, pray together, sing together, repent together, celebrate the Church feasts together, and are shepherded and guided by the wisdom of our priests together. We take very seriously the roles of God parents, God children and God family. We rejoice when infants are churching and baptized, becoming official members of the Church, the Body of Christ. We celebrate the baptism and chrismation of adult catechumens with just as much joy and fervor. We love getting together for almost any reason – coffee hour, baby showers, bridal showers, Bible studies, play dates for mothers with young children, family night, and, of course, all the church services and liturgies – the list goes on.

But, first and foremost, Orthodox Christians partake of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ together. Orthodoxy is all about the Eucharistic celebration (or *Thanksgiving* per the Greek). Christ our God took on human flesh to live and die for us, cleansing us from sin, redeeming us from every brokenness, restoring us to the position of God’s dear children. And, by His resurrection, He literally “trampled down death by death” to secure for us eternal life. The life of Orthodox Christians revolves around this ancient holy sacrament of remembrance, celebration and participation in the “mystery of our salvation.”

Mid-week Vespers, Saturday Great Vespers and Sunday Matins all help prepare us to take part in this Holy Communion, this “partaking of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4). From its very opening prayer – “Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” – the entire Divine Liturgy moves toward that Eucharistic moment when the very life of Christ is imparted to each of us. To Orthodox Christians, this is a transforming, life-giving mystery. It is not something we try to explain in concrete or scientific terms. We reverently and joyfully receive the bread and wine as the Lord’s true Body and Blood, *by faith*. From this spiritual nourishment we receive forgiveness of sin, cleansing of soul, and restoration; and, we are drawn ever closer to Christ, all by faith.

Yes, one would have to say the whole of Christian Orthodoxy is lived out by faith. These treasures – the all-consuming power of worship, the tonic of unceasing prayer, the healing of confession, the life-altering inspiration of beauty and truth, the enriching sense of community, and the precious life-giving Eucharist itself are all expressions of faith in the one and only triune God. They are treasures that bind us all together in His great love. Treasures that make life worth living and give us hope beyond this life into eternity. Treasures that save, heal, restore and transform us into the image and likeness of Christ our true God, the One Who has forever won our hearts.

ST. ANDREW COMMUNITY NEWS...



Congratulations to Bashir and Jackie Saiid on the birth of their first child. Emma Victoria Saiid was born on February 6, 2016 weighing 7 lbs. 14.3 ozs. and measuring 20" long. May God grant Emma, her parents, grandparents, godparents and all the family many years!



MOVING AWAY: Due to a job transfer, the Sirko family is moving to the East Coast. May God be with them and may the transfer be temporary and they come back to their St. Andrew family who will miss them.



Congratulations to the newly-elected 2016 SOYO officers: Leen Saiid, President; Jad Saiid, Vice President; Mark Rahal, Treasurer and Michael Butts, Secretary. God grant you all many years and wisdom to do what is pleasing to our Lord.



St. Andrew was blessed by a visit from a son and daughter of our parish, Fr. Nicolai and Kh. Jeanette (Anderson) Meyer. Fr. Nicolai was in town for the Mid-Winter meetings which were hosted by St. Luke in Garden Gove the first weekend of March. His family came along for long overdue visit. It was great to see them and their beautiful 3 children (with a 4th on the way).

18 Annual Annunciation Tea



On Saturday, March 19, the Myrrhbearers of St. Andrew held their 18 Annual Annunciation Tea with more than 180 ladies and girls attending.

Our guest speaker was our former parishioner, who is now Mother Paraskeva from St. Barbara Monastery. The theme of her talk was *“The Virtue of a Quiet Heart”*.

Following the reading of the Annunciation Gospel by Barbara Ball, our young girls’ choir, under the leadership of Regina Roum, sang *“Rejoice O Virgin”*. Then, under the leadership of Elizabeth Beck, the Teen Girls’ choir sang *“Teach Me to Know Thy Ways, Oh Lord”*. The Ladies’ Choir then sang *“Beneath Thy Compassion”* and *“O Pure Virgin”*, under the direction of Terry Stevens.



While the women and girls were enjoying the delicious potluck Lenten buffet, Elizabeth serenaded us with her beautiful music on the Harp.



A big thankyou to all who helped make this year’s Tea a success.





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