



*Welcome to St. Olympia Orthodox Church,  
 a young and, God willing, growing community of worshipers.*

*Fr. Nikolay Khalimonov, Priest-in-Charge, 323-851-7989, nkhalimonov@yahoo.com  
 Fr. Alexy Karlgut, Dean/Administrator, 607-759-1833*

*Please join us for prayer and fellowship.*

**Upcoming Services:**  
**Saturday, March 16, 23**  
 Great Vespers: 5pm

**Sunday, March 17, 24**  
 Divine Liturgy: 10am  
 Coffee and fellowship  
 will follow the service

*The above services are  
 at St. Olympia Church  
 34 North Main Street  
 Norwood, NY, 13668*

*Mailing Address  
 St. Olympia Orthodox  
 Church PO Box 122  
 Canton, NY 13617*

**The First Sunday of Great Lent:  
 Sunday of Orthodoxy  
 March 24**



*We venerate Your most pure image, O Good One, and ask forgiveness of our transgressions, O Christ God. Of Your own will You were pleased to ascend the Cross in the flesh to deliver Your creatures from bondage to the enemy. Therefore with thanksgiving we cry aloud to You: You have filled all with joy, O our Savior, by coming to save the world.*

**Troparion**

*No one could describe the Word of the Father; but when He took flesh from you, O Theotokos, He accepted to be described, and restored the fallen image to its former state by uniting it to divine beauty. We confess and proclaim our salvation in word and images.*

**Kontakion**

# Great Lent

## From *The Orthodox Faith* - Volume II: Worship

### By Protopresbyter Thomas Hopko

The season of Great Lent is the time of preparation for the feast of the Resurrection of Christ. It is the living symbol of man's entire life which is to be fulfilled in his own resurrection from the dead with Christ. It is a time of renewed devotion: of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. It is a time of repentance, a real renewal of our minds, hearts and deeds in conformity with Christ and his teachings. It is the time, most of all, of our return to the great commandments of loving God and our neighbors.

In the Orthodox Church, Great Lent is not a season of morbidity and gloominess. On the contrary, it is a time of joyfulness and purification. We are called to "anoint our faces" and to "cleanse our bodies as we cleanse our souls." The very first hymns of the very first service of Great Lent set the proper tone of the season:

*Let us begin the Lenten time with delight . . . let us fast from passions as we fast from food, taking pleasure in the good words of the Spirit, that we may be granted to see the holy passion of Christ our God and his holy Pascha, spiritually rejoicing.*

*Thy grace has arisen upon us, O Lord, the illumination of our souls has shown forth; behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the time of repentance (Vespers Hymns).*

It is our repentance that God desires, not our remorse. We sorrow for our sins, but we do so in the joy of God's mercy. We mortify our flesh, but we do so in the joy of our resurrection into life everlasting. We make ready for the resurrection during Great Lent, both Christ's Resurrection and our own.

## Beginning of Great Lent

March 18

In the Orthodox Church, the last Sunday before Great Lent—the day on which, at Vespers, Lent is liturgically announced and inaugurated—is called Forgiveness Sunday. On the morning of that Sunday, at the Divine Liturgy, we hear the words of Christ:

*"If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses..." (Mark 6:14-15).*

Then after Vespers—after hearing the announcement of Lent in the Great Prokeimenon: "Turn not away Thy face from Thy child, for I am afflicted! Hear me speedily! Draw near unto my soul and deliver it!", after making our entrance into Lenten worship, with its special melodies, with the prayer of Saint Ephraim the Syrian, with its prostrations—we ask forgiveness from each other, we perform the rite of forgiveness and reconciliation. And as we approach each other with words of reconciliation, the choir intones the Paschal hymns, filling the church with the anticipation of Paschal joy.

What is the meaning of this rite? Why is it that the Church wants us to begin the Lenten season with forgiveness and reconciliation? These questions are in order because for too many people Lent means primarily, and almost exclusively, a change of diet, the compliance with ecclesiastical regulations concerning fasting. They understand fasting as an end in itself, as a "good deed" required by God and carrying in itself its merit and its reward. But the Church spares no effort in revealing to us that fasting is but a means, one among many, towards a higher goal: the spiritual renewal of man, his return to God, true repentance and, therefore, true reconciliation. The Church spares no effort in warning us against a hypocritical and pharisaic fasting, against the reduction of religion to mere external obligations. As a Lenten hymn says:

*"In vain do you rejoice in not eating, O soul!  
For you abstain from food,  
But from passions you are not purified.  
If you persevere in sin, you will perform a useless fast!"*

Now, forgiveness stands at the very center of Christian faith and of Christian life because Christianity itself is, above all, the religion of forgiveness. God forgives us, and His forgiveness is in Christ, His Son, whom He sends to us so that by sharing in His humanity we may share in His love and be truly reconciled with God. Indeed, Christianity has no other content but love. And it is primarily the renewal of that love, a growth in it, that we seek in Great Lent, in fasting and

prayer, in the entire spirit and the entire effort of that season. Thus, truly forgiveness is both the beginning of, and the proper condition for, the Lenten season.

One may ask, however: Why should I perform this rite when I have no “enemies?” Why should I ask forgiveness from people who have done nothing to me, and whom I hardly know? To ask these questions is to misunderstand the Orthodox teaching concerning forgiveness. It is true that open enmity, personal hatred, real animosity may be absent from our life, though if we experience them, it may be easier for us to repent, for these feelings openly contradict Divine commandments. But the Church reveals to us that there are much subtler ways of offending Divine Love. These are indifference, selfishness, lack of interest in other people, of any real concern for them—in short, that wall which we usually erect around ourselves, thinking that by being “polite” and “friendly” we fulfill God’s commandments. The rite of forgiveness is so important precisely because it makes us realize—be it only for one minute—that our entire relationship to other men is wrong, makes us experience that encounter of one child of God with another, of one person created by God with another, makes us feel that mutual “recognition” which is so terribly lacking in our cold and dehumanized world.

On that unique evening, listening to the joyful Paschal hymns we are called to make a spiritual discovery: to taste of another mode of life and relationship with people, of life whose essence is love. We can discover that always and everywhere Christ, the Divine Love Himself, stands in the midst of us, transforming our mutual alienation into brotherhood. As I advance towards the other, as the other comes to me—we begin to realize that it is Christ who brings us together by His love for both of us.

And because we make this discovery—and because this discovery is that of the Kingdom of God itself: the Kingdom of Peace and Love, of reconciliation with God and, in Him, with all that exists—we hear the hymns of that Feast, which once a year “opens to us the doors of Paradise.” We know why we shall fast and pray, what we shall seek during the long Lenten pilgrimage.

**Forgiveness Sunday: the day on which we acquire the power to make our fasting—true fasting; our effort—true effort; our reconciliation with God—true reconciliation.**

—Father Alexander Schmemmann

## **1st Sunday of Great Lent: Sunday of Orthodoxy** **March 24**

The first Sunday of Great Lent is called the Sunday of Orthodoxy because it commemorates the restoration of the Holy Icons and the triumph of the Orthodox Faith against the terrible heresy of the Iconoclasts, i.e. those heretics who refused to honor the Holy Icons. For more than a hundred years the Church was disturbed by the evil doctrine of iconoclasm.

The first Emperor to persecute the Church was Leo the Isaurian, and the last was Theophilos, the spouse of Saint Theodora (February 11), who reigned after her husband's death and re-established Orthodoxy in the time of Patriarch Methodios (June 14). Empress Theodora proclaimed publicly that we do not kiss the Icons as a sign of worship, nor do we honor them as "gods," but as images of their prototypes.

In the year 843, on the first Sunday of the Fast, Saint Theodora and her son, Emperor Michael, venerated the Holy Icons together with the clergy and the people. Since that time this event has been commemorated every year, because it was definitively determined that we do not worship the Icons, but we honor and glorify all the Saints who are depicted on them. We worship only the Triune God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and no one else, neither a Saint, nor an Angel.

Originally, the Holy Prophets Moses, Aaron, and Samuel were commemorated on this Sunday. The Alleluia verses appointed for today’s Liturgy reflect this older usage.



### **The Annunciation** **March 25**

*Today is the beginning of our salvation,  
the revelation of the eternal mystery!  
The Son of God becomes the Son of the Virgin  
as Gabriel announces the coming of Grace.  
Together with him let us cry to the Theotokos:  
Hail, O Full of Grace, the Lord is with You!*

**Troparion**

## PARISH WISH LIST

*A wish list to help our parish grow!*

### RECURRING needs:

**Paper Plates** (small and large), **Paper Bowls**, **Hot Cups**  
**Napkins**  
**Plastic Utensils**, especially **Forks**  
**Paper Towels**  
**Toilet Paper**

*Holy Mother Olympia, pray to God for us!*

## UPCOMING DIOCESAN & PARISH EVENTS

**Lenten Women's Retreat:** Friday, March 22 – Sunday, March 24, 2024  
St Andrews Camp – see the Diocesan website to register

**Reader's Service for the Annunciation at the Hermitage of Saint Olympia**

**Monday, March 25, 10 AM**

**Followed by Brunch**

**Presanctified Liturgy with Archbishop Michael**

Wednesday, April 17, 6 PM

**Presbyter's Council Meeting**

Thursday, April 25, 11 AM

Zoom



*Christ with me, Christ before me,  
Christ behind me, Christ in me,  
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,  
Christ on my right, Christ on my left,  
Christ in breadth, Christ in length, Christ in height,  
Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,  
Christ in the mouth of every man who speaks of me,  
Christ in every eye that sees me, Christ in every ear that hears me.*

*I arise today through a mighty strength,  
the invocation of the Trinity,  
through belief in the Threeness,  
through confession of the Oneness of the Creator of creation.*

**From the Lorica of Saint Patrick**