



“ORTHODOX 9” PARISHES BULLETIN

RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN CANADA

Monthly Newsletter for the family of Orthodox Churches including:



St. Mary’s (the Nativity of the Holy Virgin) - NISKU

Sts. Peter & Paul - BONNYVILLE

St. John the Baptist - HOREN

Holy Ascension - CALMAR

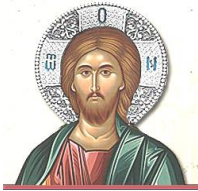
St. Onuphrius - FOAM LAKE (SK)

Whitsuntide (Holy Trinity) - THORSBY

Dormition of Theotokos -MACNUTT (SK)

St. John the Baptist - VEGREVILLE

Sts. Peter & Paul - INSINGER (SK)



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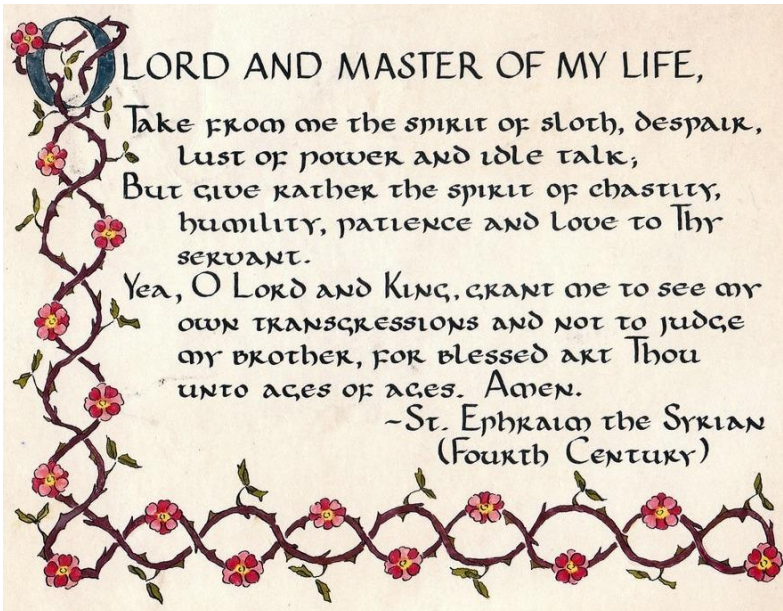
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LORD AND MASTER OF MY LIFE,

Take from me the spirit of sloth, despair,
Lust of power and idle talk,
But give rather the spirit of chastity,
humility, patience and love to Thy
servant.

Yea, O LORD AND KING, grant me to see my
own transgressions and not to judge
my brother, for blessed art Thou
unto ages of ages. Amen.

-St. Ephraim the Syrian
(Fourth Century)

The sad truth and the joyful way of the Great Lent

We are again starting our way to the Joy of the Holy Easter, the Pacha of the Lord!

First of all, to put the beginning for this uneasy way, we should know and clearly see the reason to do so. For, those who do not realize the necessity, they shall not start the work.

The Lord has called us to do His commandments, proving that they are good; the Sundays preparatory for the Great Lent taught us by the parables; our own life teaches us, that the Lord Who sacrificed His Son, can be our only Hope.

So, are we ready to accept the sad truth, which is the true reason to start our Lenten journey.

St. Apostle Peter proclaimed it in his 1st Epistle: “for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin”. Isn’t it harsh and cruel, this truth? Especially, if we are sometimes likely to think the opposite... “We need enough strength to do good!” And this is also true...

How deep is the contradiction and the damage that sin brought to our essence, and how dangerous are its snares! Only the Cross of the Lord could fill the abyss and cure the division!

And St. Apostle, knowing their power, wants to make these his words sound louder for us, so this is the whole phrase quoted: “Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.”

You see, how strong are the words that ‘wrap’ the idea of fasting! We can find even more if we care to read the whole epistle of his.

So, for those who care to still accept this sad truth the joyful way to the Holy Resurrection of Christ, our New Life, begins!

God bless us to have a good and profitable Great Lent and wholeheartedly enter the Joy of Easter!

The Lord said: *For if you **forgive men their offences**, your heavenly Father will forgive you also your offences. But if you will not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your offences.*

And when you fast, be not as the hypocrites, sad. *For they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Amen I say to you, they have received their reward. But thou, when thou fastest anoint thy head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not to men to fast, but to thy Father who is in secret: and thy Father who sees in secret, will repay thee.*

Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth: *where the rust, and moth consume, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven: where neither the rust nor moth consume, and where thieves do not break through, nor steal. For where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also. [Matthew 6:14-21; Gospel of the Forgiveness Sunday – The Casting out of Adam – Cheesefare Week]*

The three-part message for the Great Lent /of the last pre-Lenten Sunday Gospel/



What we have recently heard, some people call it a three-part message for the Great Lent.

Forgiveness, Fasting, and collecting Treasures in Heaven.

Forgiveness

Having received His forgiveness, God calls on us to grant forgiveness to all who have hurt us and also to seek forgiveness from those whom we have hurt. God offers us His forgiveness very graciously and generously. But His forgiveness obligates us to forgive others. This is exactly what Jesus says in Gospel of today. Our faith begins with the forgiveness of our Lord. But it does not end there. Because I have been forgiven and daily am being forgiven by God for my many sins, I am obligated to forgive others. Again, *the judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy.* (James 2:13)

“The triumph of sin, the main sign of its rule over the world, is division, opposition, separation, hatred. Therefore, the first breakthrough this fortress of sin is forgiveness; the return to unity, solidarity, love. To forgive is to put between me and my ‘enemy’ the radiant forgiveness of God Himself.” (Fr. Alexander Schmemmann †1983)

Fasting

The Triodion [Church service book], which contains our church services for Lent, says the following about the Lenten fast:

The Lenten spring has come, The light of repentance...

Let us receive the announcement of Lent with joy!

For if our forefather Adam had kept the fast,

We would not be deprived of paradise...

The fasting was there at the very beginning of our creation, part of our nature!

The Lord said through the prophet Isaiah: "Is not this the fast that I choose ... to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked to cover him..." (Isaiah 58:6-7).

Then, the same service text continues:

While fasting physically, brothers,

Let us also fast spiritually;

Let us loose every knot of iniquity,

Let us tear up every unrighteous bond,

Let us distribute bread to the hungry and welcome

to our homes those who have no roof over their heads

So that we may receive great mercy from Christ our God.

And St. John Chrysostom says: "So then, what have you gained by fasting, my brother? Do not say to me, I fasted for so many days. I did not eat this or I did not eat that. I did not drink wine, that I endured want. Instead, show me if you, from an angry man, have become instead gentle. If from a cruel man, you have become benevolent. If you are filled with anger, why oppress your flesh? If hatred and avarice are within you, of what benefit is it that you drink water instead of wine? Do not show forth a useless fast, for fasting alone does not ascend to heaven."

Treasures in Heaven

All our treasures on earth – said the Lord – will last only as long as this life. They are "rust collectors." They will all end up in the junk yard.

Today we can also remember the Gospel of the previous preparatory Sunday – the great and pleasant surprise of the righteous!

"At the Last Judgment I shall not be asked whether I was successful in my ascetic exercises, nor how many bows and prostrations I made. Instead, I shall be asked, Did I feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick and the prisoners. That is all I shall be asked. About every poor, hungry, and imprisoned person the Savior says "I"; 'I was hungry, and thirsty, I was sick and in prison.' ..." (Says one of the new saints, St. Maria Skobtsova)

Thus, the righteous were *laying up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal*, by doing good to the Only Heavenly One, God and Man, in the person of those easily accessible people, whom He, in His love, *equals to Himself...* (As the same saint continues)

A good time to try and practise Christ's three-part recipe: forgiveness, fasting, and laying up treasures in heaven.

And we will find this to be the perfect recipe if we are looking not only for the resurrected Christ, but also for resurrected *us* this Easter! Amen.

Based on "Christ's Three-Part Recipe for Lent"
by Fr. Anthony Coniaris

Proper Confession

Before confession one should attempt to recall all the sins which one has committed voluntarily or involuntarily. One must attentively reexamine one's life in order to recall not only those sins committed since the last confession, but also those which have not been confessed through forgetfulness. Then, with compunction and a contrite heart, approach the Cross and the Gospel and begin the confession of your sins.



1. Confess your sins honestly, remembering that you open them not to a man, but to God Himself. God knows your sins already and only wants your admission of them. You should not be embarrassed before your spiritual father: he is a person just as you are. Your spiritual father cannot be your terrible judge at confession. Is the reason that you are embarrassed before your spiritual father that you are afraid to lose his good opinion of you? On the contrary, your spiritual father will have all the more love for you when he sees your open, honest confession. Furthermore, if you are afraid to reveal your sins before just one person, how will you overcome your embarrassment when you appear at God's Last Judgment? There, all your sins which you have not confessed will be opened before God Himself, the Angels and all the people.

2. Be specific when you confess, listing all your sins separately. St. John Chrysostom says: "One must not only say: I have sinned, or I am sinful, but one must declare each type of sin." "The revelation of sins," says St. Basil the Great, "is subject to the same law as the Declaration of physical ills..." It stands to reason that one must confess or tell about one's sins in the same way as one who is physically ill describes the symptoms of his illness to a physician from whom he expects to receive healing.

3. Do not mention anyone else during confession, i.e. do not complain about anyone - what sort of confession is this? It is not confession, but judgement and a new sin.

4. Do not attempt to justify yourself in any way during confession: blaming weakness, custom, etc. The more one justifies himself during confession, the less one is justified by God. The more one denounces, judges and accuses oneself, the more one is justified in the eyes of God.

5. When questioned by your spiritual father, do not say: "I can't remember, maybe I committed that sin." God commanded us to always remember our sins. In order not to justify ourselves with not remembering, we must confess our sins as often as possible. Those who, because of carelessness, confess and take communion infrequently, and because of this forget their sins, have no one to blame but themselves. They cannot hope for remission of the sins which they failed to confess. Thus, it is imperative that we try to recall all our sins. When someone owes us something we are sure to remember this. Yet we forget our own debts before God!

6. Unless asked by your spiritual father, do not list the sins you have not committed or things you have not done. Doing this, you liken yourself to the Pharisee of the Gospel. You do not confess your sins, but boast, thereby increasing your judgment.

7. We must confess with sorrow and a contrite heart the sins by which we have grieved our Lord God. It is not good that many tell of their sins matter-of-factly, without any remorse. They speak as though they are engaged in some casual conversation. What is worse, some even allow themselves to laugh during confession. These are all signs of unrepentedness. Confessing in this manner, we do not cleanse ourselves of our sins, but rather increase them.

8. Finally, confess your sins with faith in Jesus Christ, with hope in His mercy. Only with faith in Jesus Christ and hope in Him can we receive forgiveness of our sins. Without faith, we cannot receive remission. An example of this is Judas the traitor—who was remorseful of what he did, but did not have faith in Jesus, no hope in His mercy, and thus ended his own life.

This then, is how we must confess in order to receive remission of our sins from our Lord God. *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* (1 John 1:9)

The Great Lent is the time to "be alert and always keep on praying" (Eph. 6:18)

Read the Prayer, Add Colours to This Picture and Try to Keep the Great Fasting!

Lenten Prayer of Saint Ephrem (children's version)

O Lord, help me to not
want to have my own
way today.

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Help me to be kind and
loving to everyone.

+

Help me to know when I
have done wrong against
You and others. Amen.

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March 2023

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	Great Lent Beginning Great Repentance Canon reading – St. Barbara Cathedral – 6 p.m.	Great Repentance Canon reading – St. Barbara Cathedral – 6 p.m.	<u>1</u> Great Repentance Canon reading – St. Barbara Cathedral – 6 p.m.	<u>2</u> Great Repentance Canon reading – St. Barbara Cathedral – 6 p.m.	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u> 10:00 am - The Annual “Orthodox IX” Parishes meeting will be held at St. Mary’s Parish Hall, Nisku
<u>5</u> 10:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy – St. Mary’s NISKU Triumph of Orthodoxy	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u> Uncovering of the relics of the Holy Martyrs at the gate of Eugenius at Constantinople (395-423).	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u> First (4th c.) and Second (452) Findings of the Precious Head of St. John the Baptist.	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u> 1:00 pm - The Annual St. Mary’s Parish meeting will be held at Parish Hall, Nisku
<u>12</u> 10:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy at St. Barbara. St. Gregory Palamas	<u>13</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>15</u> 440 Martyrs slain by the Lombards in Italy (ca. 579)	<u>16</u>	<u>17</u> Martyrs Paul and his sister Juliana, and Quadratus, Acacius, and Stratonicus, at Ptolemais in Syria (ca. 273)	<u>18</u>
<u>19</u> 10:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy – St. Mary’s at NISKU (Confession) Cross Veneration Sunday	<u>20</u> The Holy Hieromartyrs of Chersonese: Basil, Ephraim, Capiton, Eugene, Aetherius, Elpidius, and Agathadorus (4th c.)	<u>21</u> The Holy Forty Martyrs of Sebaste (ca. 320)	<u>22</u>	<u>23</u> Martyr Codratus (Quadratus) and Martyrs Cyprian, Dionysius, Anectus, Paul, Crescens, and Dionysius, at Corinth (258).	<u>24</u> 06:00 p.m. – Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts - NISKU	<u>25</u>
<u>26</u> 10:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy at THORSBY (Confession) Of St. John of the Ladder	<u>27</u> Martyr Eustathius and his company, at Carrhae, Mesopotamia (741)	<u>28</u> Martyrs Agapius, Publius (Pauplius), Timolaus, Romulus, two Dionysius, and two Alexander, in Palestine (303)	<u>29</u>	<u>30</u> New Hieromartyr Victor Kiranov, archpriest, of Berdyansk (Crimea) (1942)	<u>31</u> Martyrs Trophimus and Eucarpus of Nicomedia (ca. 300). 10,000 Martyrs at Nicomedia	