



# “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**

**Holy Ascension - CALMAR**

**Whitsuntide (Holy Trinity) - THORSBY**

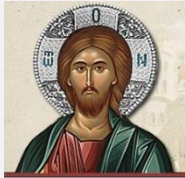
**St. John the Baptist - VEGREVILLE**

**St. John the Baptist - HOREN**

**St. Onuphrius - FOAM LAKE (SK)**

**Dormition of Theotokos -MACNUTT (SK)**

**Sts. Peter & Paul - INSINGER (SK)**



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## *Congratulation on the Spring Spiritual – the Great Lent!*



March, the 11th is marked by the beginning of the Great Lent, the period preparatory to the Greatest Joy and Exaltation of our Lord’s Resurrection Feast. Pascha – Easter Sunday – is on April, the 28th, but it takes time and effort in prayer, fasting and attending the church services.

Whereas the core of the lent is permanent – living the life in Christ – each era brings its own challenges to the believers. “Immediately they left their nets and followed him” (Math. 4,22). What kind of ‘nets’ do people have, or rather, are in today?... Yes, many preachers mention this “shift of accent from food to information” in fasting, for the contemporary Church. So, let’s squeeze those ‘social’ nets and media into a very modest schedule!

Don’t we remember, that the bodily abstinence is “the mother of all good things”! Great Lent is for that; and for giving alms, for reading the Gospel (maybe even family reading) and kneeling, extending time and attention for personal and church prayer, thinking back to your past life and making a closer attention to your heart; being less judgmental but friendlier to people; take more effort in preparing for Communion and Confession – at least once during the lent; visit people that have been left alone or need any of your help; quit or reduce any of bad habits (smoking, for example).

There is another important point of our attention at this period - go to the Canon of St. Andrew of Crete, which greatly affects the heart and mind with deeply repentant thoughts. If you don’t have the chance, don’t despair, but rather find its text and read attentively.

It’s good to avoid external manifestations of your asceticism, don’t have a downcast face during Lent. Another sign of an incorrect fast is irritability, anger. It often appears, when there is a fight going on between the old and new man.

By its length, Lent reminds of a kind of tithe of the year, which we give to God, that is, it is a sacrifice to God. We have to sacrifice something to make some room for the Paschal joy.

As for abstinence from food, everything is individual: Fast as you are able, but urge yourself towards restraint.

God bless us to have a good and profitable Great Lent!

**f. Yevheniy**

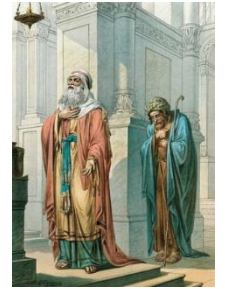
# The meaning of the weeks preparatory to the Great Lent in short.

The four weeks preceding Great Lent are called preparatory, as each of them is dedicated to some crucial aspect of Christian fasting with the instructions taken either from Christ Himself or from the Holy History. Those instructions break our every-day reasoning by the logics of repentance that comes from above. Let us attend!

## 1<sup>st</sup>. Sunday of the Tax Collector (the Publican) and Pharisee

The Liturgy reading is Lk. 18: 10–14, in which the tax collector personifies a sincerely repentant sinner, and the Pharisee a person who is seemingly pious, but does not see his sins and imagines himself righteous, judging the publican.

While judging (or comparing) yourself to someone we falsely justify ourselves, for we can always find someone, who is seemingly worse; this process is unstoppable and actually leads to hell, as its inhabitant is the worst; what profit is for us to be better than Satan... Besides, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick”(Mt 9:12)



## 2<sup>nd</sup>. Sunday of the Prodigal Son



The Liturgy reading is Lk. 15: 11–32, about the prodigal son who left his father's house, but then repented and returned. The parable reminds us of our own weakness and God's great mercy, as it describes the attitude of God to a fallen man.

Great Lent is the period to “come to senses” like the younger son and to see how far we are from the Heavenly Father’s house. And again, the former waster of the father’s inheritance turns to be in a better spiritual state than his brother... Now we can also see, why the younger left the household: there’s no love in the older brother’s attitude to the father and brother; he does what he does because of fear – being a son by name he is a slave in heart. That’s also the reason of the younger brother’s going astray.

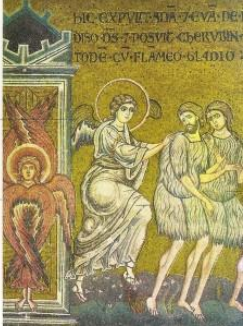
## 3<sup>rd</sup>. Sunday of the Final Judgment

The Liturgy reading is Matthew 25: 31-46. Believers are reminded of the second coming of Christ and the upcoming Judgment Day.

What breaks our judgement here are the words of Christ to the righteous/wicked: “I was thirsty, and you gave me drink/no drink”. So great is are the deeds of mercy towards the neighbour, as Kingdom of Heaven is given “for a glass of water”, as well as the opposite... Again, love is precious (or true) only when it is free. This Sunday is the last day before Lent that the believer eats meat.

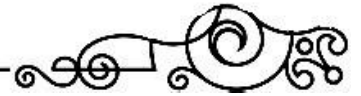


## 4<sup>th</sup>. Sunday of Adam's expulsion from Paradise, or Forgiveness Sunday



The Liturgy reading is Matthew 6: 14–21 is read, in which Christ speaks of the need to forgive everyone. The key idea is the longing for paradise, which was lost by people after the fall of Adam.

Again, what is greater – the communion with God or knowledge of good and evil? Does it concern only Adam and Eve? Are we going to choose what seems to be rational and logical, or what is love and companionship? “For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face” (Math. 6, 14-17).



***Have mercy on me, O God,  
have mercy on me!***

*The first week of Great Lent has been known since times of old as the “dawn of abstinence,” or “clean week.” During that week, the Church persuades her children to come out of that sinful state into which all of mankind fell because our forefathers did not abstain, because they lost the blessings of heaven, the state of sin which each of us increases by his personal sins. It coaxes them into coming forth by way of faith, prayer, humility and fasting, things, which are pleasing to God. This is the time for repentance, says the Church “Behold the day of salvation, the entrance to the Fast. O my soul, be watchful, close all the doors through which the passions enter, and look up towards the Lord.” (From the first canticle of the triodion canon at Matins on Monday of the first week of Great Lent).*

## The Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete as a conversation of the penitent and his soul

*Over the course of the first four days of Great Lent, Great Compline is served, with the reading of the Great Penitential Canon of St. Andrew of Crete, which sets the tone which is to resound throughout Great Lent. During the first week of Great Lent, the Canon is divided into four separate parts, one chanted at each Compline.*

*The refrain “Have mercy upon me O Lord, have mercy upon me” accompanies each verse of the Great Canon. Several troparia in honor of St. Andrew, composer of the canon, and to St. Mary of Egypt are also included.*

*The Great Canon is more astonishing than any other liturgical text encountered during Great Lent. It is a marvel of liturgical hymnography, with texts of amazing power and poetic beauty.*



**The Great Canon consists of a conversation between the penitent and his own soul. The conversation begins:**



“Where shall I begin to weep for the actions of my wretched life? What first-fruit shall I offer O Christ in this my lamentation? But in Thy compassion grant me forgiveness of sins.”

A marvelous troparion follows:

“Come wretched soul, with thy flesh to the Creator of all. Make confession to Him, and abstain henceforth from thy past brutishness; and offer to God tears of repentance.”

The words are astonishing, containing both Christian anthropology and asceticism: our flesh, an inseparable part of human nature and being, must also participate in our repentance.

The apogee of this conversation with the soul, its constant unremitting call to repentance, comes in the kontakion sung following the 6th canticle of the Canon:

“My soul, O my soul, rise up! Why art thou sleeping? The end draws near and soon thou shalt be troubled. Watch, then, that Christ thy God may spare thee, for He is everywhere present and fillest all things.”

And then the penitent applies one more powerful means in while conversing with his soul: “I bring thee, O my soul, examples from the [Old and] New Testament...”



The Bible is not merely a history of the people of Israel. It is also a great chronicle of the soul of mankind, of the souls which would repeatedly fall and stand up again before the face of God, which repeatedly fell into sin and repeatedly repented.

And so, through the individuals and events recounted in the Great Canon, the history of the Old Testament and the New Testament passes before us. Its author points out to us our forefathers' falling into sin, and the corruption of the original world. He points to Noah's virtues and the bitterness and lack of repentance shown by the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. He resurrects for us the memory of

the righteous patriarchs and valiant men: Moses, Joshua son of Navi, Gideon and Jephthah; he allows us to look at the King David's piety, his fall and touching repentance; he points out to us Ahab's and Jezebel's impiety, and also the great paradigms of repentance – the Ninevites, Manasseh, the harlot, and the wise thief.

He accords special attention to Mary of Egypt, and more than once stops the reader at the Cross and at the Holy Sepulchre of our Lord. Everywhere, he teaches repentance, humility, prayer, and self-denial. It is in these examples that the exhortation to the soul constantly takes place – [O my soul] remember this righteous one; this way did he please God; remember that righteous one as well; this way did he please God; you have done nothing comparable.

The Bible speaks of some individuals in a positive light, and about others in a negative one. We must emulate the one, and not the other.

“Riding in the chariot of the virtues, Elijah was lifted up to heaven, high above earthly things. Reflect, my soul, upon his ascent.” – Reflect, O my soul, upon the ascent of the righteous ones of the Old Testament.

“O wretched soul, always thou hast imitated the polluted thoughts of Gehazi. Cast from thee, at least in thine old age, his love of money. Flee from the fire of hell, turn away from thy wickedness.” - At least in old age, rid yourself of Gehazi's avarice, O soul, and leaving behind your evil deeds, avoid the fires of hell...”

Finally, having presented all from the Old Testament, the writer ascends toward the Giver of Life, the Savior of our souls, and like the thief, he cries out “Have mercy upon me!” and like the publican exclaims “God be merciful to me a sinner!” Emulating the persistence of the Canaanite woman and the blind man at the crossroads he says “have

mercy on me O son of David! Like unto the harlot, he pours out tears instead of myrrh onto Christ's head and feet, and weeps bitterly over himself as Martha and Mary did over Lazarus...

In its concluding troparia, the Great Canon, using every possible means to move us to repentance, as it were reveals to us its "method" [of instruction]: How I have talked with thee, O soul! I have reminded thee of the Old Testament righteous ones, and have given thee examples from the New Testament [to lead thee to compunction], and yet it has all been for naught, for "thou, my soul hast not followed their lives and actions. Woe to thee when thou art judged!" – woe unto thee, when thou shalt stand before the Judgment!



Attending the words of the Great Canon, having scrutinized the history of people who ran from God only to be overtaken by Him, people who were in chasms, but whom God led out, let us contemplate the fact that God brings each of us out of the chasm of sin and despair, so that we might offer Him the fruits of repentance.

One should not imagine that repentance consists of rooting around in one's personal sins, engaging in self-flagellation, and striving to expose in oneself as much evil and darkness as possible. To truly repent is to turn from the darkness to the light, from sin to righteousness... True repentance is reflected not so much in words as in deeds: in readiness to come to the aid of others, to be open with our neighbors, and not become involuted onto oneself.

True repentance is understanding that, while we do not possess the power to become true Christians, God is capable of making us so. As it says in the Great Canon "wheresoever God wishes, the order of nature is overcome." That is to say, where God so wishes, supernatural events occur: Saul becomes Paul, Jonah is brought out of the belly of the whale, Moses crosses the sea on dry land, the dead Lazarus is resurrected, Mary of Egypt is turned from a harlot into a great righteous one. For, according to the Savior "with men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (Matt. 19: 26).

Compiled by f. Yevhen Protsenko

From "The Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete" of Archpriest Victor Potapov

### ***Upcoming Events in March***

*March, the 2<sup>nd</sup> – St. Mary's Parish Annual Meeting, held at Parish Hall, Nisku at 01.00 pm*

*March, the 9<sup>th</sup> – Divine Liturgy at 10.00 am; The Annual Diocese Meeting at St. Mary's Church, Nisku at 11.30*

*March, the 11<sup>th</sup> – **Great Lent begins***

*March, the 16<sup>th</sup> – 'Orthodox 9' Annual Meeting, held at St. Mary's Church Parish Hall, Nisku at 10.00 am*

*March, the 17<sup>th</sup> – Sunday of Orthodoxy, that will be celebrated at St. Barbara's Cathedral at 6.00 pm*

*The Sundays of March, the 17<sup>th</sup>, the 24<sup>th</sup> and the 31<sup>st</sup> – Liturgy with Confession will be in Nisku, Calmar and Vegreville accordingly.*

# March 2019

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					<u>1</u>	<u>2</u> 1:00 p.m. - The Annual St. Mary's Parish meeting at Parish Hall, Nisku
<u>3</u> 10:00 a.m. - Divine Liturgy at Nisku. <b>Sunday of the Last Judgment (Meatfare).</b>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u> 10:00 a.m. - Divine Liturgy. 11.30 a.m. - The Annual Diocese meeting at St. Mary's Church
<u>10</u> 10:00 a.m. - Divine Liturgy at Nisku. <b>Sunday of Forgiveness (Cheesefare).</b>	<u>11</u> <b>Great Lent Begins</b>  Great Repentance Canon reading - St. Barbara Cathedral - 6 p.m.	<u>12</u> <b>Great Repentance Canon reading - St. Barbara Cathedral - 6 p.m.</b>  7.00 p.m. -St. Mary's Board Meeting, at Parish Hall	<u>13</u> <b>Great Repentance Canon reading - St. Barbara Cathedral - 6 p.m.</b>	<u>14</u> <b>Great Repentance Canon reading - St. Barbara Cathedral - 6 p.m.</b>	<u>15</u>	<u>16</u> 10:00 p.m. - The Annual "Orthodox 9" Parishes meeting at Parish Hall, Nisku
<u>17</u> 10:00 a.m. - Divine Liturgy (Confession) at Nisku. <b>Triumph of Orthodoxy.</b>	<u>18</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>20</u> Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts, St. Barbara's Cathedral	<u>21</u>	<u>22</u> Liturgy of Presanctif. Gifts, St. Barbara's Cathedral	<u>23</u>
<u>24</u> 10:00 a.m. - Divine Liturgy, (Confession) Calmar. <b>St. Gregory Palamas.</b>	<u>25</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>27</u> Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts, St. Barbara's Cathedral	<u>28</u>	<u>29</u> Liturgy of Presanctif. Gifts, St. Barbara's Cathedral	<u>30</u>
<u>31</u> 10:00 a.m. - Divine Liturgy, (Confession) Vegreville. <b>Cross Veneration.</b>						