



“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

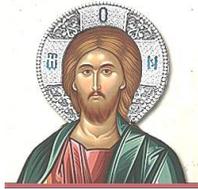
St. Onuphrius - FOAM LAKE (SK)

Whitsuntide (Holy Trinity) - THORSBY

Dormition of Theotokos -MACNUTT (SK)

St. John the Baptist - VEGREVILLE

Sts. Peter & Paul - INSINGER (SK)



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March 7 - April 19 – the 40-days of the Great Lent



Great Lent in the Orthodox Church begins on the Monday seven weeks before the feast of the Holy Pascha - Easter. It is called "Great" because it is the longest, strictest, and most significant fast for an Orthodox Christian. It encompasses the Holy Forty Days—a forty-day period of abstinence (in memory of Jesus Christ’s forty-day fast in the wilderness, where He neither ate nor drank)—and Holy Passion Week, when the Church commemorates the final days of the Savior’s earthly life, His suffering, and crucifixion on the Cross.

Particularly strict fasting is observed during the first week, the fourth week (known as the Veneration of the

Cross), and the seventh week (Passion Week) of Great Lent. The purpose of the fast is to prepare Orthodox Christians for the celebration of the principal Christian feast—The Resurrection of the Lord, Holy Easter.

The first commandment God gave to the first people in paradise was a commandment about fasting. Old Testament righteous ones fasted strictly and frequently, especially during critical moments in the life of the people. The Prophet Moses fasted for forty days on Mount Sinai before receiving the tablets of the Covenant from God. The Prophet and Psalmist David spent much of his life in fasting and repentance, saying: “I... afflicted my soul with fasting... My knees weakened from fasting...”

The Bible recounts instances where people fasted for show but questioned God: “Why do we fast, and You do not see? Why do we humble our souls, and You take no notice?” Through the Prophet Isaiah, God rebuked such hypocritical piety: “Behold, on the day of your fast, you... demand heavy labor from others. Behold, you fast for strife and contention and to strike others with a wicked fist... Is this what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord?” Isaiah goes on to explain that the essence of fasting is not outward but inward, conveying God’s words about the kind of fast that pleases Him: “This is the fast I have chosen: loose the bonds of wickedness... set the oppressed free... share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, clothe him...”

(continued on the next page)

In the New Testament, after His baptism in the Jordan, Christ withdrew into the wilderness, where, when tempted by food and power, He said: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”

Adam broke the fast in paradise by eating the forbidden fruit. Christ, the New Adam, begins His ministry with a fast. Adam was tempted and failed; Christ was tempted and overcame. The consequence of Adam’s fall was expulsion from paradise and human death. The fruits of Christ’s victory are the destruction of death and our return to paradise. In the struggle against tempting demons, Christ recommends fasting as a primary means: “This kind can only be driven out by prayer and fasting.”

The Church’s teaching on fasting is primarily conveyed through the Lenten services. Entering a church during Lent, one notices everything is unusual: the structure of the services, the absence of festivity, the order, prayers, hymns, prostrations, and the decor and atmosphere of the church. It is orderly, quiet, and reverent. **The humble, contrite spirit of Lent is palpable, with its central theme resounding: “Open to me the gates of repentance, O Giver of Life...”** The Psalter is read frequently—psalms of repentance and praise. Listening closely, it becomes clear that the Lord is near, always saving and preserving: “The Lord will hear you in the day of trouble...” “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me...” It becomes evident that repentance is not only sorrow but also joy, because it is accompanied by hope. Together with the officiating priest, the faithful make prostrations while reciting the Prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian: “O Lord and Master of my life...”

During the fast, people voluntarily abstain from meat, milk, butter, eggs, cheese, and products containing them. Fasting is also accompanied by abstinence in marital relations. In strict fasting, alcoholic beverages are forbidden—not because one type of food is considered pure and another impure, nor because plant-based food is healthier. By changing the diet, the Church seeks to help individuals temper their sensuality and allow their spirit to prevail over the flesh. This shift in diet helps people become lighter, more agile, and better suited for spiritual life. Blessed Augustine says: “If someone asks why you fast and torment yourself, reply: a wild horse that cannot be tamed by a bridle must be subdued by hunger and thirst.” During major feasts within Great Lent—the Annunciation of the Most Holy Theotokos on April 7 and the Entry of the Lord into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday)—fish is permitted at meals. On Lazarus Saturday, fish roe is allowed. The fast is relaxed for the sick, the frail, the elderly, young children, pregnant and nursing mothers, soldiers, and travelers. Those engaged in heavy physical labor or prolonged work in harsh climates should consult a priest about the appropriate degree of fasting strictness.

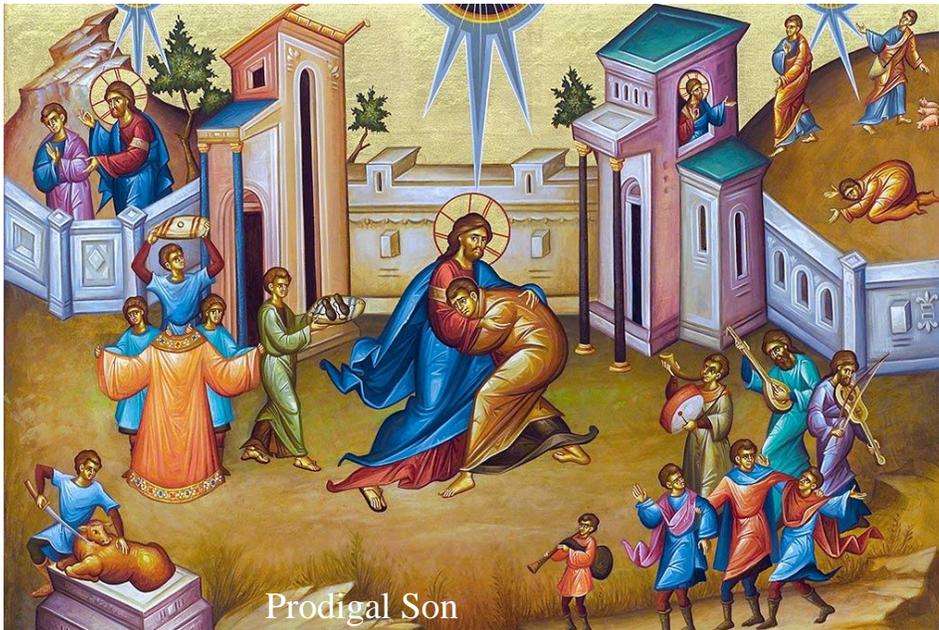
People fasted as a sign of repentance, to reconcile with God, and through abstinence, repentance, and prayer, to show their love for Him and prepare to meet Christ. The meaning, purpose, and heart of fasting lie in drawing closer to Christ by imitating Him, and in purifying soul and body to become more capable of uniting with Him in the partaking of the Holy Mysteries. While externally fasting involves limiting food, excess, and indulgences, and refraining from treats, spiritually it means abstaining from sin and evil, correcting bad habits and tendencies, and striving for a pious life according to the Church’s rules. Fasting is a time to forget oneself and learn to sacrifice for others for Christ’s sake. To those who avoid fasting for various reasons, St. John Chrysostom says: “You cannot fast? But why can’t you forgive your enemy’s offense? Change your character: if you’re angry, strive to be meek; if vengeful, do not seek revenge; if you love to slander and gossip, refrain from it. Do more good during fasting days, be more compassionate, eagerly help those in need, and pray more fervently and warmly...”

During Lent, believers strive to avoid entertainment and lead a spiritually focused life. In Great Lent, each person can take on a spiritual endeavor, such as attending church more often, confessing, and receiving communion. Or one might resolve not to judge anyone aloud, avoid quarreling, or offending anyone during the fast. One could decide to read all four Gospels or turn to the spiritual writings of the Church Fathers.

Christ calls us to practice true fasting—not hypocritically, not outwardly for show, but inwardly and secretly. Then, as the Savior promises, the Lord, who sees in secret, will reward you openly.

On True Repentance

By Archbishop Dimitriy (Muretov) †1883



Now the Lord Himself calls us to his judgment. This grace-filled judgment is merciful and differs from His Judgment of Righteousness in that the one who blames himself the most is justified; one who reveals his uncleanness completely is cleansed; and on contrary, unjustified is the one who does not confess all his sins; one who hides his disease returns unhealed.

What constitutes this self-examination? In cognizing one's self, that is, in the realization and renewal, in the mind and memory of all one's life with all its incidents and

circumstances; with all the acts which marked its hours and minutes; with all the words which one's lips have ever uttered; with all one's thoughts and images, which have filled the mind and imagination, and with all one's desires and feelings that have agitated the heart. **For one must remember that everything confessed will be remitted and forgotten forever, and everything unconfessed will remain with us to be condemned at the Last Judgment of Christ.**

In order to make this necessary work easier for us, the Wise and Merciful Lord gave us His Word in which the example of true righteousness is presented and seen as clearly as in a mirror, while the Holy Church has given us the rule of faith and life of a Christian in the holy confession of faith and the holy commandments. Look into this mirror to see the way of your life, what it is... Press closer with your heart to see by what it lives, what it loves and hates, what it desires and turns away from, what it strives for and what it retreats from and what rejoices and grieves us most. Where is the main goal to which we are striving with all our thoughts and desires? Is it in Heaven or on Earth? By which rules are we principally guided in our actions? Those taken from the Gospel or mundane [worldly] customs that are inspired by worldly pride? What motives inspire us most in our desires, enterprises and actions - the desire to please God, save our soul and inherit Life Eternal, or the vices of the flesh or eyes and worldly pride? What gives us greater joy or sorrow - achievement of virtues or success in mundane enterprises, victory over some passion, or the fulfillment of our whims [caprices], the achievement of ambitious and egotistic aims?

Draw closer to the mirror of righteousness with your conscience, to see whether it distinguishes between good and evil as rightly as the Word of God teaches; whether it watches over her actions as sharply and vigilantly as the pure Eye of God sees them; whether it judges every criminal tendency of our soul as strictly and implacably [irreconcilably] as the Word of God judges? For woe to us if our conscience itself goes to sleep or deadens, becomes unfeeling and indifferent to the considerations of good and evil. Then, only the thunder of Heaven can awaken it from the sleep of sin.

... If we, considering ourselves grave sinners threatened with eternal damnation, are revived by faith in the Son of God, in His sacrifice on the cross for us; cling with cordial love to Him, to the only One Who can save us, and strive, as far as we can, to conform ourselves more to His teachings, to bless ourselves with His

grace, to imitate His holy life, if despite chance digressions and involuntary stumblings, we hold the thought of God and eternal salvation as the main aim of our actions, the constant rule of behavior, the principle motive for labor and source of inspiration; if we are constantly inspired with zeal to be perfect, as our Heavenly Father is perfect, desire to please God, fear to offer his love and mercy, and to be counted among the rejected; if after every confession we feel better, if all that is depraved and impure not only loses its charm for us, but from day to day becomes loathsome, and all that is good and kind from day to day, attacks our hearts quicker, fills our mind and imagination, then it is a sign that we, from day to day, are dying more and more to sin and are becoming alive for God and eternity.

On the contrary, if the incentive of our thoughts, feelings and actions is self-love or any other passion, if sinful habits possess our soul, if we love sin, take delight in it within, seek opportunities to satisfy our vices, then even if our lives are adorned with some external deeds of piety, as a corpse is decorated with flowers, we are not among those being saved and are dead in God's sight.

... One who does not feel sincere desire to be completely rid of the ties of sin, wholly and forever to turn to God, should ask himself: what precisely hinders me from repenting? What chains me to sin? What particular passion dominates me? The answers may be derived from the following symptoms: everything we find is hard to part with; in what our hearts find greatest consolation; what we most dream of during the day and in our sleep; what we try hardest to hide, not only from others, but from ourselves too; what we find hardest to admit to our father confessor, what we particularly do not want to declare at confession; all of this evidently dominate over us and hold us captive; in all this the inner serpent is hidden and poisons us with its venom.

Precisely against this spiritual disease, we must be waged, and it is this disease that must be revealed to the physician of the spirit; all one's efforts and spiritual vigilance must be directed against it. One who wants to improve without struggle and conquest of the dominating passion is cheating himself. Such a person is like a bird caught in the net, which struggles and hops but cannot fly to freedom. Outwardly he lives and acts, can even accomplish deeds of faith and piety, but he does not enjoy full life, nor true spiritual freedom. At every attempt to lift up oneself the dominating passion attracts and drags him down.

... One must examine oneself. By giving up one defect or vice, do we fall into another extreme? Attaching ourselves to one good deed, do we neglect others, no less necessary and important? By trying to free ourselves from one passion, do we submit to another more attractive, but no less dangerous? Rejecting one form of pleasure, do we become seduced by another, more refined, but no less sinful? If we do, this would mean to go from one thralldom to another; instead of former chains to gain new ones, perhaps heavier; instead of the former disease, to acquire a new, perhaps more dangerous one.

**“One Church”, The Bi-Monthly Journal of the Patriarchal
Parishes in the United States, No. 3, 1997
From: Dimitriy, Archbishop of Kherson and Odessa.
“Sermons, Conversations and Addresses”, 1898**

Archbishop Dimitriy of Kherson and Odessa



Archbishop Dimitriy (Kliment Ivanovich Muretov) was born on February 11, 1813, in the village of Luchinsk, Pronsk county, Ryazan Province, into the family of a deacon. He received higher theological education at the Kiev Theological Academy, from which he graduated with honors. In 1834, Kliment Muretov was professed with the name of Dimitry; a year later he was ordained hieromonk. That same year, he won the master's degree and was assigned to the Chair of Scripture Studies and Heremeneutica at the Kiev Theological Academy. Two years later Hieromonk Dimitriy was made Professor of Theology. In 1838, he was raised to the rank of archimandrite and appointed father superior of the Kiev-Vydubechi monastery. From 1841 to 1851, Archamandrite Dimitriy was the Rector of the Kiev Theological Academy. The years of his administration were marked by the high level of learning and the depth of spirituality of academic life.

In 1851, Archimandrite Dimitriy was consecrated Bishop of Tula and Belev. In 1860, he was elevated to the dignity of archbishop. In 1874, he was appointed Archbishop of Yaroslavl; in 1876, Archbishop of Volyn, and in 1882, Archbishop of Kherson and Odessa. His Grace rested in peace in 1883.

Vladyka Dimitriy had great influence over his flock. We can well understand this if we read his sermons that were simple and devoid of empty rhetoric or any striving to make a display of eloquence or erudition. It goes without saying that a preacher acts not without calculation, which is, moreover, long-range and exact - the seeds planted in the souls of the flock must sprout without fail and gain strength with the help of the inner energy enclosed by him in the word. For all its smoothness and simplicity, his speech is intense and dramatic, it struggles and fights for each sinner. The sermons are inspired by constant and ardent zeal for human perfection. But this demanding attitude towards the Christian comes from excessive goodness and cognition of Divine Wisdom.

Vladyka Dimitriy had the power to reinforce long known truths, addressing them to the hearts of his listeners. His words are also effective today. Is he not warning us when he says: "Woe to us, if our conscience goes to sleep and deadens, becomes unfeeling and cold to the considerations of good and evil. Then, only the thunder of Heaven can awaken it from the sleep of sin."

How Christians Should Deal with News



There are many problems in constantly waiting for news. These problems affect both secular people and church people. Especially church people, who, it would seem, should completely rely on God's will.

People get so used to news that they can no longer live in peace without it. At the same time, they forget that the presentation of news in the media is sometimes very far from an adequate transmission of

information.

Let's try to abstract and read the news as if from the outside, without involvement. What will we see? A catchy headline that often manipulates the reader's mind from the very first words: puts the "correct" accents, or even worse – immediately, even before reading the news piece itself, issues a verdict. And it's not uncommon for a headline to not match the essence of what is said in the text itself. But the impression has already been created and the reader is ready to accept the information in the right light (in the "right" way, of course, for the one who wrote or, rather, ordered this news piece).

And at the same time, newsmakers play on people's expectations, aspirations, desires, passing off wishful thinking or, conversely, exaggerating where everything is not so terrible (depending on the need of those who want to form this or that public reaction).

Is there really no real news? Of course there is. But think about how often do we ourselves, retelling an event to our acquaintances, adhere to accuracy in describing what happened? After all, we often embellish something or, on the contrary, denigrate it. And how often do we adjust the facts to give the appearance of what we would like [to be true]? Sometimes we don't even notice how we distort realities to please some of our impulses. But it's not only with our acquaintances – indeed, sometimes we ourselves are ready to convince ourselves of anything. Alas, such is the property of fallen human nature: "all men are liars," says the psalmist (Ps. 116:11).

Only the Lord can be absolutely honest. But with people it's a little more difficult. This should always be kept in mind when absorbing any information. Approach it with restraint, find manipulations, distortions, etc. But the most important thing is not to get involved. After all, we remember that without God's will nothing can happen to us (Luke 21:18), which means that everything that happens to us and to the whole world takes place exclusively by God's Providence. It is only important to accept His will with humility – and then no news will frighten us or mislead us.

Advised by Metropolitan Anthony (Pakanich)

Lenten Humor

A Christian's Diary During Lent

Day 1. *It was a tough morning. Spent an eternity standing in front of the fridge, staring at two eggs, some leftover milk, and a piece of ham. Couldn't decide which sin to commit, throwing away food or breaking the fast with an omelet and ham. Made the omelet... The cat was thrilled.*

Day 7. *I'm hungry all the time. Last night, I dreamed of a steak. I think we were discussing some spiritual matters...*

Day 9. *Spent two hours in the supermarket, read every label, and finally reached the checkout looking miserable with just a bunch of dill and a cucumber. When the cashier suggested I get some sausages on sale, I gave the whole store a lecture on the history of the Fast. Guess I'll have to find a new grocery store.*

Day 21. *Started envying the cat. To overcome this sin, I changed his diet. Now we're both miserable.*

Day 35. *Went to a party yesterday. Took one look at the table—nothing to eat. Felt personally offended by the Olivier salad. By 1 AM, I finally agreed with my friends that there's no real meat in bologna.*

Day 39. *Feeling much better, finally got into the rhythm. Remembered that the most important part of fasting is prayer, forgot about food, and the steak hasn't appeared in my dreams anymore. The cat and I now walk around happy for no reason. Too bad that the Lent is almost over—I'd extend it.*



Where's the Best Place to Fast?



— Time on this planet passes six times faster than on ours!

— Perfect! This is where we'll fast.

List of Sins for Confession

Making a list of sins for confession—got 13 items. Thought I should remember something else... unlucky number. Oh, right! Believed in superstitions!

Lenten Recipe

Lentil Bread (Flour-Free). Ingredients: Lentils – 500 g; Quinoa – 500 g; Water

*Soak both types of grains separately in purified water. It's best to do this in the morning. During the day, drain the water once, rinse the grains, and refill with fresh water. Leave them to soak until the evening. *In the evening, drain the water again and rinse the grains. Cover with a towel and leave them at room temperature overnight. *In the morning, blend the grains into a smooth mixture. *While blending, add some water—about **1 to 1.5 cups per bowl**—until you achieve the consistency of thick sour cream. At this stage, **add salt to taste**. *Leave the lentil and quinoa purée to ferment until the evening, covering it with a towel. The fermentation time depends on the room temperature. The ideal temperature is **24–25°C (75–77°F)**, and by **5:00–6:00 PM**, the mixture should be ready. In the evening, blend it again and leave it overnight. *In the morning, blend the mixture once more and let it sit until the evening. Then, mix the lentil and quinoa purée thoroughly. *Divide the mixture into baking molds. *At this stage, sprinkle the dough with seeds such as flax, sesame, or pumpkin—whatever you prefer. Let the dough rest in a warm place for about **1 hour**. *Bake the bread in a preheated oven at **180°C (356°F)** for **70 minutes**. Check for doneness with a toothpick or a matchstick. *Once the bread is done, remove it from the oven and let it cool until morning. This resting time allows the bread to fully develop its texture. *Store the bread in the refrigerator. You can slice some of it and freeze it for later. Before serving, reheat in a microwave or on a skillet.

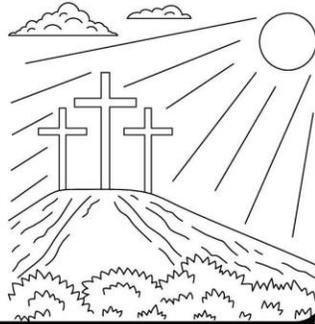


Enjoy your homemade flour-free lentil bread! 🍞

Great Lent is the period of our spiritual and physical preparation for Pascha, the glorious Resurrection of our Lord. It is a period of repentance, confession of sins and prayer, and is certainly the perfect time to do good deeds! These are almost all possible good deeds, and you do not have to do all of them, but you can try!

40 DAYS OF LENT

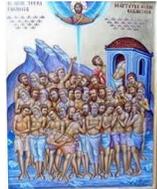
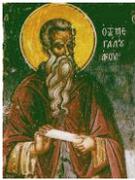
COUNTDOWN ACTIVITIES FOR KIDS



							1	SMILE AT SOMEONE WHO LOOKS SAD.				
							2	SHARE YOUR FAVORITE BOOK WITH A FRIEND.				
							3	HOLD THE DOOR OPEN FOR SOMEONE.				
		8	7	6	5	4						
9	SAY SOMETHING NICE TO A STRANGER.	8	OFFER TO HELP WITH A CHORE.	7	PICK UP LITTER AT A PARK.	6	CLEAN UP WITHOUT BEING ASKED.	5	SEND A KIND NOTE TO A FRIEND.	4	SAY "THANK YOU" TO A PARENT.	
10	GIVE AWAY AN OLD TOY YOU DON'T NEED.											
		11	12	13	14	15	16					
	BAKE COOKIES FOR A NEIGHBOR.	11	THANK GOD FOR SOMETHING NEW.	12	GIVE A HUG TO SOMEONE YOU LOVE.	13	GIVE A COMPLIMENT TO SOMEONE.	14	SHARE YOUR SNACK WITH A FRIEND.	15	OFFER TO WATER A NEIGHBOR'S PLANTS.	
		23	22	21	20	19	18					
	MAKE A "THINKING OF YOU" CARD FOR SOMEONE.	23	GIVE A COMPLIMENT TO A TEACHER.	22	DRAW A PICTURE FOR SOMEONE WHO IS SICK.	21	HELP A SIBLING MAKE THEIR BED.	20	PICK UP TRASH AT THE PARK.	19	SHARE A FAVORITE SONG WITH SOMEONE WHO MIGHT LIKE IT.	
24	HELP SOMEONE TIE THEIR SHOES.											
		26	27	28	29	30						
	GO ON A WALK WITH YOUR FAMILY.	26	OFFER TO PLAY WITH SOMEONE WHO IS ALONE.	27	WRITE A LETTER TO A FIRST RESPONDER.	28	FIND SOMETHING YOU CAN RECYCLE.	29	HELP CLEAN UP A MESS AT SCHOOL.	30	PLANT A SEED AND WATCH IT GROW.	
		31										
		31										
		32										
		33										
		33										
40	SAY A PRAYER FOR YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS.	39	38	37	36	35	34					
	HELP ORGANIZE OR CLEAN UP A SHARED SPACE.	39	TAKE OUT THE TRASH OR RECYCLING.	38	OFFER TO SWEEP THE FLOOR OR VACUUM A ROOM.	37	READ A BOOK TO SOMEONE YOU LOVE.	36	HELP YOUR PARENTS CLEAN THE CAR.	35	HELP SET THE TABLE FOR DINNER.	



March 2025

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						<u>1</u> 10:00 am - The Annual “Orthodox IX” Parishes meeting at St. Mary’s Parish Hall, Nisku
<u>2</u> 10:00 a.m. – Liturgy – St. Mary’s NISKU <i>Sunday of Forgiveness</i>	<u>3</u> Great Lent Beginning Great Repentance Canon reading – St. Barbara Cathedral – 6 p.m.	<u>4</u> Great Repentance Canon reading – St. Barbara Cathedral – 6 p.m.	<u>5</u> Great Repentance Canon reading – St. Barbara Cathedral – 6 p.m.	<u>6</u> Great Repentance Canon reading – St. Barbara Cathedral – 6 p.m.	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u> St. Theodore the Tyro 
<u>9</u> 10:00 a.m. – Liturgy at St. Barbara. <i>Sunday of Orthodoxy</i>	<u>10</u> New Hierom. Sylvester 	<u>11</u>	<u>12</u> Martyrs Julian 	<u>13</u>	<u>14</u> Martyr Eudocia of Heliopolis 	<u>15</u>
<u>16</u> 10:00 a.m. – Liturgy at St. Barbara. <i>St. Gregory Palama Sunday</i>	<u>17</u>	<u>18</u> Martyr Conon of Isauria 	<u>19</u>	<u>20</u> The Holy Hier. of Chersonese 	<u>21</u>	<u>22</u> The Forty Martyrs of Sebaste 
<u>23</u> 10:00 a.m. – Liturgy – St. Mary’s NISKU <i>Adoration of Cross</i>	<u>24</u>	<u>25</u> St. Theophanes the Confessor 	<u>26</u>	<u>27</u> Most Holy Theotokos of St. Theodore 	<u>28</u> 06:00 p.m. – Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts - NISKU	<u>29</u>
<u>30</u> 10:00 a.m. – Liturgy (Confession) – THORSBY <i>St John of the Ladder Sunday</i>	<u>31</u> St. Edward, martyr and king of England 					