



# “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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## February 23 - April 3 – 40 days of the Great Lent



The teaching on true fasting runs like a golden thread through Scripture and the Fathers. Here is Isaiah’s definition; and here is Chrysostom’s application. Let us attend to them!

“They ask of Me the ordinances of justice; They take delight in approaching God. <sup>3</sup> ‘Why have we fasted,’ *they say*, ‘and You have not seen? *Why have we afflicted our souls, and You take no notice?*’ “In fact, in the day



of your fast you find pleasure, and exploit all your laborers.<sup>4</sup> Indeed you fast for strife and debate, and to strike with the fist of wickedness. You will not fast as *you do* this day, to make your voice heard on high. <sup>5</sup> Is it a fast that I have chosen, a day for a man to afflict his soul? *Is it* to bow down his head like a bulrush, and to spread out sackcloth and ashes? Would you call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? <sup>6</sup> “*Is this not the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? <sup>7</sup> Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh? <sup>8</sup> Then your light shall break forth like the morning, your healing shall spring forth speedily, and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. <sup>9</sup> Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; You shall cry, and He will say, ‘Here I am.’ ‘If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, <sup>10</sup> If you extend your soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul, then your light shall dawn in the darkness, and your darkness shall be as the noonday. <sup>11</sup> The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and strengthen your bones; You shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail!”*

**Great Prophet Isaiah, chap. 58; vers. 2-11**

*(continued on the next page)*

“Do you fast? Give me proof of it by your works. If you see a person who is poor, take pity on them. If you see an enemy, be reconciled to them. If you see a friend being honored, do not envy them. Let not only your mouth fast, but also your hands and feet and eyes and ears and all the members of your body. Let the hands fast by being free of avarice. Let the feet fast by ceasing to run after sin. Let the eyes fast by not looking with lust. Let the ears fast by not listening to malicious talk or false reports. Let the mouth fast from hateful words and unjust rants. For the food of the eye is the sight of things; if therefore you abstain from unlawful sights, the eye fasts. Let the ear fast also. The fasting of the ear consists in refusing to receive evil speakings and calumnies. Let the mouth fast from foul words and reproaches. For what good is it if we abstain from birds and fishes but bite and devour our brothers and sisters?”



The value of fasting consists not in abstinence from food, but in withdrawal from sinful practices; since he who limits his fasting only to an abstinence from meats is one who especially disparages it.

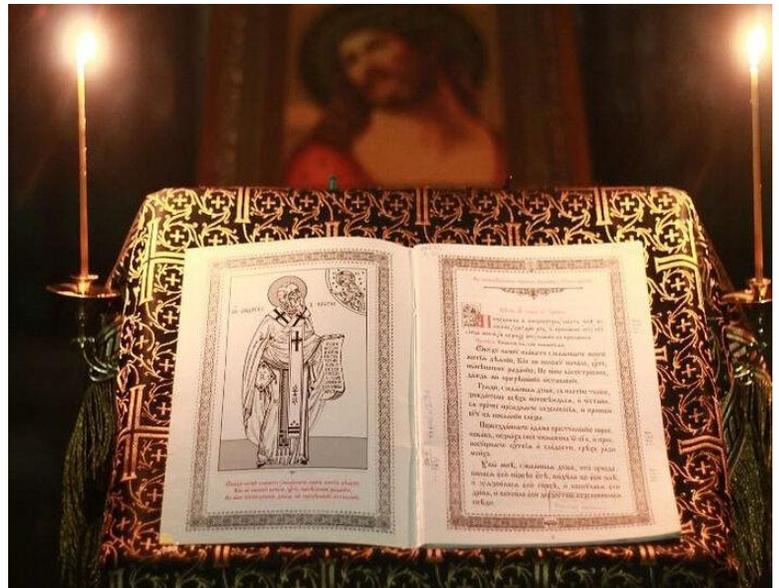
Let us not then seek to appear before men fasting, but let us show our fasting by our works. For the Pharisee fasted, and was nothing profited; but the publican, though he fasted not, yet by humility obtained the kingdom.”

**John Chrysostom, from Homily III, IV on the Statues, and Homily XVI on Matthew**

## Sermon on the Second Section of the Great Penitential Canon

*Read on Tuesday of the First Week of Great Lent*

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 — a service that sets the spiritual tone for the entire Lenten season. During the first week, the Canon is divided into four parts, one chanted at each Compline. The refrain *“Have mercy upon me, O Lord, have mercy upon me”* accompanies each verse, drawing the faithful into a spirit of deep and personal repentance.



The Canon is perhaps the most spiritually penetrating reading of Holy Scripture that the Church offers us. St. Andrew does not lecture or analyze — he *confesses*, and in doing so, he draws us into the same spirit of penitence, and through it, into reconciliation with God. Rather than dwelling at length on the symptoms and causes of our spiritual illnesses (as does, for example, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* by St. John Climacus), the Canon presents sin in faces — in the tragedies of people we know well from Scripture, people who were often righteous to begin with. This is what makes it so arresting.

In the Tuesday reading, among many others, we heard of three figures from the Old Testament whose stories are bound together by a thread of warning: **Cain, Ham, and Solomon.**

**Cain** killed his righteous brother Abel. Both brothers offered sacrifices to God — much as two people might keep an identical bodily fast — yet it was Abel's offering that was accepted, because it came from a *contrite and humble heart*. The Canon places these words in our own mouth:

*"I have refused to imitate Abel's righteousness, O Jesus: never have I offered Thee any acceptable gift or godly work; neither a pure sacrifice nor a blameless life."*

The passion that consumed Cain was **envy** — not merely envy of Abel's success, but a deeper, more bitter thing: the inability to rejoice in another's closeness to God. Envy does not simply want what the other has; it wants the other not to have it. This is the passion that led to the first murder.

**Ham** dishonored his father Noah — the very man whose righteousness had saved all of humanity from the Flood. Rather than covering his father's weakness with love and discretion, Ham exposed and mocked it. The Canon holds this up as a mirror:

*"Thou hast followed the example of Ham, O my soul, who mocked his father; for thou hast not covered the disgrace of thy neighbor, keeping thy face turned away."*

The passion here is **condemnation** — and perhaps its most repugnant form: judging the one to whom we owe the most. It is easy to criticize from a distance; it takes a particular hardness of heart to turn that criticism upon a father, a benefactor, a friend.

**Solomon** is perhaps the most sobering of the three. The third king of Israel, son of David, builder of the Temple, and recipient of the gift of divine wisdom — he had asked God not for riches but for understanding, in order to govern his people well. And yet, under the influence of his wives, he turned to idolatry in his old age. The kingdom was divided after his death.

*"Solomon the wonderful was full of grace and wisdom, yet he too committed evil in the sight of Heaven and turned away from God; and thou, my wretched soul, hast followed him, by thine accursèd life."*

How did this happen? St. John Climacus, writing of **vainglory** in the twenty-second step of *The Ladder*, calls it "a subtle thief of spiritual virtues" that "plunders every labor and fruit." A person performs a good deed — but begins inwardly to claim it as his own. Virtue ceases to be a gift of God; the heart gradually begins to lean on itself; humility weakens; and grace withdraws. St. John illustrates this with characteristic sharpness:

*"Vainglory shines upon all virtues alike. For example: I fast, and I become vainglorious; and when I break the fast to hide my abstinence from others, I become vainglorious again, counting myself wise. I am overcome by vainglory when I dress well; but when I dress poorly, I am vainglorious again. Whether I speak or hold my tongue, vainglory gets the better of me. Like a three-pronged hook, however you throw it, one prong will always face upward."*



Even the greatest may fall — if the heart loses its humility.

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These three images — Cain, Ham, Solomon — are not distant figures from another age. The Canon offers them to us as a mirror. The passions they represent — **envy**, **condemnation**, **vainglory** — are alive in us, often dressed in respectable clothing, often unnoticed until they have already done their work.

This is the gift of the Great Canon: it does not point a finger at the world. It points inward. And in that pointing, it opens a door — toward repentance, toward humility, toward the mercy that the refrain keeps asking for, verse after verse:

*Have mercy upon me, O Lord. Have mercy upon me.*

# How Not to Harm Your Health While Fasting

Great Lent is a time of spiritual effort and restraint. But bodily fasting should not become unconscious harm to one's health. Having given up meat and dairy, many people compensate with large amounts of potatoes, white bread, rice, and sweets. From a nutritional standpoint, this is a serious mistake.

## The Glycemic Index: Why It Matters

The glycemic index (GI) measures how quickly a given food raises blood sugar. The higher the GI, the sharper the spike — and the greater the strain on the pancreas. High-GI foods provide a rapid sense of fullness that is replaced just as quickly by hunger and fatigue.

One important and often overlooked fact: cooking significantly raises the GI of many foods. Raw carrots have a GI of around 30 — the body digests them slowly. Boiled carrots rise to around 85. The same applies to beets and potatoes. A Lenten table heavy with boiled root vegetables and white bread can actually place more strain on the pancreas than a regular mixed diet.

## Common Mistakes at the Lenten Table

**Monotony.** Many people fall back on plain potatoes or pasta — an unintentional mono-diet that limits essential nutrients. Lenten eating can be varied: porridge with fruit or berries in the morning, vegetable soups and salads at midday, stewed vegetables in the evening.

**Excess sweets.** Jam, honey, and sugar in large quantities place the same burden on the body as ordinary sweets. One of the core principles of fasting is moderation and self-control.

**Too much salt.** Sauerkraut, pickles, and marinades are wholesome foods — but excess salt causes the body to retain water. Aim for 1.5–2 litres of water daily, and try replacing some salt with herbs and spices.

**Oversized portions.** Plant-based foods are less satiating than meat, making it easy to eat twice as much pasta or rice as needed. Smaller portions eaten 4–5 times a day work better than large, infrequent meals.

## Where to Find Protein and Energy

Giving up meat and dairy does not mean protein deficiency — if the diet is well planned. Fish is permitted by Church rules only on certain feast days during Great Lent (the Annunciation and Palm Sunday); some parish traditions also allow it on Saturdays and Sundays — check with your spiritual father. On other days, good sources of protein include:

- **Beans and peas** (kidney beans, lentils, chickpeas, green peas) — rich in iron and protein, they help prevent fatigue and anaemia. Excellent in soups, stews, and salads.
- **Mushrooms** — a satisfying meat substitute; good stewed, fried, or added to soups and grains. Best not eaten every day, as they are fairly heavy. (Also, vitamin D, esp., if raised in the sun.)
- **Nuts** (walnuts, almonds, pistachios) — filling and nutritious; add to porridge or salads. A reasonable daily portion is about 30 g.
- **Dried fruit** (apricots, prunes, dates) — a source of energy, fibre, and minerals; limit to 30–40 g per day. *Note: some dried fruits have a high GI.*
- **Plant-based milk** (soy, oat, almond) — substitutes for dairy in porridge and baking. *Note: almond milk is low in calories but contains very little protein.*



- **Whole-grain bread and grains** — unlike white bread and polished rice, they provide slow carbohydrates and lasting satiety. Prefer buckwheat, pearl barley, bulgur, and whole oats.
- **Honey** — a good source of quick energy in moderation. *Note: high GI.*

## B Vitamins: Pay Special Attention

B vitamins are found mainly in meat, poultry, and fish — precisely what is absent from the Lenten table. Yet they are essential for the nervous system and immune function. Fortunately, most of them can be found in plant-based foods: whole grains, beans and peas, nuts, leafy greens, potatoes, bananas, and fresh fruit cover B1, B2, B3, B6, and B9 reasonably well. The one to watch most carefully is **B12**, which is scarce in plant foods — look to soy products, fortified grains, seaweed, and nutritional yeast, or consider a supplement if your diet is very restricted.

## Who Should Take Extra Care

Doctors advise those in the following groups to avoid strict fasting, or to seek a blessing for a dispensation:

- People with gastrointestinal conditions (ulcers, gastritis, pancreatitis, cholecystitis) or diabetes
- Those recovering from serious illness or prolonged stress
- Pregnant and nursing mothers, children, and the elderly

Fasting is, above all, spiritual work. Caring for the body during this season means not eating as little as possible, but eating *wisely* — so as to preserve the strength needed for prayer, work, and good deeds. When in doubt, consult both your doctor and your spiritual father, **and have a good and graceful Great Lent!**

## Greetings on the Holy Chrismation!



*"As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Alleluia!"*

We cordially **congratulate our new young parishioner, Dakota (Dorotheos), on the occasion of his Holy Chrismation** and reception into the Orthodox Church, which took place at St. Mary's Church in Nisku on February 1, 2026!

This is a great event for our Parish Community, and personally for Dakota, his godparent Anita Borys, and the priest, Fr. Yevheniy Protsenko. New life and grace have been given to all of us!

We also wish good health and every blessing from God to his parents David and Angela, and to all of Dakota's family.

May God continue to bless us with such great and joyful gifts!

## Lenten recipes from the Centennial Cookbook of the St. Mary's Church (at Nisku, AB)

### BETTY'S BEAN SOUP

*Pat Ursuliak*

1/4 cup black eyed peas  
1/4 cup dried small limas  
1/4 cup white beans  
1/4 cup split green peas  
1/4 cup lentils

1/4 cup large dried limas  
1/4 cup pinto beans  
1/4 cup pearl barley  
1/4 cup red beans

Wash beans well. Cover with water, add some salt, and soak overnight. Drain. Add 8 cups water, chopped ham or ham bone. Bring to a boil. Simmer 2 to 2 1/2 hours, stirring occasionally. Add 1 chopped onion, 28 ounce can tomatoes, 1 teaspoon chili powder, juice of 1 lemon, salt and pepper to taste. Simmer 30 minutes. Enjoy.

### TOMATO-CABBAGE SOUP

*Phyllis Borys*

2 Tbsp butter  
1 onion, chopped  
1 cabbage, shredded

4 potatoes, cubed  
Fresh or canned tomatoes  
Season to taste

Fry onions and butter, then add shredded cabbage. While this is frying, stir often. Boil potatoes in salted water. When done mash potatoes but leave some chunky. Add to cabbage mixture and simmer. Add fresh or canned tomatoes. If too thick add more water and heat. Serve hot. Season to taste.

## April 7th - Feast Day of The Annunciation of the Mother of God

Think, for a moment, about the icons you see at the front of an Orthodox Church. Facing the altar, you will see the icon of the Archangel Gabriel on the right part of the Holy Gates — the Archangel who was sent by God to the Blessed Virgin Mary, depicted on the left part of the gates, to announce that she would give birth to the Christ Child, the Saviour of the world. This event, known as the Annunciation (announcement), took place almost 2000 years ago.

The Angel found her and told her she was going to have a child. Naturally, she was alarmed at first and asked questions. "Do not be afraid," said the Angel Gabriel, "the Lord is with you, because God has chosen you among all the women in the world and in history."

Mary could have said "no" or given a whole list of reasons why she did not wish to accept God's invitation. But instead, she said, "Let it be according to the will of God." She allowed herself to be an instrument (a vessel) of God. She did not change, nor did she become a robot or a puppet. She let the Holy Spirit act within her and her life. She let God bless her and guide her. She let the baby Jesus be born of her.

The Feast Day of the Annunciation is a very important holiday for all Christians: because the Blessed Virgin Mary said "yes", all of humanity had a chance to be saved.



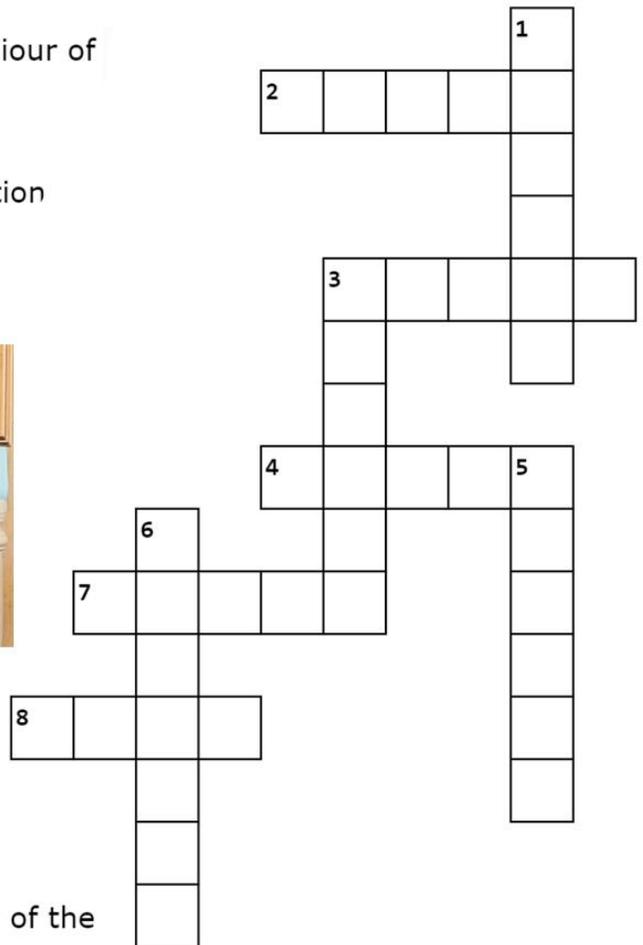
### Across

2. — She would give \_\_\_ to the Christ Child, the Saviour of the world
3. — "Do not be afraid," said the \_\_\_
4. — The Holy \_\_\_, where the icons of the Annunciation are found
7. — Because Mary said "yes," all of humanity had a chance to be \_\_\_



### Down

1. — "God has \_\_\_ you among all the women in the world and in history"
3. — "Do not be \_\_\_, " said the Angel Gabriel
5. — The Holy \_\_\_ came within her and her life
6. — Archangel whose icon appears on the right part of the Holy Gates



## 🌿 Color Me! — Palm Sunday (also called the Green Feast)

On this special Sunday, just before Easter, Jesus rode into the city of Jerusalem on a donkey. The people who loved Him ran out to meet Him — and they waved palm branches and laid them on the road before Him, shouting "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" In our Orthodox Church this feast is sometimes called the Green Feast, because on this day we bring branches to church to be blessed — just like those joyful people did so long ago! Can you see all the palm branches surrounding Jesus in this picture? Use as many shades of green as you can find — light green, dark green, yellow-green, olive — and bring those branches to life!

Palm Sunday



# March (April) 2026

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<u>1</u> 10:00 a.m. – Liturgy at St. Barbara. <i>Sunday of Orthodoxy</i>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u> New Hiero- confessor Vladimir (1933) 	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u> Hiero-confessor Nilolai, presbiter (1938) 	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u> 10:00 am - The <b>Annual “Orthodox IX” Parishes meeting</b> at St. Mary’s Parish Hall, Nisku
<u>8</u> 10:00 a.m. – Liturgy – St. Mary’s NISKU <i>St. Gregory Palama Sunday</i>	<u>9</u> <i>First and Second (452) Findings of the Precious Head of St. John the Baptist.</i> 	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u> New Hieromartyr John (Pashin), bishop of Rylsk (1938) 	<u>12</u>	<u>13</u> St. Oswald, archbishop of York (992) 	<u>14</u>
<u>15</u> 10:00 a.m. – Liturgy at St. Barbara. <i>Adoration of the Cross</i>	<u>16</u>	<u>17</u> New Hieromart. Dimitry (1933) 	<u>18</u>	<u>19</u> Icons of the Most Holy Theotokos: “Chenstokhov” 	<u>20</u>	<u>21</u> “Kursk Root” Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos 
<u>22</u> 10:00 a.m. – – Liturgy at St. Mary’s NISKU (Confession) <i>St John of the Ladder</i>	<u>23</u> New Martyr Michael of Agrapha, at Thessalonica (1544) 	<u>24</u>	<u>25</u> St. Theophanes the Confessor, of Sigriane (818) 	<u>26</u>	<u>27</u> 06:00 p.m. – <u>Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts</u> - NISKU	<u>28</u> 01:00 pm - The <b>Annual St. Mary’s Parish meeting</b> at St. Mary’s Parish Hall, Nisku
<u>29</u> 10:00 a.m. – Liturgy (Confession) – CALMAR <i>of Mary of Egypt</i>	<u>30</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>1 - April</u> Martyrs Chrysanthus and Daria 	<u>2 - April</u> Martyrs Photina (Svetlana), the Samaritan 	<u>3 - April</u>	<u>4 - April</u> 10:00 a.m. – Liturgy (Confession) – THORSBY
<u>5 - April</u> 10:00 a.m. Liturgy at Nisku. <b><i>Palm Sunday</i></b> <i>Blessing of Willow Branches</i>	<u>6 - April</u>	<u>7 - April</u> <b>Annunciation of the Mother of God</b> – 10:00 am – Liturgy at St. Barbara	<u>8 - April</u>	<u>9 - April</u> <b>Great Thursday – 6:00 pm – Twelve Passion Gospels – NISKU</b>	<u>10 - April</u> <b>Great Friday – THE HOLY SHROUD</b> Service: 2:00 pm – NISKU	<u>11 - April</u> <b>Great Saturday</b>