

SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY: A DAY OF TRIUMPH

The importance of the use and veneration of icons by the Orthodox Church is well-documented today. There was a time, however, when their use was forbidden. Those who opposed the use of icons were referred to as “**iconoclasts**,” which literally means “**image breakers**.” This controversy raged for over 100 years, and was seemingly settled at the 7th Ecumenical Council, which convened in Nicea in 787 A.D. The Church Fathers decreed that the veneration of icons was a long standing tradition of the Church, and that this practice was not, in any way, in conflict with the Second Commandment, which directs us “**not to make unto ourselves any graven image**.”

The 7th Ecumenical Council, however, did not completely settle

this issue. The conflict over icons continued until 843 A.D. when a local council, led by Patriarch Methodios of Constantinople, established the 1st Sunday of Lent as a day of celebration of the “**Triumph of Orthodoxy**” and the return of holy icons to their rightful place in churches everywhere.

The Sunday of Orthodoxy is a celebration of all of the faithful men and women who struggled for the Faith in times of persecution. On this great day, all Orthodox Christians are called upon to remember the example of these holy ones and to renew our own commitment to Christ and His Church. We proudly proclaim today that the rich Orthodox Faith that we possess is truly “**THE FAITH OF THE APOSTLES . . . THE FAITH OF THE FATHERS . . . THE FAITH WHICH HAS ESTABLISHED THE UNIVERSE**.”

The Orthodox Weekly Bulletin Vestal, Cliffwood, New Jersey Litho in U.S.A.

ABOUT COMMUNION

We are happy that you have joined us today. Indeed, we pray for the “unity of the Faith” for the day when all of Christianity are united as ONE and can share a common Chalice. However, this is not the case as yet. Please note that Holy Communion, the actual Body & Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, is only for Members of the Orthodox Church who have prepared themselves through prayer, fasting, and confession, & arrived before the Gospel reading. However, everyone is welcome to partake of the blessed bread and receive a blessing from the pastor at the dismissal. If you are interested, you may inquire with the pastor how you can become a member.

If you are a guest or otherwise not a regular communicant, please give your baptismal name when receiving.

*Icons are to be Venerated;
God alone is to be served in Faith*





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WELCOME TO ST. ANTHONY'S

Where people from around the world come together to serve God and our community. We are glad you are worshiping with us today! This Church is one community of many in the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. The Church of Antioch belongs to two thousand years of evangelization, teaching, history, and tradition which expresses the continued commitment of its members to the Orthodox Christian faith in the Lord Jesus Christ!

St. Anthony Church is a Pan-Orthodox community, under the omophorion of His Eminence Metropolitan SABA within Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America.

If you are a first time visitor, please fill out the guest form located on the literature table.

We want you to feel at home in prayer and worship. Please submit your names to the ushers and introduce yourself to Fr. Elia at the end of the service so he may welcome you personally.

Following services, please join us for sharing of fellowship, coffee, and food.

DIVINE LITURGY VARIABLES ON SUNDAY, MARCH 09

FIRST SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT (SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY) & THE HOLY AND GREAT FORTY MARTYRS OF SEBASTIA

DIVINE LITURGY OF ST. BASIL THE GREAT

THE FIRST ANTIPHON

The Lord is King, and hath clothed Himself with majesty. The Lord is robed; He is girded with strength. For He has established the world so that it shall never be moved.

Refrain: Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us.

Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? Who can cause all his praises to be heard? Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy. (**Refrain**) Glory... Both now... (**Refrain**)

THE SECOND ANTIPHON

Let them praise the Lord for His mercies, and for His wonderful works to the children of men.

Refrain: Save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead; who sing to Thee. Alleluia.

Let them exalt Him in the congregation of the people, and praise Him in the seat of the elders. (**Refrain**)

The eyes of the Lord are upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy; to hear the groaning of the prisoners, to loosen the sons of the slain. (**Refrain**) Glory... Both now... O, only begotten Son and Word of God...

THE THIRD ANTIPHON

Let the heavens and the earth praise Him. This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto Thee forever.

~ During the Little Entrance, after the verses of the Third Antiphon, chant the Apolytikion of Theophany. the

First Sunday of Great Lent. The Eisodikon (Entrance Hymn) is "O come, let us worship... save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead..." as on ordinary Sundays. After the Little Entrance, chant these hymns in the following order:

RESURRECTIONAL APOLYTIKION IN TONE FOUR

Having learned the joyful message of the Resurrection from the angel the women disciples of the Lord cast

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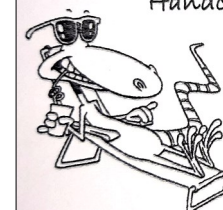


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humanity, He speaks in the plural: “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness” (Genesis 1:26). The Trinity was not fully revealed in the Old Testament but was hinted at through events such as Abraham's three visitors and Isaiah's vision of the seraphim proclaiming, “Holy, holy, holy.” With the coming of Christ, the fullness of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—was made clear through the events of the Annunciation, Theophany and Ascension. This foundational interpretation in Orthodox theology underscores that humanity is created in the image of the Trinity—created to be communal and relational, just as the Holy Trinity.

This subject is vast and cannot be fully addressed in an article of this length. To train oneself in this interpretation, one must turn to the Old Testament readings designated by the Orthodox Church in Vespers of the Lord’s feasts in particular, and of great feasts and saints in general. Liturgy is the primary school of theology par excellence. Let us consider some examples.

On the eve of the Nativity (Paramon), we read eight readings from the Old Testament. When we read, “A shoot will come up from the stem of Jesse; from his roots a branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him” (Isaiah 11:1-2), we understand that the shoot is an image of Christ.

On the eve of the Elevation of the Cross (September 14), we learn that the wood that turned the bitter waters of Marah sweet is an image of the Cross, which transforms the bitterness of sin into the sweetness of grace (Exodus 15:22-16:1).

In Vespers of the Nativity of the Theotokos (September 8), we understand that the ladder Jacob saw connecting heaven and earth, with angels ascending and descending (Genesis 28:4–10), is a prefiguration of the Virgin Mary, through whom Christ united heaven and earth. Similarly, the sealed eastern gate in Ezekiel (43:27 44:4) symbolizes the Virgin Mary, through whom Christ, the Gate of Paradise, was born to open the way for us.

On Great and Holy Saturday, while catechumens are baptized, the faithful hear fifteen Old Testament readings, all of which prefigure baptism.

Through regular participation in worship, we acquire a true Orthodox understanding of Scripture, seeing the Old Testament as an integral part of God’s salvific plan.

Food for Hungry People 2025 51 st Anniversary Lenten Calendar						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
9 How many mirrors are in your home? Pay .15 for each. Let your "mirror" reflect the image of one who cares.	10 Count the locks in your home. Pay .20 for each lock. Let's "unlock" the door that gives hope to the hungry.	11 How many rings do you have? Deposit .15 per ring. This will help us b"ring" food to the hungry!	12 Count your number of sports balls, (basketballs, soccer balls, tennis balls, etc.) Pay .15 for each. Let's help the hungry "score" a meal!	13 How many doors does your home have? Pay .20 for each. Help open a "door" to a better future for those who are hungry.	14 Have everyone in the family deposit all the loose change they have in their pockets or purses. It just makes "cents" to help the hungry.	15 How many electrical outlets and phone chargers are in your home? Pay .15 each. You'll get a "charge" out of feeding the hungry.

from them their parental condemnation. And proudly broke the news to the Disciples, saying: Death hath been spoiled; Christ God is risen, granting the world Great Mercy.

APOLYTIKION OF THE FIRST SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT IN TONE TWO

Thy pure image do we venerate, O good One, asking forgiveness of our sins, O Christ our God; for by Thine own will Thou didst ascend the Cross in Thy body, to save Thy creatures from the bondage of the enemy. Wherefore, with thankfulness we cry aloud to thee: Thou hast verily filled all with joy, since Thou didst come, O our Savior, to save the world.

APOLYTIKION FOR THE FORTY HOLY MARTYRS OF SEBASTIA IN TONE ONE

Be Thou entreated for the sake of the sufferings of Thy Saints which they endured for Thee, O Lord, and do Thou heal all our pains, we pray, O Lover of mankind.

APOLYTIKION OF ST. ANTHONY THE GREAT

Thou didst become like the zealous Elijah in his condition, and followed John the Baptist in his upright ways. Becoming a dweller in the wilderness, and an establisher of the universe by thy prayer O Father Anthony. Wherefore intercede thou with Christ our God to save our souls.

KONTAKION FOR SUNDAYS IN GREAT LENT (AND AKATHIST SATURDAY) IN TONE EIGHT

To thee, the Champion Leader, do I offer thanks of victory, O Theotokos, thou who hast delivered me from terror; but as thou that hast that power invincible, O Theotokos, thou alone can set me free: from all forms of danger free me and deliver me, that I may cry unto thee: Hail, O Bride without Bridegroom.

THE EPISTLE

*Thou, O Lord, will preserve us and keep us from this generation.
Save me, O Lord, for the godly man hath disappeared.*

The Reading from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews. (12:1-10)

My son Brethren, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely; and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus: the Pioneer and Perfecter of our faith, Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him Who endured from sinners such hostility against Himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you forgotten the exhortation which addresses you as sons? “My son: do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor lose courage when you are punished by Him; for the Lord disciplines him whom He loves, and chastises every son whom He receives.” It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers to discipline us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time at their pleasure, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness.

THE GOSPEL

(For the First Sunday of Great Lent)

The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. John. (1:43-51)

At that time, Jesus decided to go to Galilee. And He found Philip and said to him, “Follow Me.” Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael, and said to him, “We have found Him of Whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.” Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!” Nathanael said to Jesus, “How do you know me?” Jesus answered him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I

saw you.” Nathanael answered Him, “Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God! Thou art the King of Israel!” Jesus answered him, “Because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these.” And Jesus said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.”

ST. BASIL LITURGY MEGALYNARION

All creation rejoiceth in thee, O thou who art full of grace: the angelic hosts and the race of men. O hallowed temple and spiritual paradise, glory of virgins, of whom God was incarnate and became a little child, even our God who is before all the ages; for he made thy womb a throne, and thy body more spacious than the heavens. All creation rejoiceth in thee, O thou who art full of grace. Glory to thee.

Announcements

March is Antiochian Women’s Month

During this month, women of will do all of the Epistle readings and Sermons.

We will also have a basket raffle for the Clergy Widow’s Fund TODAY 3/9.

See Yuliya for tickets.

	Epistle Readers	Sermon	
Mar 9	Debbie Thieme	Patricia Smith	St. Paul to the Hebrews. (12:1-10)
Mar 16	Yuliya	Ceara Jacobs	St. Paul to the Hebrews. (1:10-2:3)
Mar 23	Kh. Odette	Yuliya	St. Paul to the Hebrews. (4:14-5:6)
Mar 30	Skylla Holland	Michealle Carey	St. Paul to the Hebrews. (6:13-20)

Blessing of Homes 2025

Fr. Elia is doing House Blessings by request, only if you fill the Request Form (at info table).

Please keep in mind that Fr. Elia is available only on the weekend.

Mar 9– March 23 Fasting Calendar

Great Lent Fast: Abstain from meat, dairy, eggs, fish, olive oil & wine

Oil and Wine permitted on Saturdays and Sundays

View calendar at <https://tinyurl.com/AOCfast2025>

THANK YOU TO DEBBIE AND ANONYMOUS SPONSOR FOR TODAY’S COFFEE HOUR



PLEASE SIGN UP ON THE CALENDAR IN THE NARTHEX TO PREPARE AND SERVE FOOD FOR OUR COFFEE HOUR .

March Birthdays & Anniversaries

- 02: James (Alan) Zolo
- 03: Abby Zabrodskey
- 04: Noah Bellinger
- 08: Bryce Shonka
- 12: Enrique (Henry) Soto
- 17: Stella White
- 20: Rayne Zims
- 21: Faris Adili, Jeffrey Dick
- 27: Micah Riter
- 29: Michael Lieberman B-day
- 30: Adrian and Carrie Matos Wedding Anniversary



May God Grant You Many Years!
Happy Heavenly Birthday to Ann Shark (March 17) and Luke Delida (March 30)
May their Memory be Eternal!

The interpretation of Scripture held great importance among Christians. The Church recognized various complementary interpretations based on the approach of the interpreters. The Church rejected an interpretation only when it conflicted with sound doctrine.

Jesus inaugurated the Christian reading of the Old Testament when He read from the book of Isaiah in the synagogue of Nazareth: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18-19, referencing Isaiah 61:1-2). He then applied this passage to Himself, declaring to His audience: "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21). Christians read the Old Testament in the light of Christ. This approach unlocked many prophecies found in the Old Testament about Christ, the Trinity, the salvific plan, and other matters.

From this perspective, the principle of Scripture interpreting Scripture was born. Divine revelation unfolded gradually, beginning with Abraham (18th century BC) and culminating in Christ, who revealed God to us directly: "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). Later texts clarified earlier ones, making them comprehensible. The Scriptures are taken as an integrated whole, and no part is isolated or studied independently of the others.

Let us consider some examples. Matthew the Evangelist, writing for Christians of Jewish origin, cited many Old Testament prophecies to demonstrate their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. For instance, when Joseph was perplexed about Mary’s pregnancy, the angel of the Lord revealed the divine mystery to him, fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy: “All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel, which means, God with us” (Matthew 1:22-23, referencing Isaiah 7:14).

Regarding John the Baptist, the Evangelist states: “This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: A voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make his paths straight’” (Matthew 3:3, referencing Isaiah 40:3).

In Matthew 4, it says: “When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, He withdrew into Galilee. And leaving Nazareth, He went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: “Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned” (Matthew 4:12-16, referencing Isaiah 9:12).

Finally, Christ Himself declared: “But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled” (Matthew 26:56). The Bible is a complete unit, with Christ as the central axis—concealed in the Old Testament and fully revealed in the New Testament.

Another example: In the creation narrative in Genesis, God speaks in the singular when creating the world (“And God said, ‘Let there be...’”). However, when creating

Unless man acquires a new giant soul to match his giant eyes, ears and fists, he will not remain a giant for long. How can man acquire a giant soul?

Perhaps the period of Lent can be of assistance to us in this respect; for Lent was always intended by the Church to be a period of growth for the soul, growth in the life of God.

Soon the snow will melt in the northern climes.

The grass will turn green. Chipmunks, toads and frogs will awaken from their winter sleep. Tulips will bloom and the trees will be covered with buds. Earth will come alive.

What is it that will cause the earth to come alive? Spring! Of course. But what is in spring that causes the earth to come alive? The greatest secret of spring is the sun. Spring is the in-between period when the earth is changing its position, turning the north toward our great source of heat and light: the sun. Spring, then, is that time when our hemisphere simply moves into the position where the sun can bring new life.

It is significant that Lent happens to coincide with spring. I think there is a wonderful lesson for us in this happy coincidence. Lent should be for all of us a period of placing ourselves in the position where the best things can happen to us. That position for Orthodox Christians is the presence of Christ, where the Sun of His love and p6wer can shine into our arid souls to bring about a real awakening, a real springtime of the soul. Lent should be for all of us a period of turning our souls toward the Source of Power and New Life through daily prayer, spiritual reading, the divine liturgy and participation in the sacraments.

The Church's service book for Lent (Triodion) calls this period the "spiritual spring which blossoms with the fruits of the Spirit ... love, JOY, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal. 5:22).

A folk tale of the Belgian Congo tells of a clearing made in virgin jungle. Certain ground was exposed to sun-light for the very first time. Strange shoots appeared, strange plants, with flowers of indescribable beauty. Men had not dreamed that these exquisite plants could grow in that place. Often the same is true with us. We allow old sins and evil habits to grow to the point where our soul becomes like a jungle. But if through sincere repentance we allow Christ to forgive us, He will remove the sins that hide us from the life-giving Sun of His Spirit. He will make flowers of indescribable beauty grow where formerly there were weeds. He will help us achieve our greatest potential.

On the Interpretation of the Holy Bible, Part One

By His Eminence Metropolitan Saba

Christians initially (in the first century A.D.) knew the Holy Scriptures, consisting of the Old Testament and some widely circulated texts of the New Testament. It is worth remembering that printing was not available at that time. Consequently, the complete Bible, with both Testaments and all its books, was not accessible to everyone until the advent of the printing press (Johann Gutenberg, died 1468). From the first century, Christians were accustomed to reading excerpts from these sacred texts during worship gatherings, especially in the Divine Liturgy (the Sacrament of Thanksgiving). The structure of the liturgy from the beginning included petitions and praises, followed by readings from the Scriptures, then the sermon, and the remainder of the liturgy.

Upcoming Events

<p><u>This Week</u> Sunday, 3/9 8:45 am: Matins Service 10:00 am: Divine Liturgy, <i>followed by The Icon Procession</i> Annual Parish General Meeting Coffee Hour Mon—Thurs , 3/10—3/13: 5:30 pm <i>Great Compline</i></p> <p>Friday, 3/14: 5:00 pm <i>Presanctified Liturgy</i> Followed by the Akathist Service at 6:30pm</p> <p>Saturday, 3/15 4:00 pm: Catechism Class 5:30 pm: Great Vespers <i>followed by Confessions</i></p>	<p><u>Upcoming Sunday Calendar</u> Below lists the upcoming Sundays from January 26th until Holy Pascha, which falls on April 20th this year. We invite you to join us each week for Sunday Liturgy to celebrate this special commemoration of Jesus' life, death, and Resurrection. <i>Please mark these special dates on your calendar.</i> March 9: 1st Sunday of Lent (Sunday of Orthodoxy) <i>(Bring your icon to Church for the procession)</i> March 16: 2nd Sunday of Lent March 23: 3rd Sunday of Lent <i>(Elevation of the Holy Cross - wear your crosses)</i> March 30: 4th Sunday of Lent April 6: 5th Sunday of Lent April 13: PALM SUNDAY April 18: GOOD FRIDAY April 20: HOLY PASCHA April 27: THOMAS SUNDAY</p>
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FOOD FOR HUNGRY PEOPLE COIN BOX PROGRAM
Please make sure to pick up your coin BOX to take home.
You can use a calendar in the back of this bulletin to make collecting coins fun with kids.
Boxes will be due back on Sunday after Pascha (April 27).

	<p>No Sunday School Today, but we will get together in the Fellowship Hall after the Holy Communion. We are starting to work on Creative Arts Festival. The theme is "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." +Luke 1:38 Dear Parents, please mark these dates for our meetings: Saturday, March 15 zoom; Sunday, March 16 preparation in Sunday School; Saturday, March 22 meet at the Church to work on the project; Sunday, March 30 finish up in Sunday School (details to follow) March 23 No Sunday School (Feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross) Saturday, April 12 St. Lazarus Retreat at 11am-1pm (Session with Abouna, food, crafts, Easter Egg Hunt).</p>
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FOOD FOR THE NEEDY (Basket in the Foyer)
Please remember to bring non-perishable food as you attend church services.
It will be distributed to the needy within the local community.



Please pray for the healing of Michealle Carey, Debbie Thieme, Adriana Theodoropoulos, Beverly Delida, Alix Hall, Nina and Diogo Penas, Beth Manzini, John Archambeau, Alex & Soula, Susan Moran, William Snell, Vasilika Yardines



A JOURNEY TO PASCHA

Great Lent is indeed a journey. It's a journey of repentance, a journey to be closer to God, whereby we can, by God's grace, participate and experience Christ's humility, His love and His victory over sin and death. It is our journey to Pascha. We began on the Sunday of Forgiveness (last Sunday) seeking to reconcile ourselves to one another by asking for forgiveness of each other. This serves to spiritually clear the slate and provides us with a clean beginning. On the Sunday of Forgiveness, we were presented with the image of Adam sitting outside of Paradise, exiled and filled with sorrow. He is looking back at what he lost. Our Lenten Journey begins with identifying with the Old Adam. But instead of looking back, our focus is ahead. Our journey has as its destination - the saving Passion, Crucifixion, and glorious Third-day Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our goal is not simply to survive Great Lent and get to Holy Week and Pascha. Our goal is to uncover God in our lives hidden by our many sins. To reacquaint and deepen our relationship with God. To accomplish this goal, the Church has provided us with some important tools: Prayer, Fasting, Almsgiving and Confession.

Our goal in PRAYER should be to remember God and keep the name of Jesus on our lips, in our thoughts, and on our hearts as often as possible by increasing our daily prayer and attending as many of the beautiful lenten services as we can. FASTING is not merely abstaining from certain foods. Our heart needs fast from the desires of the world. Our eyes, ears, mouth and minds must fast from the things that corrupt us and separate us from God.

Practicing ALMSGIVING is the third tool necessary in our lenten journey. We should share with others what we have been blessed with. Almsgiving includes any act of mercy toward another; it is an imitation of Christ Who is the source of all mercy. When we are merciful towards others, this softens our hearts, becomes a means of attaining all the virtues and draws us closer to both our neighbor and God.

REPENTANCE and salvation are impossible without God. Our Lord knew this very well; He knew that we, in our weakness, would struggle in our Christian life, that we would fall and get up, fall and get up again. This is why our Lord Jesus Christ offers us the great gift of the Mystery of Holy Confession. Confession is the sacrament of repentance, the sacrament of reconciliation with God. It is a necessary part of the Christian life, and we should avail ourselves of this holy Mystery - especially as we journey to Pascha.

There is no other time of the year quite like Great Lent and Holy Week. Take full advantage of the lenten tools laid out to strengthen our lenten journey. May our journey to the Light of the empty tomb of Christ be blessed!

Your servant in Christ,
Fr. Elia Shalhoub
Very Rev. Fr. Elia Shalhoub, Pastor



TODAY'S FEAST: ORTHODOXY SUNDAY

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

For more than one hundred years the Church of Christ was troubled by the persecution of the Iconoclasts of evil belief, beginning in the reign of Leo the Isaurian (717-741) and ending in the reign of Theophilus (829-842). After Theophilus's death, his widow the Empress Theodora (celebrated Feb. 11), together with the Patriarch Methodius (June 14), established Orthodoxy anew. This ever-memorable Queen venerated the icon of the Mother of God in the presence of the Patriarch Methodius and the other confessors and righteous men, and openly cried out these holy words: "If anyone does not offer relative worship to the holy icons, not adoring them as though they were gods, but venerating them out of love as images of the archetype, let him be anathema." Then with common prayer and fasting during the whole first week of the Forty-day Fast, she asked God's forgiveness for her husband. After this, on the first Sunday of the Fast, she and her son, Michael the Emperor, made a procession with all the clergy and people and restored the holy icons, and again adorned the Church of Christ with them. This is the holy deed that all we the Orthodox commemorate today, and we call this radiant and venerable day the Sunday of Orthodoxy, that is, the triumph of true doctrine over heresy.

40 MARTYRS AT LAKE SEBASTE

These holy Martyrs, who came from various lands, were all soldiers under the same general. Taken into custody for their faith in Christ, and at first interrogated by cruel means, they were then stripped of their clothing and cast onto the frozen lake which is at Sebastia of Pontus, at a time when the harsh and freezing weather was at its worst. They endured the whole night naked in such circumstances, encouraging one another to be patient until the end. He that guarded them, named Aglaius, who was commanded to receive any of them that might deny Christ, had a vision in which he saw heavenly powers distributing crowns to all of the Martyrs, except one, who soon after abandoned the contest. Seeing this, Aglaius professed himself a Christian and joined the Martyrs on the lake, and the number of forty remained complete. In the morning, when they were almost dead from the cold, they were cast into fire, after which their remains were thrown into the river. Thus they finished the good course of martyrdom in 320, during the reign of Licinius. These are their names: Acacius, Aetius, Aglaius, Alexander, Angus, Athanasius, Candidus, Chudion, Claudius, Cyril, Cyrion, Dometian, Domnus, Ecdicius, Elias, Eunoicus, Eutyches, Euty chius, Flavius, Gaius, Gorgonius, Helianus, Heraclius, Hesychius, John, Lysimachus, Meliton, Nicholas, Philoctemon, Priscus, Sacerdon, Severian, Sisinius, Smaragdus, Theodulus, Theophilus, Valens, Valerius, Vivianus, and Xanthias.



PREPARING FOR GREAT LENT

Make Lent a Spiritual Spring (From Fr. Alexander Schmemman book-Great Lent)

Man today has become a giant. Jet airplanes have given him wings to fly faster than sound. Radar has given him eyes so powerful that he can see through fog and darkness. Electronics have given him a giant ear to amplify the slightest whisper, turn it into a shout and hurl it around the world. Nuclear fission has given man powerful fists with which he can wipe out entire cities with one blow.