



# Welcome to St. Michael's Orthodox Church

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America

1182 Ashland Street, Greensburg, PA 15601

[www.stmichaelsgreensburgpa.org](http://www.stmichaelsgreensburgpa.org)

Rev. Fr. David Hyatt, Pastor

## Sunday, March 10, 2024

### Office Hours:

By Appointment

### Office Telephone:

(724) 834-1311

### Church Office Email:

[admin@stmichaels.comcastbiz.net](mailto:admin@stmichaels.comcastbiz.net)

### Fr. David Hyatt – Cell Phone:

(218) 576-8324

### Fr. David Hyatt:

[frdavidhyatt@gmail.com](mailto:frdavidhyatt@gmail.com)

### This Week

#### Sunday, March 10<sup>th</sup>

#### Judgment Sunday / Meatfare Sunday

8:45 AM – Orthros

10:00 AM – Divine Liturgy

11:30 AM – 40 Day Memorial for  
Thomas Andrews

12:00 PM – Adult Choir Practice

12:00 PM – Inquirer's Class

(Nut Roll Sale – Social Hall)

#### Office Closed – Tuesday – Thursday

*Fr. David will be travelling with Bp. THOMAS during the week.* In an emergency, call Fr. David's cellphone (218-576-8324) or Parish Council Chair, Christine Mansour (724-331-6127)

#### Friday, March 15<sup>th</sup>

**Eastern Dioceses Spring Retreat at the Antiochian Village**

#### Saturday, March 16<sup>th</sup>

**Eastern Dioceses Spring Retreat at the Antiochian Village**

Cancelled – Catechism Class

Cancelled – Great Vespers @ St. Michaels

\*\*\*Great Vespers will be held at

**5:00pm at the Antiochian Village\*\*\***

#### Sunday, March 17<sup>th</sup>

**Forgiveness Sunday / Cheesefare Sunday**

8:45 AM – Orthros

10:00 AM – Divine Liturgy

11:30 AM – No Church School

12:00 PM – Forgiveness Vespers

### Divine Liturgy Variables on Sunday, March 10, 2024

#### Sunday of the Last Judgment (Meat Fare)

*Martyr Kodratos of Corinth and his five companions;*

*Anastasia the patrician of Alexandria*

#### RESURRECTIONAL APOLYTIKION IN TONE SEVEN

Thou didst shatter death by Thy Cross, Thou didst open paradise to the thief; Thou didst turn the sadness of the ointment-bearing women into joy. And didst bid Thine Apostles proclaim a warning, that Thou hast risen O Christ, granting to the world the Great Mercy. • Now sing the apolytikion of the patron saint or feast of the temple.

#### KONTAKION FOR SUNDAY OF LAST JUDGMENT

When Thou comest, O God, to earth with glory, and all creatures tremble before Thee, and the river of fire floweth before the Altar, and the books are opened and sins revealed, deliver me then from that unquenchable fire, and make me worthy to stand at Thy right hand, O righteous Judge.

#### EPISTLE — 1 Corinthians 8:8-9:2

Brethren, food will not bring us closer to God; for neither if we eat, are we the better, nor if we do not eat, are we the worse. But take heed lest by any means this authority of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. For if anyone sees you, as someone who has knowledge, reclining at a table in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of the one who is weak be emboldened to eat of the things sacrificed to idols, and through your knowledge the weak brother perishes, for whom Christ died? And thus, sinning against the brethren, and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.

Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will not eat meat forever, lest I cause my brother to stumble. Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are not you my work in the Lord? If to others I am not an apostle, yet at least I am to you; for the seal of my apostleship are you in the Lord.

#### THE GOSPEL – Matthew 25:31-46

The Lord said, "When the Son of man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. Before Him will be gathered all the nations, and He will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and He will place the sheep at His right hand, but the goats at the left. Then the King will say to those at His right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave Me food, I was thirsty and you gave Me drink, I was March 10, 2024 Liturgy Variables 2 The Last Judgment a stranger and you welcomed Me, I was naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and you visited Me, I was in prison and you came to Me.' Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see Thee hungry and feed Thee, or thirsty and give Thee drink? And when did we see Thee a stranger and welcome Thee, or naked and clothe Thee? And when did we see Thee sick or in prison and visit Thee?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.' Then He will say to those at his left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the

## Serving Schedule

### Jr. Altar Boys

3/10 – Andrew Hahey  
3/17 – Breccan Daniels  
3/24 – Noor Sahawneh

### Fellowship Hosts

3/10 – Michelle Gajewski, Donna  
Curry, Janet Mochak  
3/17 – Forgiveness Sunday  
(No Fellowship Hour)  
3/24 – Kh. BethAnn Hyatt, Carolyn Hill,  
Christine Mansour

### Lock Up

3/10 – Lisa Stewart  
3/17 – Thomas Sproch  
3/24 – Donald Yoder

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## Live-Streaming Services

### [Holy Transfiguration Monastery](#)

Ellwood City, PA

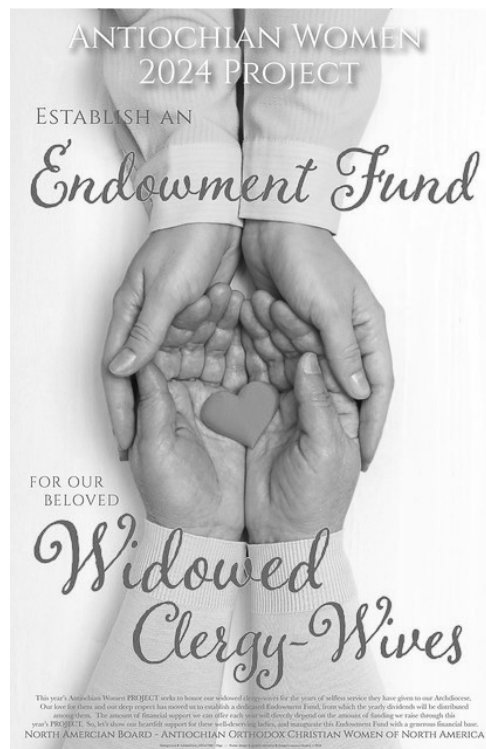
### [Holy Cross Monastery](#)

Wayne, WV

### [St. Tikhon's Monastery](#)

Waymart, PA

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During the month of March, a **special collection** will be received in the Social Hall during the Fellowship Hour. All proceeds will go to the Antiochian Women's special project for 2024 – establishing an endowment fund to help support widowed clergy-wives. We appreciate your generosity!

eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave Me no food, I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome Me, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.' Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see Thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to Thee?' Then He will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to Me.' And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

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## The Triodion Sundays

March 3, 2024

**Sunday of Judgement** (Meatfare Sunday) (Matthew 25:31-46)

On this Sunday, we read the Gospel of Judgment, just as Jesus Christ describes His Second Coming in the Gospel of Matthew. He compares the humans whom He created to cattle, because the image of the shepherd is common about God in the Old Testament, and it is also a common image of priests (see the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel 34:11).

In the New Testament, Christ likens himself to the Shepherd, knowing that it is also the Lamb that takes away the sin of the world. Since He suffered for our sake, only His love can judge the ingratitude of the world.

This gospel on Meatfare Sunday is meant to make us realize the importance of true love towards others because our neighbor is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself; it is as we are standing before Him.

One is his own judge; all his actions are revealed plainly before God's righteous judgment.

St Jerome (4th century) says: Remember Christ each time you stretch your hand to give... The true temple of Christ is the believer's soul; adorn this, clothe it, offer gifts to it, welcome Christ in it. What use are walls blazing with jewels when Christ in His poor Matthew 25:40 is in danger of perishing from hunger?

St Cyprian of Carthage highlights the importance of adhering to Christ with all our life, says: "But it may be, dearest brethren, that Christ himself is the kingdom of God, for whose coming we daily ask. For since He is our resurrection since in him we rise again, so also the kingdom of God may be understood to be himself since it is in him that we shall reign".

On this Sunday we stop eating meat (food without blood) to enter little by little the peaceful condition of the kingdom of God like the first humans before the Fall.

### Kontakion for Meatfare Sunday

When Thou comest, O God, upon the earth with glory, the whole world will tremble. The river of fire will bring men before Thy judgment seat, the books will be opened and the secrets disclosed. Then deliver me from the unquenchable fire, and count me worthy to stand on Thy right hand, Judge most righteous.

Source: [Antiochian Patriarchate Website](#)



**Please sign-up** to bring soup and/or bread for the weekly meals after Wednesday Presanctified Liturgies. Reminder: the soup needs to be Lenten / Vegan (no animal products). *The sign-up sheet is on the bulletin board outside of the kitchen.*



In the Antiochian Archdiocese, **March is Women's Month**. Please read the attached letter from His Eminence Metropolitan SABA at the end of the bulletin. We are grateful to God for all the service our women contribute to the life of St. Michael's. As part of this special month, the following are the schedules for service:

#### Epistle Readers

March 10 - Valerie Flizanes  
March 17 - Mary Gazal  
March 24 - Luann Johnson  
March 31 - Joyce Eger

#### Holy Bread (distribute)

March 10 - Luann Johnson & Patricia Baughman  
March 17 - Janet Mochak & Paulette Sproch  
March 24 - Pattie Senerius & Joyce Eger  
March 31 - Connie Capar & Bernadette McNichol

#### Offering Collection

March 10 - Fotini Abatzis, Nancy Mauer, Raymounda Chaho  
March 17 - Michelle Gajewski, Paulette Sproch, Raymounda Chaho  
March 24 - Patricia Baughman, Raymounda Chaho, Valerie Flizanes  
March 31 - Violet Kharma, Kathy Bleibtrey, Laura Simmons

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### Upcoming Events for the Antiochian Women at St. Michael's

1) **Nut Roll Sale** on Sunday, March 10<sup>th</sup> (NO PRE-ORDERS). We will only sell rolls after Liturgy that day. Limit of 3 rolls/family. Any leftover rolls will be sold on March 24<sup>th</sup>.

2) **Ladies Annual Luncheon** is Sunday, May 19<sup>th</sup> at Morelands @Waterworks. It is the same place as last year. Cost: \$25. Sign up by April 28<sup>th</sup>. Only 40 reservations permitted. See Michelle Gajewski in social hall to make payment by check or cash.

### Prayers of Oblation

...in memory of Adel Armanious by Dn. Noah & Bethann Papas  
...in memory of Diana Roberts and Irene Papas by Dina Papas  
...in memory of Helen Ciavarra by Ron and Joanne Hasnauer

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### Intercessory Prayer List (Orthodox & Non-Orthodox)

Please pray for the following people this week. *Names will remain on the list for 2 weeks.* Please contact Fr. David to add a name for prayer.

PAULETTE Weiss (*Ongoing Cancer Treatment*)  
MATUSHKA SOPHIE Daniels (*Recovering from Illness*)  
FRANK Kocevar (*Continued recovery from a quintuple bypass*)  
Cousin of Michelle Gajewski  
VAUGHN Baughman (*Recovery from back surgery*) husband of Pat Baughman  
FIKERTE Assefa (*Battling a serious illness*) sister of Aster Assefa

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### In Memory of Thomas Andrews

We thank the following individuals for making Memorial Donations in honor of Thomas Andrews to St. Michael's Orthodox Church.  
*May his memory be eternal!*

Julie Bowling	Arnold
Migias Family	Stuart Rodwell
Emanuel Andrews	George Lakes
Joanne Guissarri	George and Joanne Spanos
Betsy Fiedler	Steve Petrakis
Gina Santino	Bill and Mary Etto Painter
Joe & Kim Satira	Ernie and Diane Kampetis
Ami & Eric Akins	Nancy Logan and Family
Muna Jabbour	Beth Goodwin
Helen Waskoskre	Linda and Steve Michaux
Emanuel & Stacy Romanias	David and Marilyn Elias
Petros Papas	James and Karen Lynch
Paulette & Thomas Sproch	Ruth Stout
Joe & Mary Gazal	Gust and Valerie Flizanes
Dina Papas	Jeff and Donna Curry
C.J. Kudlik	Mercedes Michetti
Bob and Donna Jacobs	Dee Chronis

*Going forward, on the Sunday of the 40-Day Memorial, we will acknowledge those who have made donations "in memory" of a member of our parish, rather than listing them one at a time in the Prayers of Oblation section of the bulletin.*

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### Phronema: The Lifeblood of Orthodoxy

Bishop Thomas (Joseph) and Peter Schweitzer

"The Greek word φρόνημα, transliterated in English as phronema is difficult to capture in a single word since it is more of a way of being in the world or a way of looking at the world. Often, it is rendered in English as mindset or ethos."

"Acquiring an Orthodox ethos does not mean collecting a head full of "patristic quotes." Rather it refers to the transformation of the whole man, resulting in one's gradual participation in the "noetic vision.""

3) **Pirates Ball Game** - Monday, July 22<sup>nd</sup>. Ticket cost: \$28. More details coming later.

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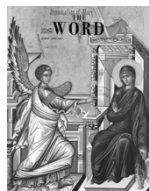
### Catechumens at St. Michael's

Please keep in your prayers our catechumens who are preparing to be received as members of the Orthodox Church.

1. Bob Gunther
2. Dave Bartholomew
3. Stacey Bartholomew
4. Ryan Bartholomew
5. Victoria Gray
6. Mat Hahey
7. Pamela Johnson
8. Garrett Kalinowski
9. Nicholas Lehman
10. Brandon Miele
11. Debbie Paulus
12. Riley Polomoscanik
13. Brooke Williams



Sarris Candy Easter Fundraiser has begun! Online only ordering directly from [sarriscandiesfundraising.com](http://sarriscandiesfundraising.com). Please use the St. Michael's Group ID number 10-2891 for all orders placed online. There is a \$5 fee per address for online orders. The deadline for online orders is *Friday, March 22, 2024*.



**The WORD** is the official news magazine of the Antiochian Archdiocese. Published monthly (with the exception of July and August) .... The magazine was founded in 1905 in the Arabic language by St. Raphael of Brooklyn, and later was turned into an English language publication by Metropolitan Antony Bashir in 1957.

To read the latest edition, click on the link below:

<https://antiochian.org/dashboard?name=The%20WORD%20Magazine>

A contemporary example of this may be found in the life and writings of Jean Claude Larchet, a patristics scholar and a convert from Rome. Larchet describes the importance of phronema when he describes how he came to Orthodoxy through his love of the Holy Fathers. Importantly, Larchet credits his relationship with his spiritual father Elder Sergei of Vanves for assisting him in the acquisition of an Orthodox phronema. Larchet notes,

*I discovered Orthodoxy through the Fathers, but after, he taught me how to read the Fathers. For example, he taught me not to read the Fathers with an intellectual approach with an abstract mind, but in a spiritual way, with prayer, to read the Fathers spiritually. . . Theology is closely connected with spiritual life. . . it was to be like a sponge, to receive the teaching of the spiritual Father without wanting to think something by my own, you know, I didn't want to think something by my own, no creation, no invention, no new teaching, I didn't want to be known by other people... And that was the conception of St. Maximus, too - he says in his Letter 15: "I will not say anything about myself, but I only hear what the Fathers teach, without changing anything" - and also of St. John Damascus writing in the Preface of "Fountain of Wisdom": "I shall add nothing of my own, but shall gather together into one those things which have been worked out by the most eminent of teachers." [Click here to read the full article...](#)*

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### LONG TERM CALENDAR

(Upcoming Dates to Remember)

#### Monday, March 18<sup>th</sup>

##### Great Lent Begins

6:00 PM – Great Compline & Canon of St. Andrew

#### Tuesday, March 19<sup>th</sup>

6:00 PM – Great Compline & Canon of St. Andrew

#### Wednesday, March 20<sup>th</sup>

6:00 PM – Presanctified Liturgy

Lenten Soup Supper to Follow

#### Thursday, March 21<sup>st</sup>

6:00 PM – Great Compline & Canon of St. Andrew

#### Friday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>

6:00 PM – Akathist & Little Compline

#### Saturday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>

##### First Saturday of Lent: The Commemoration of the Miracle of Kollyva wrought by Saint Theodore the Tyro

8:00 AM – Orthros

9:00 AM – Divine Liturgy

6:00 PM – Great Vespers (Confession Follows)

#### Sunday, March 24<sup>th</sup>

##### Sunday of Orthodoxy

8:45 AM – Orthros

10:00 AM – Divine Liturgy

*Icon procession at the end of the Divine Liturgy.*

*Children bring your icons to participate!*

6:00 PM – Great Vespers w/ Litia & Artoklasia

*for the Feast of the Annunciation*







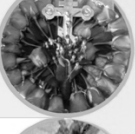





#### Monday, March 25<sup>th</sup>

##### Feast of the Annunciation

6:00 PM – Vespersal Divine Liturgy

# OUR JOURNEY TO PASCHA! 2024

Created by Fr. Jonathan Bannon (ACROD)

SUNDAYS		THEMES / GOSPEL READING	HOW TO PARTICIPATE:
Fast - Free Week <b>FEBRUARY 25th</b>		<i>TRIODION WEEKS</i> <b>Publican and the Pharisee</b> Epistle: 2 Timothy 3:10-15 Gospel: Luke 18:10-14	Show compassion on the poor and distressed. Trust in God, not yourself and ask for His help before every task this week.
Normal Fast Week <b>MARCH 3rd</b>		<b>The Prodigal Son Returns!</b> Epistle: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 Gospel: Luke 15:11-32	Schedule a Confession. Every morning say, "Today I will be humble." Use up/freeze meats this week.
Meatfare <b>MARCH 10th</b> FAREWELL TO MEAT TODAY		<b>The Last Judgement</b> Epistle: 1 Corinthians 8:8-9:2 Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46	Pray facing East this week. Christ is returning from the East and we wait for Him! Use up/freeze dairy this week.
Cheesefare <b>MARCH 17th</b> FAREWELL TO CHEESE TODAY		<b>Adam and Eve are cast from Paradise!</b> <i>FORGIVENESS SUNDAY</i> Epistle: Romans 13:11-14:4 Gospel: Matthew 6:14-21	Ask each other for forgiveness each evening this week before bed.
1st Sunday of Lent <b>MARCH 24th</b>		<i>GREAT LENT BEGINS WITH FORGIVENESS VESPERS</i> <b>SUNDAY of ORTHODOXY</b> Epistle: Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-12:2 Gospel: John 1:43-51	Bring an icon to church for a procession.
2nd Sunday of Lent <b>MARCH 31st</b>		<b>ST GREGORY PALAMAS</b> Epistle: Hebrews 1:10-2:3 Gospel: Mark 2:1-12	Bring a prayer rope to be blessed today! Use it and pray the Jesus Prayer each day this week.
3rd Sunday of Lent <b>APRIL 7th</b>		<b>VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS</b> <i>HALF WAY TO PASCHA!</i> Epistle: Hebrews 4:14-5:6 Gospel: Mark 8:34-9:1	Wear your cross to church and kiss the cross each morning with a bow!
4th Sunday of Lent <b>APRIL 14th</b>		<b>ST JOHN of the LADDER</b> Epistle: Hebrews 6:13-20 Gospel: Mark 9:17-31	Every time you climb stairs this week ask St. John to help you reach Paradise with the sign of the cross!
5th Sunday of Lent <b>APRIL 21st</b>		<b>ST MARY of EGYPT</b> Epistle: Hebrews 9:11-14 Gospel: Mark 10:32-45	Ask the Theotokos to offer you and the world pure thoughts and ideas this week.
FLOWERY (PALM) SUNDAY! <b>APRIL 28th</b> GREAT WEEK BEGINS		<i>GREAT AND HOLY WEEK</i> <b>ENTRY OF OUR LORD INTO JERUSALEM</b> Epistle: Philippians 4:4-9 Gospel: John 12:1-18	Place your palm branches and pussywillows behind an icon at home and in your car!
GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY <b>MAY 3rd</b>		<b>GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY</b> <i>JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS</i> CHECK WITH YOUR PARISH FOR ROYAL HOURS AND VESPERS SCHEDULE	Refrain from TV, Internet & Phones to honor Christ's Death.
FEAST OF FEASTS! <b>MAY 5th</b> NO FASTING!		<i>BRIGHT WEEK</i> <b>HOLY PASCHA! (CHRIST IS RISEN!)</b> Epistle: Acts 1:1-8 Gospel: John 1:1-17	Greet everyone with "CHRIST IS RISEN!" & say it before good morning and goodnight!

# The Great Fast begins Monday, March 18<sup>th</sup>

<b>Fasting rules as followed in our Antiochian Archdiocese</b>	
Saturdays and Sundays of Great Lent	<b>Abstain from meat, fish, dairy, eggs</b>
Monday through Friday of Great Lent	<b>Abstain from meat, fish, dairy, eggs, alcohol, oil</b>
Feast of Annunciation of the Theotokos on March 25 of every year.	<b>Abstain from meat, dairy, eggs. <i>Fish is allowed.</i></b>
Palm Sunday	<b>Abstain from meat, dairy, eggs. <i>Fish is allowed.</i></b>

## How and Why Do We Fast?

by Fr. Steven Ritter

Meatfare Sunday marks the last time we as Orthodox Christians eat meat products, and the week following we dismiss dairy as well. Why is this? There are many and learned treatises on this topic far superior to what I will say here, but perhaps we can put some things into perspective.

Fasting is, according to St. John Chrysostom, the third most important element in our spiritual practices outside the worship of God in community. What are the other two? They are almsgiving, which indicates a mature spiritual Christian's willingness to help others, even at the expense of his or her own well-being, and prayer, which should be self-evident as the primary means by which we commune with God and He forms His will in us. However, what we normally hear about most at this time of the year is fasting, and in fact our Lenten season also bears the name of the Holy and Great Fast.

If St. John puts fasting in third place, why this emphasis? There are three reasons that come to mind, though there are of course many more. First of all, fasting is a primal marker of our return to God. As the services remind us, it was by food that our ancestors Adam and Eve were led to their ancient fall from the grace and glory of God to which they were called to participate, and the results of that choice have affected all of us ever since. Our stomachs are, as St. John Climacus calls them, "a clamorous mistress" that demand everything of us, leading us down wrong paths, and continually deceiving us into thinking that our bodily needs are far more than they really are. This translates into other desires as well—we pamper ourselves and continually seek to satisfy that most fickle of masters, the human will. Fasting helps to remind us that we are putting off the things that separate us from God in order to slowly climb back to the Paradise that we lost.

Secondly, fasting disrupts our normal routine and self-centered wills. As creatures of tremendous habit, and often bad habit at that, we need something to serve as a "circuit breaker" to interrupt this process of continuous self-regard. Fasting makes us think twice about the high favor we have for our persons by depriving us of those things that we take to ourselves too often and easily. This includes all facets of our lives as well as that of pure intake of food. We must be cognizant of our need to reach out of ourselves and help others, to dedicate an increased amount of time to spiritual reading and conversation, especially that involving the Holy Scriptures, and to make every effort to attend the extra services offered during this season as a sacrifice to God of prayer and praise. He doesn't need this, but we do, and those who neglect this are missing a great opportunity for a quick injection of spiritual growth.

Lastly, fasting is a way of practicing obedience. That's right! The one thing that we all talk about as being important in the spiritual life is probably the one thing that we hate most of all! Many complain about the lack of genuine spiritual leaders in the world today (a very old complaint by the way, going back centuries) saying that there is no one to whom they can place their trust and submit to in obedience. This argument is a canard, for

obedience can be practiced anywhere and any place, if we would just to humble ourselves. Additionally, there is a wise a spiritual elder to whom we can all submit at any time. As Tito Colliander asks in his marvelous book

*The Way of the Ascetics*, "since the time of the Apostles [the Church] has given us a teacher who surpasses all others and who can reach us everywhere, wherever we are and under whatever circumstances we live...Do you wish to know his name? It is holy fasting."

By being obedient to the rules of the Church rather than our own re-interpretation of them, we are practicing the purest form of spiritual and bodily obedience possible, and it's a fact of life that if we cannot do this then the instructions of the most saintly elder would prove impossible for us!

Yet the Fathers of the Church also encourage moderation in how we keep the fast. I have seen the strictest adherence prove to be most harmful to someone because of the poisonous disposition that resulted from it. I have also seen someone who hardly kept the fast at all because of illness or medical issues profit greatly because of sorrow at not being able to keep it more fervently, and even the little done was to them a mountain of great height.

Here are a few things to remember about fasting:

- Challenge yourself—you can probably do much more than you do. It's the old thing about pampering the flesh again. Find a way of fasting that is within your means, that makes you stretch a bit, but that doesn't frustrate so much that you give up. We are all on different spiritual levels and practical abilities.
- Once you find your level, stick to it—nothing disrupts obedience more than variance and making excuses.
- Make your fast a broad-based effort. Find time for reading and extra attendance at the services. The excuse of not having enough time will not suffice, since we all find time for those things we really want to do, no matter how crowded the schedule.
- Always remember to repent for your failings. God is not there to strike you down, but to lift you up, and nothing reaches his heart like sincere repentance.
- Remember that breaking the fast, or failing to keep it as well as you might is not a sin, but failing to keep the spirit of the fast in mind, or denying its importance as a precept of the church, certainly is. And no matter how we might ignore this time of the year, it is still a holy one whether we pay attention or not, and the evil one certainly knows what time of the year it is, and will increase his attacks whether you are prepared for them or not!
- Most of all, approach the fast with joy and anticipation, a time of year that the church gives us to draw closer to God, and to achieve true and genuinely heartfelt reconciliation and forgiveness with and for our family, friends, neighbors, congregation, nation, and the world at large.

May God grant us all a blessed Great Lent!

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*Father Steven Ritter is the priest at St. James Orthodox Mission in Lawrenceville, Georgia, and the author of That Your Joy May Be Full, Learning from the Authentic Orthodox Theology of the Spirit (Regina Press).*

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