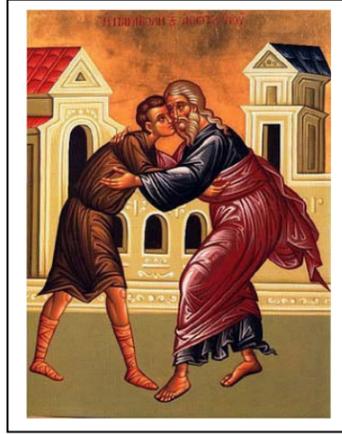


Great Lent & Holy Week



- **Major Sunday Themes of Lent and Holy Week Themes and Services**

Key Verse

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

Reflection

Several weeks before Lent begins, the Triodion period starts. The scripture passages for the Sundays during Pre-Lent introduce us to the values and virtues which we are to pray about and incorporate into our lives during Lent. The first Sunday of Pre-lent is the **Sunday of the Publican (Tax Collector) and Pharisee** and contrasts the arrogant prayers of the Pharisee with the humility and repentance that characterize the prayers of the Publican (Luke 18:9-14). Next is the **Sunday of the Prodigal Son** which depicts a return to the Father, further exploring repentance, and the unconditional love the Father has for us (Luke 15:11-32). **Judgment (Meatfare) Sunday** follows where we learn about loving others through our acts of charity (Matt. 25:31-46). **Forgiveness (Cheesefare) Sunday** is the fourth and last Sunday of the Pre-Lenten period and immediately precedes Clean Monday, the first day of Lent. Jesus encourages us to forgive others, to fast in secret, and to concentrate on spiritual rather than material treasures (Matt. 6:14-21). The first Sunday of Lent is the **Sunday of Orthodoxy** where we commemorate the return of icons back into the church (John 1:43-51). The **Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas** commemorates this 14th century theologian for his many contributions to the Orthodox Faith. The scripture reading is of Jesus’ healing of the paralytic (Mark 2:1-12). The third Sunday of Lent is the **Sunday of the Holy Cross** in which we are reminded to take up our personal crosses and make the decision to follow Christ (Mark 8:34-9:1). The **Sunday of St. John Climacus** is based on St. John’s book, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* which gives a progression of 30 steps that are necessary to achieve a faithful life in Christ (Mark 9:17-31). The fifth and last Sunday of Lent is the **Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt** commemorating St. Mary’s radical turn from a sinful life to an extremely ascetical one of repentance, prayer, and fasting (Mark 10:32-45). **Palm Sunday** commemorates Jesus’ triumphant entrance into Jerusalem and begins Holy Week.

Home Study/Activities

1. Read *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* by St. John Climacus or *Ascending the Heights* by Fr. John Mack throughout the Lenten period.
2. Create a refrigerator chart with the different themes of Lent.
3. Read the scriptural passage of each Sunday’s reading on the Saturday night prior to its commemoration (see above in the Reflection section).
4. Read Psalm 51, a prayer of repentance, in preparation for confession.
5. Read the Bible passages indicated for each day found in the Daily Bible Reading Guide pamphlet or in the Lectionary of the Orthodox Study Bible every day through Pascha.

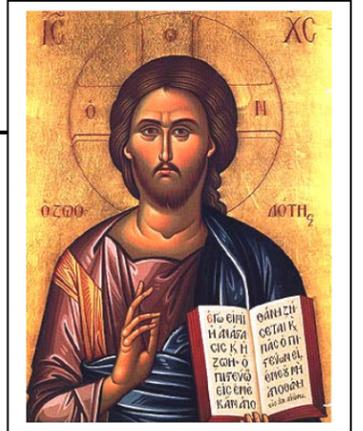
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Lenten Study Program

“Great Lent & Holy Week”

Key Themes:

- The History and Development of Lent (page 2)
- Holy Week Themes and Services (page 2)
- Three Lenten Priorities: Fasting, Prayer, & Almsgiving (page 3)
- Major Sunday Themes of Lent (page 4)



“We are followers of Christ. As a sign and expression of your love to Christ during Lent, we encourage you to take one evening a week for three weeks and focus on one of the themes of this program.

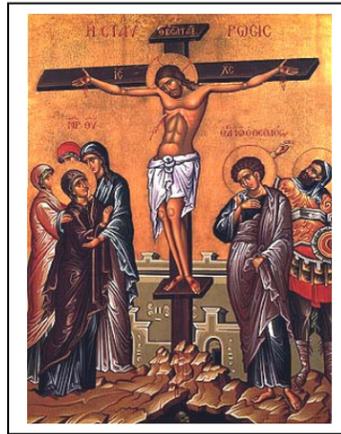
Take 10 minutes and complete one of the home study activities with family, friends, or on your own.”

SOURCES/RESOURCES

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Great Lent & Holy Week



- *The History and Development of Lent*
- *Holy Week Themes and Services*

Key Verse

“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” (John 10:10)

Reflection

In the early church, very few people were baptized. There were many adults who wanted to commit their lives to Christ and became catechumens, that is, new converts to the faith. As preparation for baptism, the catechumens spent a period of time devoted to learning the teachings of Christ. Traditionally, they were baptized and chrismated during the liturgy of Pascha (Easter). Therefore, the period of preparation took place before Pascha which became Great Lent. Today, the Lenten period is still used as a time of preparation for catechumens. For those who are already members of the Orthodox Church, it is a time of renewing our commitment to our life in Christ. It is an opportunity to step away from the world in order to increase our prayer life, to attend the many church services offered during Lent and Holy Week, to perform charitable acts, and to confess and repent of our sins. Repentance, or “metanoia” in Greek, means a change of spirit; of turning back towards God rather than away from Him. This return to God is the purpose of Great Lent. We fast by abstaining from certain foods and eating sparingly, during Lent. It is a physical discipline designed to deepen our spiritual life. Pascha, which celebrates the resurrection of the Lord, is the focus and pinnacle of our life in Christ. There are three parts to this season called the Triodion: Pre-Lent, Lent, and Holy Week. Holy Week services begin on the evening of **Palm Sunday**. We hear the parable of the fig tree which reminds us of how we often fail to bear spiritual fruit. **Holy Monday**’s parable of the Ten Virgins cautions us to be watchful and prepared, knowing that at any time we can be facing the judgment seat of Christ. On **Holy Tuesday**, we commemorate the anointing of Jesus with oil by the sinful woman and of her repentance. We hear the beautiful Hymn of Kassiane. On **Holy Wednesday**, we are anointed with holy oil at the Sacrament of Holy Unction for physical and spiritual healing (See James 5:13-16). On **Holy Thursday** morning, we share in the Last Supper at Divine Liturgy. During the evening services, we hear the 12 Gospel passages that tell of Jesus’ sufferings and death. The Service of the Hours occurs on **Holy Friday** morning. In the afternoon, Christ is taken down from the Cross and is buried in the epitaphios. We sing lamentations during the evening service but end with a note of joy and hope in anticipation of His resurrection. The **Holy Saturday** morning service tells of the myrrh-bearing women’s attempt to anoint Jesus in the tomb. Instead, they are rewarded for their faith by being the first people to witness His resurrection. And later, at midnight, **Pascha** arrives and we joyously celebrate the resurrection of Jesus.

Home Study/Activities

1. Read about Jesus’ 40 days in the desert. Discuss with your family or friends, or journal how it relates to the Lenten period (Matt. 4:1-11, Luke 4:1-13).
2. List and identify areas of your life in need of spiritual renewal.
3. Make a plan for Lent: establish realistic goals, prayer goals, and charitable goals, etc.
4. Schedule an appointment for Confession.

Great Lent & Holy Week

- *Three Lenten Priorities: Fasting, Prayer, & Almsgiving*

Key Verse

“O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of sloth, despair, lust of power and idle talk; but give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to Thy servant. Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own transgressions and not to judge my brother, for blessed art Thou unto ages of ages. Amen. (The Prayer of St. Ephraim)



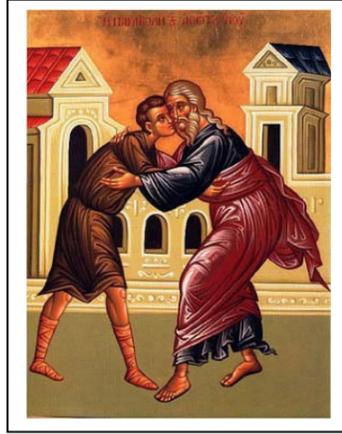
Reflection

Just as the stool in the photo needs all three of its legs to remain upright, our spiritual lives require us to practice all three of the Lenten priorities of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving (charity) to be complete and balanced. “Fasting is seen as a means to greater hope. Prayer is seen as a means to greater faith. Almsgiving is seen as a means to greater love” (Dn. Evan). **Fasting** during Great Lent, as well as on Wednesdays and Fridays and at other times of the Church year, involves abstaining from meat, poultry, eggs, dairy products, fish (except for shellfish), oils, and alcoholic beverages. It is easy to stuff ourselves with the allowable foods, but to follow the spirit of the fast, we should eat less food than normal during these periods. This is to help us focus more on God and to be reminded that we need God. It is important that we fast in secret and with humility (Matt. 6:16-18). More importantly, we are to fast from sins such as pride, gossip, envy, and greed. Jesus does not tell us, “if you fast” but instead says “*when* you fast” (Matt. 6:16). He fasted and prayed and expects us to do so, also. “*Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God*” (Luke 6:12). Attending as many Church services as you can during the Triodion period is a way to increase your **prayer** life during Lent. We pray the Prayer of St. Ephraim (see Key Verse) often during Lenten services but we can pray it at any time of the year. We are told to “pray without ceasing” (1Thes. 5:17). The Jesus prayer is one that can be prayed continuously: “*Lord, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.*” And when the apostles asked Jesus to teach them to pray, He taught them the Lord’s Prayer (Luke 11:1-4). We are expected to think of other people’s needs even more during Lent and to perform charitable acts, or **almsgiving**. For example, the money we save from eating less during Lent can be given to those in need, perhaps by giving food to a local food bank. We can volunteer at a favorite charity. Or we can fill our OCMC boxes with money to help missionaries. “*...Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.*” (Matt 25:40)

Home Study/Activities

1. Speak with your priest to create a fasting, prayer, and almsgiving plan.
2. Read what St. John Chrysostom wrote about fasting.
3. Read Matt. 6:16-18 to learn Jesus’ instructions on how to fast.
4. Begin a prayer routine. There are books full of prayers in the bookstore. The Orthodox Study Bible has extensive morning and evening prayers. See Matt. 6:5-15.
5. Read Matt. 25:31-46 as you develop your almsgiving plan.

Great Lent & Holy Week



- **Major Sunday Themes of Lent and Holy Week Themes and Services**

Key Verse

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

Reflection

Several weeks before Lent begins, the Triodion period starts. The scripture passages for the Sundays during Pre-Lent introduce us to the values and virtues which we are to pray about and incorporate into our lives during Lent. The first Sunday of Pre-lent is the **Sunday of the Publican (Tax Collector) and Pharisee** and contrasts the arrogant prayers of the Pharisee with the humility and repentance that characterize the prayers of the Publican (Luke 18:9-14). Next is the **Sunday of the Prodigal Son** which depicts a return to the Father, further exploring repentance, and the unconditional love the Father has for us (Luke 15:11-32). **Judgment (Meatfare) Sunday** follows where we learn about loving others through our acts of charity (Matt. 25:31-46). **Forgiveness (Cheesefare) Sunday** is the fourth and last Sunday of the Pre-Lenten period and immediately precedes Clean Monday, the first day of Lent. Jesus encourages us to forgive others, to fast in secret, and to concentrate on spiritual rather than material treasures (Matt. 6:14-21). The first Sunday of Lent is the **Sunday of Orthodoxy** where we commemorate the return of icons back into the church (John 1:43-51). The **Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas** commemorates this 14th century theologian for his many contributions to the Orthodox Faith. The scripture reading is of Jesus’ healing of the paralytic (Mark 2:1-12). The third Sunday of Lent is the **Sunday of the Holy Cross** in which we are reminded to take up our personal crosses and make the decision to follow Christ (Mark 8:34-9:1). The **Sunday of St. John Climacus** is based on St. John’s book, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* which gives a progression of 30 steps that are necessary to achieve a faithful life in Christ (Mark 9:17-31). The fifth and last Sunday of Lent is the **Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt** commemorating St. Mary’s radical turn from a sinful life to an extremely ascetical one of repentance, prayer, and fasting (Mark 10:32-45). **Palm Sunday** commemorates Jesus’ triumphant entrance into Jerusalem and begins Holy Week.

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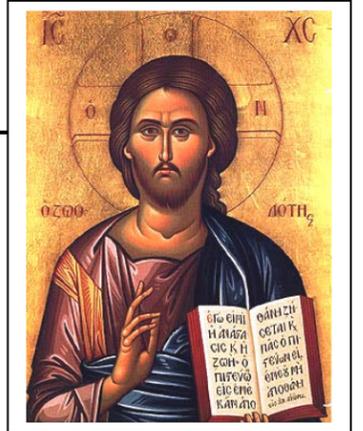
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Lenten Study Program

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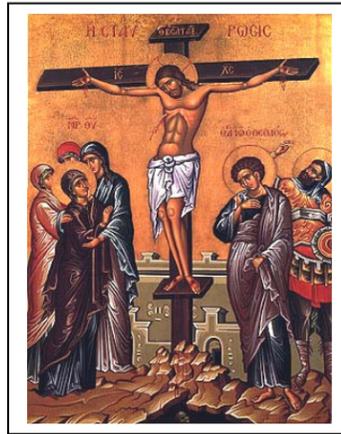
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Great Lent & Holy Week



- *The History and Development of Lent*
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Great Lent & Holy Week

- *Three Lenten Priorities: Fasting, Prayer, & Almsgiving*

Key Verse

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