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“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.”

— Matthew 6:19

Great Lent—the Great Leveler

Great Lent begins on Monday, March 14. This is the premier time of the year in which we can truly re-enliven our walk with God, supercharging the spiritual life that carries us through every circumstance; improves our attitudes and performance in every task and relationship; and refocus our spiritual sight. No matter who we are—prophet, priest, Metropolitan, President, political candidate, captain of industry or beggar in the street, if we are Orthodox, we are called to participate in Great Lent as faithful disciples of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ.

Great Lent especially impresses on us the classic formula of Christian piety: prayer, fasting and almsgiving. As we approach and engage in Great Lent, living on a humbler level than usual is essential to the spiritual benefit with which we hope to be blessed.

As a reminder of the permanence of the message of Great Lent, let us consider Meatfare/the Sunday of the Last Judgment (March 6), when we consume meat for the last time before Pascha (May 1, this year). Its meaning is driven home doubly when we realize that, on the day before (March 5), we celebrate Memorial Saturday, in which our reposed beloved and the dead of all ages past are commemorated as they themselves await the discerning wisdom of God. This adds emphasis to the reality presented by the Sunday of the Last Judgment, for, as the Church *Typicon* states, “No one is so patient and so merciful as God ... [but] when Christ comes again in glory, He will come as our judge.”

We have hope in God’s love and mercy, and we also stand forewarned. In the commemorations and the remembrance of our universal calling to be faithful to God, there is a powerful sense of bonding between all of His saints of all times, as we consciously address that “great cloud of witnesses” that Paul speaks of in Hebrews 12:1. Through this, we anticipate that as-yet unknowable moment when we shall see Jesus Christ in all His glory.

The Sunday of Cheesefare/Forgiveness/The Expulsion of Adam from Paradise (March 13) is the last Sunday of preparation before Great Lent begins on that Monday. This is the Sunday on which we consume the last of our dairy foods (cheese, milk and eggs) until Pascha, and on which we meditate on the fall of Adam. Also, after Divine Liturgy and Coffee Hour, we will participate in the Vespers of Forgiveness, in which we forgive—and ask forgiveness from—each other for any offences we have committed that have come between us. By this mutual forgiveness, we obey God in His command that we be forgiving, and spiritually put “our best foot forward,” as we enter into the supreme penitential season.

The renowned Russian liturgical scholar S.V. Bulgakov, in his (circa 1900) *Handbook for Church Servers*, wrote, “On this Sunday the Holy Church focuses on the memory of the exile of our ancestral parents from Paradise for disobedience and intemperance [in order to] more evidently emphasize the importance of ascetical effort for all [T]he example of our ancestral parents shows us

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*Corner of Jamestown Rd.
& Robinwood Ln.
(2 blocks north of
Racetrack Rd.)

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the whole weight of sin and its fatal consequences, and teaches us to avoid intemperance as the beginning and the source of sin, and to turn to repentance, as the unique means of deliverance from the judgment of God.”

A Few Lenten Suggestions Drawn from the Church Fathers that May Well Benefit us Throughout Our Lives

Do not allow personal controversies and/or disturbing headlines to inflame your wrath or fear. Respond to adversity and controversy with discernment. Discernment is that quality which considers the source, and comprehends “the facts, and nothing but the facts,” without loading the situation with overblown passion. Remember, to discern is not to judge others (for “‘Judgment is Mine,’ saith the Lord”), but to view a situation with prudence. Trust in Christ, and remember that He has overcome the world.

List your prevailing (or “repeat”) sins, and study them. Self-examination is the basis of confession, and the basis of that Christian humility which underlies true piety. Think of all the things you can do to cut off each temptation before you toy with it in your mind. Avoid becoming, in firemen’s terms, “Fully Involved,” like a house engulfed in flames.

Confess in Church, for Christ gave us the Church and the Rite of Repentance (Confession and Absolution) to free us from the bondage of sin. Confession is highly important to keep ourselves on track. Even those little times of “missing the mark” can build into a big weight to carry around, and seriously distract us from those good things we want to do.

Hours Readings

March 6	Rdr Tikhon
March 13	Rdr Tikhon
March 20	Rdr Tikhon
March 27	Rdr Tikhon

Anyone who would like to read the Hours before liturgy, please contact Subdeacon Nicolas Teshin at 209-536-1625 to be added to the list or for more information.

MANY YEARS

Birthdays:

Alyssa-Anna Jacobs	March 14
Natalie Teshin	March 17

Namesdays:

Dave Harmer	March 1
Greg Vitz	March 17

Anniversaries:

Dave and Jeanne Harmer	March 3
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Determine a Fast that will help you, and that will not become in itself the center of your attention. Fasting is an aid to help us turn ourselves away from the bodily appetites that so dominate our current culture, and more fully toward spiritual things, toward God Himself. The Lenten Fast is fairly rigorous and may need some tempering for your state of health, or experience in fasting (and other factors). Your pastor can advise you as to a suitable level of fasting for you.

Enhance the penitential aspect of your prayer rule. Emphasize prayer for God’s mercy—not only for yourself, but also for everyone for whom you have responsibility, a primary relationship, or for whom you have strong feelings, or even have just noticed on the street—for better or worse. And, do indeed pray for the beleaguered people of countries suffering drought, war, civil unrest or unrelenting poverty. Perhaps most of all, we should all pray that God grant us humility. Scripture and Tradition show that God’s people have always gained spiritual strength—and God’s favor—through humility. Humility is the basis of Christian love.

Be wary of feeling proud of your progress in spiritual practice. “With great pride cometh a fall.” Just at that moment when you are feeling especially proud of your superb handling of Great lent in your life, some guy cuts you off in traffic; or the suddenly attractive stranger crosses your path; or your kids break in on your daydream of greatness—and you tumble from the heights of your self-esteem and realize how far off the mark you have strayed, and a mini-depression sets in. Pride does that; it lifts us up above all others on the thinnest of pretences, pops like a party balloon, and down we go. At such times, considering the first, second and fifth suggestions above, and the one just below this, may be helpful.

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Keep your liturgical life sharp. There are a lot of services in Great Lent; attend as many services as possible, because the services are for the nourishment of your soul. Keep your prayer life active, and repent often. As Lent is especially focused on contrition and repentance, this is where the opposition is most likely to interfere. If you stumble in anything, repent of it, confess it, get back on your feet and walk the walk! St. Paul said that the Christian life on Earth is a marathon, not a sprint.

Replace those comfort items that you plan to “do without” during Lent, with edifying reading and actions. You will find that, by the end of Lent, your perspective has indeed become more God-centered, and your Discernment has sharpened considerably. Read good, godly books, or other edifying material; clergy or knowledgeable Orthodox friends can recommend such spiritually refreshing sources if you don’t already have something in mind. Engage in more charity—monetary or otherwise, such as volunteering, or simply being ready to lend a sympathetic ear to another person’s troubles.

Great Lent is like a honeymoon, which gives us that attitude toward our spouse which we seek to keep throughout married life. Particularly, Great Lent gives us an attitude toward God that we can carry throughout our Christian walk. Not that we continue the Lenten Fast itself 365 days a year (that would be prelest—delusional pride), rather, we strive to keep the attitude of using our understanding and our free will to direct our physical body and its appetites (and not the reverse).

Remember, Great Lent is meant to bring us to God; it is a season that can make us joyous and spiritually stronger in relationship with our Father and Creator. It is not always easy, but the Lenten struggle is supremely valuable to our life in Christ. Let us pray for each other, that we all may have a most wondrous Lenten journey.

In Christ,

Father Andrew

St. Susanna Cleaning Schedule

*Blessed are those who love the beauty
of God’s house*

Team 1—Week of March 6th

Team 2—Week of March 20th

Prayer List

PLEASE JOIN US IN GIVING THANKS TO GOD:

- For the skill and devotion of those beautifying our temple and gardens.
- For the beauty of the Mother Lode, and for the privilege we have been given to live here.
- That the Holy Mother of Jesus continues to care for the unborn.
- That many of our petitions are being answered.
- For Peter’s return back home safely.
- For Nikolai’s healthy birth.

PLEASE JOIN US IN PRAYING FOR GOD’S HELP:

- For seasonal rain.
- “St. John, please intercede for us before God for the membership growth of St. Susanna.”
- For repose of the souls of our service men and women who have given their lives for people of foreign lands.
- To safeguard all the troops who remain in heathen lands.
- To help us forgive heathen fanatics.
- That many may come to Orthodoxy through our witness and example.
- To bless our monasteries and the men and women who dwell in them.
- For the building of a monastery in Sonora.
- For the health of Fr. Ignatius.
- For health and strength for Anna.
- For health and spiritual strength for Alex.
- For Ellen, that she be cured of cancer and have strength during her treatments.
- For health and strength for Anastasia.
- For healing of Presbyteria Chrisy.
- For health and healing for Rob.
- For health and healing for Keri.
- For health and healing for Natasha.
- For health and healing for Fred.
- For health and healing for Nina.
- For health and healing for Judy.
- For Ramey for healing from an undiagnosed disease.
- For health of Metropolitan Hilarion.
- For health and healing for Andres.
- For health and healing for Violet
- For Rebecca’s speedy recovery.

*(To ask us to pray for you, your family, or friends,
please email Alex Teshin at alex@teshin.com or
call 209-536-9999.)*

~ March 2016 ~

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 6:00 pm Catechism Class	2	3	4 6:00 pm Panikhida for Memorial Saturday	5 6:00 pm Great Vespers for Meatfare Sunday/ The Sunday of the Last Judgment
6 9:00 am Divine Liturgy for Meatfare Sunday/ The Sunday of the Last Judgment (1 Corinthians 8:8-9:2 and Matthew 25:31-46); Sunday School for Younger Children; Potluck Luncheon; Parish Council Meeting	7 Meat Fast All Week	8 6:00 pm Catechism Class	9 Meat Fast All Week	10	11 Meat Fast All Week	12 6:00 pm Great Vespers for Cheesefare Sunday/ The Sunday of Forgiveness Meat Fast
13 9:00 am Divine Liturgy for Cheesefare Sunday/ The Sunday of Forgiveness (Romans 13:11-14:4 and Matthew 6:14-21); Forgiveness Vespers will be celebrated after Coffee Hour.	14 6:00 pm Part 1 of The Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete The Beginning of the Great Lenten Fast	15 6:00 pm Part 2 of The Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete	16 6:00 pm Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts	17 6:00 pm Part 4 of The Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete	18	19 6:00 pm Great Vespers for The Sunday of Orthodoxy
20 9:00 am Divine Liturgy for The Sunday of Orthodoxy (Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-12:2 and John 1:43-51) 6:00pm Rite of Orthodoxy	21	22 6:00 m Catechism Class	23 6:00 pm Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts	24 7:00 pm Forefeast of The Annunciation Vespers at Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Modesto, followed by a festal dinner	25 6:00 pm Vespertal Liturgy at St. Susanna Orthodox Mission In Sonora for The Annunciation of the Most-holy Theotokos (Hebrews 2:11-18 and Luke 1:24-38)	26 6:00 pm Great Vespers The Sunday of the Prodigal Son
27 9:00 am Divine Liturgy for The Sunday of the Prodigal Son (Hebrews 1:10-2:3; 7:6-8:2 and Mark 2:1-12; John 9:10-16)	28	29 6:00 m Catechism Class	30 6:00 pm Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts	31	Notes: Sunday School for Younger Children is held on the first Sunday of each month, after Holy Communion. Catechism class takes place at 6:00pm Tuesdays. All are invited—this is not just for beginners!	