



Schedule of Church Services

Sunday	7:00 – 7:30 AM	Matin Prayers
	7:30-11:00 AM	Divine Liturgy:
	11:00AM-12:00PM	Sermon in Arabic and Sunday
	12:15-1:00PM	School
	6:00 – 7:00 PM	Servants Meeting Bible Study N.T.
Monday	11:30AM-2:30PM	Divine Liturgy
Tuesday	11:30AM-2:30PM	Divine Liturgy
Wednesday	8:00-10:00AM	Divine Liturgy
Thursday	11:30AM-2:30PM	Divine Liturgy
Friday	8:00-9:00 AM	Raising of Incense
	4:00-7:00 PM	Divine Liturgy
	7:30–9:00PM	H. S. & College Students youth meeting
Saturday	8:30 – 10:30 AM	Divine Liturgy
	5:00 – 6:00 PM	Hymns Class
	6:00 – 7:00 PM	Advanced hymns
	5:30 – 7:00 PM	Bible Study O.T.
	7:00 -- 8:00 PM	Vesper Prayers
8:00–10:00 PM	Midnight Praises	
The Priests receive confession by appointment & during midnight praises		

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What Is Fasting, Really?

By Father Peter Gillquist

At Holy Baptism, we are cleansed of our sins and joined to Christ. Sadly, most of us--well, make that all of us--don't stop sinning at this point. In fact, we tend to struggle with the same sins over and over again.

So what was Christ getting at when he commanded us, "You shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5: 48)?

Happily, in His next breath, He lays out three spiritual disciplines that will help us toward perfection--almsgiving (Matthew 6:1-4), prayer (v.5-15), and fasting (v.16-18). Fasting, especially, is the key to self-control and conforming our will to that of God. In short, fasting is a spiritual tool to make us stronger to resist sinning.

How Does Fasting Make a Difference?

Fasting strengthens our will in general, so that we may more powerfully and effectively resist the sins that plague us. When we deny ourselves certain foods and creature comforts, our spirit, or our will, is telling our flesh, "No!" Our stomach growls with hunger, but we say, "I've decided to skip lunch today." We get a late-night craving for a bowl of ice cream, but we say, "I am not eating dairy products during the Fast." It's the night of our favorite TV program, but we say, "I made a commitment to skip this show until the Fast ends, and I'm sticking to it."

As we consistently and repeatedly deny ourselves relatively simple fleshly pleasures (things which in and of themselves are good), over time we teach our will to say "no." When we exercise our will, it grows stronger, and our "no" becomes more and more emphatic. Eventually, we find ourselves saying "no" to our sinful passions as well. Training our will to deny relatively mild passions causes it to grow stronger so as to resist the stronger temptations to sin.

Fasting is a bit like sports training. Most athletes, whether they are football players, swimmers, or runners, follow some sort of weight training program. Working out builds their strength and stamina, which translates into better performance. In a similar way, the strengthening of our will through fasting translates into a stronger "performance" in the war against sin and our pursuit of righteousness. St. Paul says, "I discipline my body and bring it into subjection..." (1 Corinthians 9:27).

Above all, understand that fasting makes a difference in our lives because of God working in us. If fasting were only about our own efforts, it would be useless. God's role in fasting is why coupling fasting with prayer and almsgiving is so essential.

Am I Guaranteed Results?

God's "diet plan" comes with no money-back guarantee, but the testimonies of millions of Christians through the ages, right up to today, cannot be denied. Having worked at fasting for several years now, I can honestly say that I can see and feel the difference it makes in me spiritually. The saints are clear on the importance and effectiveness of fasting: "When a king plans to capture an enemy's city, he first of all stops its supply of provisions. Then its citizens, pressed by hunger, submit to him. Something similar happens with carnal desires: If a person will spend his life in fasting and hunger, then improper desires will fade away." Said John Kolov. Fasting is a spiritual discipline that requires hard work. There is no magic. Above all, we must remember that the effectiveness of fasting--as with all spiritual endeavors, rests not with our own effort, but with the grace of God working in us.

LET US, THEREFORE, PICK UP THIS GODLY WEAPON WITH JOY AND PUT IT TO GOOD USE IN OUR WAR AGAINST SIN AND TAKE COURAGE THAT THE PERFECTION TO WHICH OUR LORD CALLS US IS MORE ATTAINABLE.

The Great Lent

Great Lent before Pascha (Easter) is when Orthodox Christians participate fully in preparing themselves to praise and glorify God as Lord and Savior. Lent is a workshop where the character of the faithful is spiritually uplifted and strengthened; where lives are rededicated to the principles and ideals of the Gospel; where faith culminates in deep conviction of life; where apathy and disinterest turn into vigorous activities of faith and good works. The deepest intent of the believer during Great Lent is, "forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal of the prize of the upward call of God in Christ" (Philippians 3:13-14). "Laying the Foundation in Christ" looks at the tools need by today's Christians to rededicate their lives to these principles and ideals. We look forward to the great spiritual blessing of this Pascha season. It is a time of repentance. It is a time to enter the sorrowful last days of Christ's life on earth. However, it is also a season of looking forward for the eternal brightness of the Resurrection which turned the Apostles' deep sadness into joy. Let us prepare and relive this joy and wonder of this season, the Pascha of the Lord.

RESOURCES FOR GREAT LENT

+ "The lenten worship is...a school of repentance. It teaches us what is repentance and how to acquire the spirit of repentance. It prepares us for, and leads us to the spiritual regeneration without which 'absolution' remains meaningless. It is, in short, both teaching about repentance, and the way of repentance. And since there can be no real Christian life without repentance, without this constant 're-evaluation' of life, the lenten worship is an essential part of the liturgical tradition of the church." (Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemmann)

+ "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." (Ephesians 5: 15-16)

Standards set forth by Fathers of Church

The Fathers of the Church, preaching on fasting, set forth two distinguished standards:

1) They interpreted the Holy Scriptures on fasting as a means for spiritual achievements;

2) Witnessing their profound knowledge was their own experience of fasting under many and varied circumstances related to environment. This is the difference, a sound and profound difference, between the Fathers of the past and the preachers of today. If this is true of most of the key teachings of Christ, it is also true of the practice and purpose of fasting. For this reason, a few passages of the Fathers were selected to bring forth the true meaning of fasting.

Clement of Alexandria (c.150-c.215A.D.), a great theologian, wrote in his Selection from the Prophets: "Fasting is abstention from foods according to the meaning of the word, but the food does not make us either more just or more unjust. Yet, in its mystical meaning it declares that as the life of each one depends upon food, total abstention is the sign of death. Thus we ought to abstain from worldly things, for we would die as far as worldly matters are concerned, and after that, when we partake of food of divine nature, we will live in God. Above all, total abstention empties the soul of matter, and presents the soul pure and nimble to the body, according to the divine words. Then, on the one hand, worldly nourishment consists of temporal life and iniquities, while divine nourishment is faith, hope, love, patience, knowledge, peace, prudence as our Lord said in Matthew: 'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled' (5,6), where truly He attributes this longing to the soul and not to the body."

Isidore, a great teacher of the church, (360A.D.), in Epistle 403 says: "Fasting in respect of food is of no benefit for those who fail to fast with all their senses; for whosoever is successfully waging his battle must be temperate in all things".

St. John Chrysostom (345-407A.D.) said that the purpose of fasting is to prepare for partaking of the Holy Eucharist and for the Christian solemn celebrations.

Chrysostom taught many times that fasting is not merely the abstention from certain foods, but mainly an abstention from evil doings.

Chrysostom also warns against hypocritical fasting: "It is possible for one who fasts, not to be rewarded for his fasting. How? When indeed we abstain from foods, but do not abstain from iniquities; when we do not eat meat, but gnaw to pieces the homes of the poor; when we do not become drunkards with wine, but we become drunkards with evil pleasures; when we abstain all the day, but all the night we spend in unchastened shows.

Then what is the benefit of abstention from foods, when on the one hand you deprive your body of a selected food, but on the other offer yourself unlawful food?"



THE FEAST OF THE CROSS

The feast of the cross of Christ is in remembrance of the suffering and death of Christ on the cross, the day is one of strict fasting.

If the birth of the holy virgin is the anticipation of the mystery of the incarnation, then the cross announces the redemptive sacrifice of Christ.

The sign of the cross, in roman times was an instrument of shameful death, after Golgotha it became the symbol of salvation and victory.

Through suffering to joy, through death to victory, through sacrificial giving to fulfillment of god's will, such is the way of the redeemer of the world, such is the way of his followers. "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Mark 8:34). This is not just difficulties and suffering, which on their own do not become the cross. "to take up your cross" is to reject your self, defeat love of self, learn to live for others, learn courage, patience, and to faithfully follow Christ.

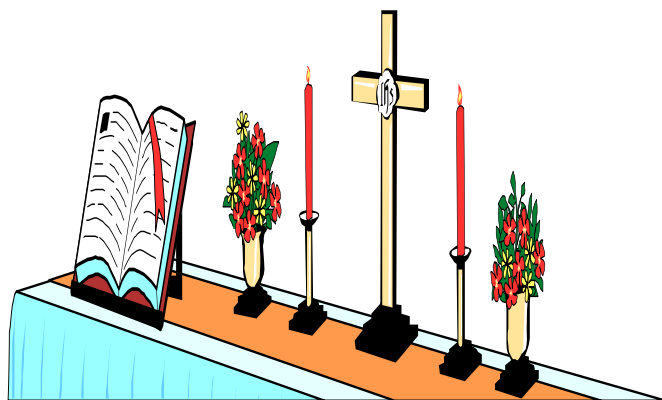
The origin of this feast is found in the glorious reign of Constantine the great (fourth century), who erected the church of the resurrection on the sites where the tomb and Golgotha were. This place had drawn Christian pilgrims from the very beginning of the existence of the church. However, in the beginning of the second century, emperor Hadrian, who was against both Judaism and Christianity, decided to destroy traces of both religions. He rebuilt and renamed Jerusalem, leveled Golgotha, filled in the tomb and built a temple to Venus in its place.

When the emperor Constantine proclaimed Christianity a free religion, he, at the urging of his Christian mother, St. Helen, ordered the pagan temple to be destroyed and excavation on this holy site to be begun. Layer after layer was removed and all of a sudden in the depths of the earth, when all hope was gone, an empty space appeared and then the true and holy sign of our salvation. Writes a contemporary of the events, Eusebius: there in the ground three crosses were found,

but the sign which had been placed on Christ's cross had fallen off, and it was impossible to decide which was his cross. Only after miracles occurred at one cross, such as the healing of a sick woman and the resurrection of one who was dead, did it become known which was the true cross. Then crowds of people flocked to the place wishing to bow before the life-giving cross and started begging the patriarch to raise it so all could see. the patriarch stood on an elevated place and raised the cross, and from this action comes the name for the feast.

On the site where the cross was found, St. Helen built a church to the glory of the resurrection of our lord Jesus Christ, and the true cross was kept in it the main part of the life-giving cross is even at present kept in Jerusalem, in the Greek church. the other parts of it were carried all over the Christian world.

The hymns to this feast speak of the cross that is raised above the world as "the beauty of the church," as "the confirmation of the believers." the cross is the sign of god's love for man, the harbinger of the coming transfiguration of nature.



The Appearance of the Sign of the Cross Of Our Lord Jesus Christ Near Athens in 1925

The All-Merciful God heeded the needs of His people, in a time of Arian trouble, and in 351, He sent to Greece a wondrous apparition of the sign of the All-Honorable Cross to seal the truth and put the false teachers to shame.

The appearance of the sign of the Cross took place in this manner:

In 1925, on the eve, of the feast of the Exaltation of the All-Honorable and Life-giving Cross of our Savior, 14 September according to the Orthodox Church calendar, the all-night vigil was served at the church of St. John the Theologian in suburban Athens. By 9 o'clock that evening, more than 2,000 of the true Orthodox faithful had gathered in and around the church for the service, since very few true-Orthodox churches had been accidentally left open by the civil authorities. Such a large gathering of people could not, however, go unnoticed by the authorities. Around eleven P.M. the authorities dispatched a battalion of police to the church "to prevent any disorders which might arise from such a large gathering." The gathering was too large for the police to take any direct action or to arrest the priest at that time and so they joined the crowd of worshippers in the already over-flowing courtyard of the church.

Then, regardless of the true motives for their presence, against their own will, but according to the Will which exceeds all human power, they became participants in the miraculous experience of the crowd of believers.

At 11:30 P.M., there began to appear in the heavens above the church, in the direction of North East, a bright, radiant Cross of light. The light not only illuminated the church and the faithful but, in its rays, the stars of the clear, cloudless sky became dim and the church yard was filled with an almost tangible light. The form of the Cross itself was an especially dense light and it could be clearly seen as a Byzantine cross with an angular cross bar toward the bottom.

This heavenly miracle lasted for half an hour, until midnight, and then the Cross began slowly to raise up vertically, as the cross in the hands of the priest does in the ceremony of the Elevation of the Cross in church. Having come straight up, the Cross began gradually to fade away.

The human language is not adequate to convey what took place during the apparition. The entire crowd fell prostrate upon the ground with tears and began to sing prayers, praising the Lord with one heart and one mouth. The police were among those who wept, suddenly discovering, in the depths of their hearts, a childlike faith. The crowd of believers and the battalion of police were transformed into one, unified flock of faithful. All were seized with a holy ecstasy.

The vigil continued until four A.M., when all this human torrent streamed back into the city, carrying the news of the miracle because of which they were still trembling and weeping.

Many of the unbelievers, sophists and renovationists, realizing their sin and guilt, but unwilling to repent, tried by every means to explain away or deny this miracle. The fact that the form of the Cross had been so sharply and clearly that of the Byzantine (sometimes called the Russian Cross) Cross, with three cross-bars, the bottom one at an angle, completely negated any arguments of accidental physical phenomenon.

The fact that such an apparition of the Cross had also occurred during the height of the first great heresy must strike the Orthodox with an especial sense of the magnitude of the importance of the calendar question and of all that is connected with it. No sensible person can discuss this issue lightly, with secular reasoning or with worldly arguments. Renovationists, like the Arians in 351, are left without extenuation or mitigation.

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WISDOM

the wordily view of wisdom:

One dictionary defines wisdom as accumulated philosophic or scientific learning i.e knowledge.

The ancient Greeks would have agreed with this definition because as St. Luke observed, they revealed in knowledge: “All the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new things”.

God’s view of wisdom is an indirect contrast of the wordily perception of wisdom. Rather than asserting that wisdom is the product of formal education or human instruction, the Bible teaches that wisdom begins with God.

We are foolish if we do not live what we learn. We can become intoxicated when our heads are filled with knowledge, so we need to apply diligently the precious truth that God shows us.

And remember that knowledge is not by any means an easy thing to attain to. There are only two ways a man can reach it:

- + One is by being cultured.
- + The other is by being blessed.

Condolences

The Priests and the congregation of Saint George Church offer their sincere condolences to Mrs. Gina Gindi and to the family for the departure of her mother, our beloved Mrs. Aida Mikhail. May God repose her soul and give comfort to the family.

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Engagement

Congratulations to Miss Sindy Botros for your engagement!

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