



Saints Cyril and Methodius Orthodox Christian Church

A Parish of the Diocese of New England of the Orthodox Church in America

Fr. John Hopko, Pastor • Protodeacon Paul Nimchek

860.582.3631 • email: terryvilleorthodoxchurch@gmail.com

www.terryvilleorthodoxchurch.org • www.facebook.com/TerryvilleOrthodoxChurch

Sunday, February 22, 2026

SUNDAY OF CHEESEFARE — Tone 4. The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise. Uncovering of the Relics of the Holy Martyrs at the Gate of Eugenius at Constantinople (395-423). Martyrs Maurice and his son, Photinus, and Martyrs Theodore, Philip, and 70 soldiers, at Apamea in Syria (ca. 305). Ven. Thalassius, Linnæus and Baradates, Hermits, of Syria (5th c.). St. Athanasius the Confessor, of Constantinople (821).

[Lives of the Saints - Orthodox Church in America](#)

Services and Events, Upcoming

(This schedule is subject to change, please confirm the schedule at www.terryvilleorthodoxchurch.org/schedule before coming to Church.)

Sunday, February 22, Forgiveness Sunday, 9:15 AM: Our usual Sunday morning celebration of the Lord's Day Divine Liturgy, followed by an abbreviated Coffee Social Hour, after which we will serve **Forgiveness Vespers with the Rite of Forgiveness to begin Great Lent.** *NOTE: Forgiveness Sunday is also called "Cheese-fare" Sunday, as it is the last day on which we eat dairy products until Holy Pascha.*

GREAT LENT BEGINS!!!!

Monday, February 23, First Day of Great Lent, 7:00 PM: Compline, with The Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete

Tuesday, February 24, 3:00 PM: Compline, with The Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete. (This service is scheduled earlier in the day than usual to allow those who cannot travel after dark to more easily attend.)

Wednesday, February 25, 6:30 PM: Divine Liturgy of the PreSanctified Gifts, followed by a "Bring-and-Share" Lenten meal.

Thursday, February 26, 7:00 PM: Compline, with The Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete

Friday, February 27, 7:00 PM: General Memorial Service ("Panikhida") for All Departed

Saturday, February 28, 6:00 PM: Our usual weekly Saturday evening Vigil Service (Great Vespers with elements of Resurrectional Matins).

Sunday, March 1, First Sunday in Great Lent, The Sunday of Orthodoxy, 9:15 AM: Our usual Sunday morning celebration of the Lord's Day Divine Liturgy, followed by a Lenten Coffee Social Hour.

Sunday, March 1, Parish Sisterhood Meeting: The Parish Sisterhood will meet for their monthly meeting during the Coffee Hour following the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy.

IN ORANGE, CT: Sunday, March 1, Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers in the afternoon or evening: On Sunday evening, March 1, at the later than usual time of 6:00 PM, at Saint Barbara's Greek Orthodox Church, 480 Racebrook Road, Orange, CT, Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers will be celebrated. This will be a "pan-Orthodox" event, involving as many of the Orthodox Churches in Connecticut as possible.

Wednesday, March 4, 6:30 PM: Divine Liturgy of the PreSanctified Gifts, followed by a "Bring-and-Share" Lenten meal.

Thursday-Friday, March 5-6: Fr. John will only be available to respond to true emergencies on these two days. He will be at home, but mostly unavailable for routine matters.

Saturday, March 7, 5:30 PM: 40th Day Memorial ("Panikhida") Service for the newly departed Frank (Fyodor) Guba. This service will be served here in Terryville, at Church.

Saturday, March 7, 6:00 PM: Our usual weekly Saturday evening Vigil Service (Great Vespers with elements of Resurrectional Matins).

Sunday, March 8, Second Sunday in Great Lent, 9:15 AM: Our usual Sunday morning celebration of the Lord's Day Divine Liturgy, followed by a Lenten Coffee Social Hour.

IN SOUTHURY, CT: Sunday, March 8, Lenten Mission Vespers, 4:00 PM: On Sunday afternoon, March 8, at 4:00 PM, Lenten Mission Vespers will be celebrated at Christ the Savior Orthodox Church, 1070 Roxbury Road, Southbury, CT.

Monday, March 9, Feast of the Holy 40 Martyrs of Sebaste, 9:00 AM: On this morning we will celebrate a liturgical service commemorating the Holy 40 Martyrs of Sebaste.

Wednesday, March 11, 6:30 PM: Divine Liturgy of the PreSanctified Gifts, followed by a "Bring-and-Share" Lenten meal.

Friday, March 13, 10:30 AM: Divine Liturgy of the PreSanctified Gifts. (This service is scheduled earlier in the day than usual to allow those who cannot travel after dark to more easily attend. It is scheduled for this specific Friday, because we can secure a Choir Director on this day and at this time.)

Saturday, March 14, 6:00 PM: Our weekly Saturday evening Vigil Service (Great Vespers with elements of Resurrectional Matins), with Bringing out of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross for Veneration.

Sunday, March 15, The Third Sunday in Great Lent, The Veneration of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross, 9:15 AM: Our usual Sunday morning celebration of the Lord's Day Divine Liturgy, followed by a Lenten Coffee Social Hour. After Liturgy, on this day, Fr. John will be discussing the Psalms, especially with those who are engaged in Psalm reading as a Lenten discipline.

EASTON, CT: Sunday, March 15, Lenten Mission Vespers: On Sunday afternoon, March 15, at 4:00 PM at St. Dmitrie Romanian Orthodox Church, 504 Sport Hill Road, Easton, CT, Lenten Mission Vespers will be celebrated at one of the Orthodox parishes in the Bridgeport, CT, area.

Wednesday, March 18, 6:30 PM: Divine Liturgy of the PreSanctified Gifts, followed by a Bring-and-Share Lenten Supper.

Saturday, March 21, 6:00 PM: Our usual weekly Saturday evening Vigil Service (Great Vespers with elements of Resurrectional Matins).

Sunday, March 22, The Fourth Sunday in Great Lent, 9:15 AM: Our usual Sunday morning celebration of the Lord's Day Divine Liturgy, followed by a Lenten Coffee Social Hour.

IN CLINTON, CT: Sunday, March 22, The Fourth Sunday in Great Lent, 4:00 PM: Connecticut Deanery Lenten Mission Vespers, at Saint Alexis Orthodox Church, 108 E. Main St., Clinton, CT.

Tuesday, March 24, 9:00 AM: Lenten Morning Prayers, with The Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete. *Note: In most years this service takes place on the Fourth Thursday of Great Lent, but, this year, because of the way that the Feast of Annunciation (March 25, annually) falls on the Fourth Wednesday of Great Lent, this service is chanted on the Fourth Tuesday of Great Lent.*

Wednesday, March 25, The Feast of the Annunciation, 6:30 PM: Vespers with Divine Liturgy to mark the Feast of the Annunciation.

Friday, March 27, 7:00 PM: The Akathist Hymn to the Most Holy Theotokos

Saturday, March 28, 6:00 PM: Our usual weekly Saturday evening Vigil Service (Great Vespers with elements of Resurrectional Matins).

Sunday, March 29, the Fifth Sunday in Great Lent, 9:15 AM: Our usual Sunday morning celebration of the Lord's Day Divine Liturgy, followed by a Lenten Coffee Social Hour.

IN ANSONIA: Sunday, March 29, the Fifth Sunday in Great Lent, 4:00 PM: The annual Connecticut Deanery Holy Unction Service, Three Saints Orthodox Church, 26 Howard Ave., Ansonia, CT. His Grace Bishop Benedict, presiding.

Wednesday, April 1, 6:30 PM: Divine Liturgy of the PreSanctified Gifts, followed by a Bring-and-Share Lenten Supper

Friday, April 3, 7:00 PM: Vespers to conclude Great Lent and to mark the Eve of Lazarus Saturday.

Saturday, Lazarus Saturday, April 4, 9:15 AM: Divine Liturgy, Lazarus Saturday, commemorating the occasion when Jesus raised His friend Lazarus from among the dead.

Saturday, April 4, Eve of Palm Sunday, 6:00 PM: Great Vespers and Litya, commemorating Palm Sunday, Our Lord's Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem.

Sunday, April 5, Palm Sunday, 9:15 AM: Festal Divine Liturgy for Palm Sunday, followed by a Coffee Social Hour.

IN HARTFORD: Sunday, April 5, Palm Sunday, 4:00 pm: CT Deanery Bridegroom Matins to begin Holy Week, All Saints Orthodox Church, 206 Scarborough St., Hartford, CT.

Great and Holy Monday, April 6, 7:00 PM: Bridegroom Matins

Great and Holy Tuesday, April 7, 3:00 PM: Bridegroom Matins. (This service is scheduled earlier in the day than usual to allow those who cannot travel after dark to more easily attend.)

Great and Holy Wednesday, April 8, 7:00 PM: Matins of Great and Holy Thursday, commemorating Our Lord Jesus Christ's Last Supper with His Disciples

Great and Holy Thursday, April 9, 10:00 AM: Vespers and Divine Liturgy, Great and Holy Thursday, commemorating Our Lord Jesus Christ's Last Supper with His Disciples

Great and Holy Thursday, April 9, 7:00 PM: Matins of Great and Holy Friday, with the Reading of the Twelve Passion Gospels

Great and Holy Friday, April 10, 3:00 PM: Vespers commemorating the Death and Burial of Our Lord, with the Bringing out of the Winding Sheet (The “Plashchinitsa/Epitaphion”)

Great and Holy Friday, April 10, 7:00 PM: Matins of Great and Holy Saturday, with the Lamentations over the Tomb, and the Procession

Great and Holy Saturday, April 11, 10:00 AM: Vespers and Divine Liturgy over the Tomb of Christ, with the Many Old Testament Readings, the Changing of the Liturgical Colors from Dark to Bright, and the First Proclamation of the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ’s Resurrection from the Dead.

Great and Holy Saturday, April 11, 11:30 PM, leading into the Sunday of Great and Holy Pascha, Sunday, April 12: Pascha Midnight Services (Nocturns, Matins, and Divine Liturgy), with the Proclamation of Our Lord Jesus Christ’s Resurrection from the Dead – Christ is risen! Indeed, He is risen!

Bright Monday, April 13, 9:15 AM: Paschal Divine Liturgy, followed by a festive procession around the Church, and then by a Bring-and-Share Paschal Brunch.

Bright Wednesday, April 15, 8:00 AM: Paschal Matins (in a somewhat abbreviated form), followed by some Paschal fellowship (Coffee and Goodies) for those who would enjoy sharing such fellowship.

Saturday, April 18, Eve of Saint Thomas Sunday, 6:00 PM: Our usual weekly Saturday evening Vigil Service (Great Vespers with elements of Resurrectional Matins).

Sunday, April 19, the First Sunday after Pascha, Saint Thomas Sunday, 9:15 AM: Our usual Sunday morning celebration of the Lord’s Day Divine Liturgy, followed by our customary Coffee Social Hour.

Sunday, April 19, the First Sunday after Pascha, Saint Thomas Sunday, 12:15 PM: The Annual Blessing of the Graves in the Terryville Parish Cemetery. (Weather permitting.)

SCHEDULING NOTE:

Bishop’s Annual Visit, Sunday, May 11: Our diocesan bishop, His Grace the Right Reverend Benedict, Bishop of Hartford and New England, will be visiting with us on Sunday morning, May 10, the day before the Feast of Saints Cyril and Methodius (our Parish’s patron saints), which always falls each year on May 11.

Year 2026 Terryville Parish Pledge Forms

The Year 2026 Terryville Parish Pledge Form packets were recently distributed via email. If you need a hard copy of the Pledge Form packet, please see Fr. John.

We depend on the generous annual support of the members and friends of our Parish to maintain the financial stability and health of our Parish. We have an annual expense budget of about \$183,000.00. We have a goal of achieving pledge income this year of at least \$132,000.00. In fact, quite a bit more than that is required to meet the annual expenditure needs of the Parish. Please, be generous in your financial support of the Parish. Thank you and God bless you.

Parish Sisterhood News

Psalm Reading: Earlier this week, Fr. John sent out several emails about Bible Reading in General and about the Psalms in more specificity. Anyone who is engaged in the Psalm Reading initiative is encouraged to read those emails. Anyone with questions or concerns about this matter is encouraged to contact Fr. John H.

PARISH PRAYER LIST

Again we pray for all victims of accident, disease, disaster, difficulty, warfare, and acts of terror and senseless violence throughout the world—both those who have died and those who have suffered and yet still live. We especially pray for those who mourn the loss of loved ones. Lord, hear us and have mercy!

+ **THOSE WHO HAVE DEPARTED THIS LIFE: *Memory Eternal!***

Newly Departed

Bishop Seraphim, retired Bishop of Sendai	d. 2/7/26
Archpriest John Pawelchak—Terryville native	d. 1/17/26
Frank (Fyodor) Guba—our fellow parishioner	d. 1/29/26
Lester—maternal grandfather of Frank G.'s daughters	d. 1/29/26
Elizabeth—friend of Helena G.	d. 1/26/26
David—an acquaintance of Helena G.	d. 1/21/26

Anniversaries of Repose – Memory Eternal!

Sophia Ivanchuk	2/22/1929
Alexei Gys	2/22/1937
Nellie Koltko	2/22/1998
Tekla Grayson	2/23/1960
Andrew Kaschak	2/23/1977
Mary Sarofin	2/23/2003
Anna Skalaban	2/24/1961
Ellen (Hasko) Williams	2/24/2001
Olga Rewak	2/24/2006
Emelian Mozalak	2/26/1939
Alexander Oneperko	2/26/1970
Fannie Serduk	2/27/1976
Anna Hricenik	2/27/1988

THOSE IN NEED OF GOD'S MERCY AND HELP

Persons captive and suffering for the Faith

Metropolitan Paul and Archbishop John—hostages in Syria

Those who are sick and suffering

H.E. Archbishop Benjamin of the Diocese of the West (Retired)
H.E. Archbishop Alexander of the Diocese of the South
Archpriest Seraphim G.—former Terryville pastor, injured in fall (ribs/collarbone)
Archpriest Vladimir A.—serious, chronic illness
Archpriest Vladimir H.—unwell
Archpriest David K.—recovering after knee joint replacement surgery
Archpriest Patrick B.—recovering after knee joint replacement surgery
Priest Moses—recent surgery
Subdeacon John Paul—ongoing health problems
Matushka Ann Sh.—at request of Lynn H.
Bill (“Vasilios”) L.—relative of the Sovyrda Family; unwell, please pray fervently
Michael N.—recipient of a kidney transplant; our devoted, beloved Choir Director
Nancy B.—our fellow parishioner; dealing with very difficult chronic illness
JoAnn—acquaintance of Jeanne Moore; ovarian cancer
Mary Lynn—friend of Donna O.; battling breast cancer
Michael “Mike” L.—ongoing health issues
Paula—friend of Jim L.; struggling with cancer
Dimitri—brother of Carolyn P.; health issues
Margaret—sister-in-law of Carolyn P.; health issues
Dianna—Jennifer W.'s mother; suffering serious and worrisome health problems
Yvonne K.—a person we have been asked to pray for; multiple myeloma
Mark—friend of a parishioner (F.G.); critically ill
Domenic—friend of a parishioner (F.G.); facing serious illness
Nicholas—friend of a parishioner (F.G.); facing serious illness
Earlene L.—Mike and Jim L.'s mother; health issues
Natonya L.—Mike and Jim L.'s family member; health issues
Bach-Loan—a neighbor of Jeanne M.'s; serious health challenges
Michael “Mike” A.—battling many, many health challenges
Robert Jos.—dealing with health issues
Diane—daughter of friends of Forrest and Elaine H., suffering in illness
Sonya K.—former W'bury parishioner, health issues
Jeffrey—at request of John G.; unwell and in need of prayers
Patrick—at request of John G.; unwell and in need of prayers
Jesse—John G.'s brother; injured in accident
Nila—John G.'s aunt; facing challenges

Brittany—relative of Pdn. Paul; young woman facing cancer
Joan—grief and chronic illness; req. of Helena G.
Candace—mourning the loss of her newly departed husband David; req. of Helena G.
Timothy—Olena's husband; undergoing treatment for a serious illness
Lisa—friend of Helena G.; suffering in illness
Ksenia—our fellow parishioner; recent surgery and further issues thereafter
Alex—Ksenia's husband; recent illness
Tatyana—Ksenia's mother-in-law; recent health issues leading to job loss
Faith—David C.'s cousin; facing health challenges due to a chronic illness
Nolan—friend of Corey F.; unwell and in need of prayers
Jacqueline—a woman for whom we have been asked to pray for general well-being
Amy—a woman for whom we have been asked to pray for general well-being
Leo M.—Parishioner Lynn H.'s father; unwell and in need of prayers
Ingrid—battling cancer; friend of Nina and John D.
Terry—battling cancer; friend of Nina and John D.
Victor—family member of Nina and John D.; suffering in illness
Alex—family member of Nina and John D.; suffering in illness
Louine K.—various health challenges; our fellow parishioner
Heather—at the request of Louine K.; facing challenges
Audrey—A.J.'s mother; unwell and in need of prayers, in residential care
Christine—at request of Elaine H.; blindness cause by aneurysms
Jill—friend of Elaine H.; recovering from surgery
Timothy—relative of Joan M.; surgery
Andrea—friend of Helena G.; mourning loss of her daughter
Joanne—acquaintance of Helena G.; mourning passing of her husband
Nikola—friend of Jacob J.; very unwell and in need of prayers
Gregory—Bob M.'s son; underwent surgery on 7/22, follow-up therapies
Chitra—Melanie B.'s mother; surgery on 7/22, followed by complications
Alexandra—Fr. John's sister; suffers Neurofibromatosis type II, a chronic disease
Boris—a participant in our Parish Bible Study; battling illness
Raymond—Fr. John's brother-in-law; some health issues
Tabitha H.—recovering from knee surgery, which took place on 2/11
John—undergoing cancer treatment; relative of Lenna M.
Iris—at request of Hopkos; for joy, peace, and tranquility
Barbara—friend of Jack K.; unwell and in need of prayers
Lynn H.—our fellow parishioner; underwent shoulder joint surgery, 1/13
Jeanne M.—our fellow parishioner; hip joint replacement surgery on 2/10
Srdjan—a man we have been asked to pray for; recovering from stroke
Donna—Dennis K.'s sister; in rehabilitation following joint surgery after a fall
Barbara K.—our fellow parishioner; suffered a fractured pelvis in fall on 2/12
Petra Joy—at request of Barbara K.; Petra is suffering a recurrence of cancer
James—husband of Barbara K., unwell and in need of prayers
David—Paul S.'s brother, unwell and in need of prayers
child Emerson—at request of Valbona H.; an infant with hearing difficulties

Shut-ins and those resident in long-term Care Facilities

Tanya B.—suffering long-term effects of brain hemorrhage
Claudia A.—Waterbury parishioner; health challenges
Claudia B.—Macrina H.'s mother; resident in long-term eldercare
Dolores M.—Bob M.'s mother; resident in long-term eldercare
Roberta K.—a Waterbury parishioner living in long-term care
Forrest H.—our fellow parishioner; resident in long-term eldercare
John—Cynthia B.'s uncle

Mothers and Newly-Born Children

Kate and the son newly born of her—Lynn H.'s daughter-in-law

Expectant Mothers and the Children to be born of them

Kelly and the children (twins) to be born of her—Lenna M.'s niece

Travelers, Those Soon to be Traveling, and Those Apart from Us

John (Jack) K., away from us during the winter months

Those from among us serving in the Armed Forces

Joel O.—U.S. Navy; hospital corpsman (“medic”); Mark and Karry O.'s son
Derek—relative of Carolyn P.; U.S. Army soldier
Weston—son of a friend of Lenna M.; National Guardsman, deployed abroad
Ruben—acquaintance of the Hopkos, U.S. Marines Corps tiltrotor pilot
Zachary W.—Fr. Zachary W.'s son; U.S. Air Force fighter pilot
John S.—Fr. John H.'s nephew; newly commissioned Ensign, U.S. Navy

Birthdays this coming week

Lynn H. 2/25

Notes on Parish Life

Vacuuming the Church: We ask that volunteers vacuum the Narthex (entrance area), Nave (main worship space), and Kliros (Choir area) of our Church building each Sunday, *right after the conclusion of the Sunday morning services*. The doing of this uncomplicated, yet needful, task would be a great help. Please consider being this volunteer on at least some occasions. Thank you.

Please, consider hosting Coffee Hour! We need Coffee Hour hosts going forward in the calendar. Please, consider hosting Coffee Hour. Thank you!

Some things to do during Great Lent (listed in no particular order):

- Embrace Silence: Turn off the phone, the computer, the TV, etc., and embrace silence before the face of God. Practice periods of silence and mindfulness. If it is not possible to be completely silent, say to yourself, slowly and carefully, the Publican's Prayer: "O God, be merciful to me a sinner." (Luke 18:13), or the Jesus Prayer, "O Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner."
- Make and keep an appointment for the Sacrament of Confession. Prepare for this appointment carefully, examining your life with honesty and humility.
- Attend as many of the Church services as you possibly can. Do not make excuses for yourself.
- Read the Bible daily: Reading a little bit every day, it is entirely possible to read all four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) during Great Lent. That, along with reading several Psalms from the Book of Psalms every day, is a good place to begin.
- Revitalize your prayer life. Pray for the strength to repent. Pray, too, for others in need of God's mercy and help. Make a list of all the living and departed you wish to commemorate and pray for them daily. Make some bows every day. It is good to pray on our knees before the Lord our God, in an attitude of humility and gratitude.
- Keep the Fast: During Great Lent (and on fasting days throughout the year) Orthodox Christians are expected to keep what is, for the most part, a vegan diet. We give up meat, poultry, fish, and dairy products that derive from animals (that is, eggs, cheese, milk, cream, butter, etc.). So, during Lent, we eat vegetables, and, occasionally, seafood that is not fish, such as shellfish and crustaceans, like shrimp and (even) lobster. (The allowance for seafood is historical: In ancient times, people did not relish seafood, other than fish. They didn't trust animals that had lived most of their lives on the bottom of the sea.) If we, truly, are not able to keep the fullness of Lenten fasting, then we need to do something, and we certainly can't do nothing. Most of us can certainly give up at least meats and poultry, without suffering ill effects.
- Give up trivial pursuits that are not edifying. Our "free" time should be occupied by activities that build us up and truly revitalize us, rather than simply entertain us in some mindless, unworthy, or useless fashion. (No "vegging out" during Lent!) We can relax in ways other than engaging in aimless or apathetic activities. Reading or listening to good and improving book is a form of relaxation that might be more "bless-able."
- Get enough sleep. Don't oversleep. 7 to 8 hours of sleep a day, at night, is appropriate for most adults. Not much more, certainly not less. If we need to nap during the day, it should be for a brief period of time that revitalizes us, rather than rendering us sluggish.
- Reach out to one person with the Good News (the Gospel) of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Is there not at least one person in your life who is open to that Good News at this time? There must be at least one.
- Do concrete acts of charity that cost you something. Don't just give away what is "extra". Rather, endeavor to go "above and beyond."
- Pick one bad habit and break it. (This will likely be very difficult, but "if we fall, we get back up again.")
- Apologize to those whom you have sinned against. Begin by simply saying "I am sorry." This honors the fact that some need to hear an apology first, and are not yet ready to hear a request for forgiveness. Then, make amends, as necessary, to undo the hurt.

Lenten Confessions Make your appointment now! Great Lent begins on Monday, March 3.

Each and every Christian should participate in the saving Sacrament of Holy Confession during the Lenten season, as part of his or her own “Lenten journey.” Please contact Fr. John now to make your Confession appointment, even if you want your appointment to take place later on during Lent. Please make your Lenten confession before the end of Great Lent, that is, by Friday, April 11.

By the time we reach Holy Week and Pascha, every member of the Parish should (must!) have participated in the Sacrament of Confession in the Lenten season.

Preparation for the Reception of Holy Communion at the Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

Most correctly described, the Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is a solemn Lenten Vespers (evening) service celebrated at the end of a day of strict Lenten abstinence at which we receive, as the first food of the day, the divine and life-giving food that is the broken Body and spilled Blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ—the food that satisfies our deepest need for meaningful life in communion with God, our Heavenly Father. (NOTE: This year, we will be serving several Divine Liturgies of the Presanctified Gifts in the late morning, in which case we are expected to fast from midnight onwards through the morning, until we receive Holy Communion as the first food of the day. We are serving this service in the morning on several occasions in order to make this service accessible to some who are unable to travel at night.)

The following paragraph is excerpted from the Introduction to the order of the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts as prepared and printed by the Department of Religious Education of the Orthodox Church in America:

“The evening reception of Communion at the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is fulfilled after a day of prayer and fasting, with the total abstinence from food and drink at least from the early morning hours of the day. Some consider the taking of even light, Lenten food on the morning of the Presanctified Liturgy as a “lessening” of the discipline. Those who have fasted a whole working day in preparation for the evening participation in the Holy Sacraments, however, know the great difficulty of the effort, as well as the very special spiritual fruits it brings from God.”

In view of this teaching, each of us needs to make a prayerful and pious decision concerning how we ourselves are going to prepare for the reception of Holy Communion during the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts. The minimum fast for a healthy adult preparing to receive Holy Communion at the evening celebration of the Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts should be complete abstinence from all food and drink (and, if you smoke, from tobacco!) from 12:00 noon. (This parallels the usual practice for receiving Holy Communion on Sunday mornings, which we prepare for by attending Saturday evening Vigil, keeping the rest of the evening free from inappropriate activity, reading our pre-communion prayers, and completely fasting from food and drink from 12:00 midnight until the time we receive Holy Communion in the morning.) Others—children, seniors, those with medical issues, etc.—should fast before the Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts as they are able.

In every case, serious and significant effort must be made in this fasting as we prepare to receive Holy Communion. Whatever the specifics of the manner in which we personally prepare for the reception of Holy Communion, we must not be heedless and simply come forward to receive the Holy Eucharist without forethought or preparation—preparation which includes fasting. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please see Fr. John.

ON FASTING DURING GREAT LENT

Fasting, specifically as it affects the issue of what and how much we are to eat, is always a topic that receives much attention when we prepare to begin Great Lent. Fasting is an ancient tradition in the Church and not one that we should easily ignore or dismiss. We all must fast during Great Lent.

What then should we do? We should begin by reminding ourselves of the basics of the Church's traditional discipline of fasting. During Great Lent the strictest levels of fasting are prescribed, with certain exceptions allowed for weekends and feast days.

The traditional norm, as developed and followed over many centuries in the Orthodox Church, is that we would abstain from the following items (listed here in order, beginning with those items which are eliminated first, on down to those items that many be permissible at some times):

- Meat and meat products (must be restricted)
- Milk and Egg Products (often referred to as "dairy." These items are perhaps permissible for some, for example, young children, the elderly or those in poor health.)
- Fish (permissible on certain feasts during Great Lent)
- Olive Oil (permissible on weekends and certain feasts in Lent)
- Wine (this means all alcoholic beverages; they are permissible on weekends and certain feasts during Great Lent)

So then, generally speaking, during Great Lent we are to make do with the following types of food:

- Shellfish and Crustaceans (shrimp, clams, etc.)
- Vegetables
- Vegetable Products
- Fruit, Grains (breads, pasta, rice, etc.), Nuts, etc.
- Non-alcoholic, dairy-free beverages

Having laid out the traditional guidelines for fasting, certain points must be made in reference to them.

First of all, each of us must make an honest, prayerful assessment of how well we can maintain the fasting discipline. If we are unable—due to age, illness, or some other weakness—to follow completely the traditional order of fasting, we must then make a decision about what we are going to do. Over-scrupulosity in this regard will not save us, but neither will any rationalizing away of the need to fast. Each and every person, usually together with the other members of his or her family and, if necessary, in consultation with his or her parish priest, needs to make an honest and prayerful decision about how he or she is going to keep the Fast.

For Church events—such as Sunday morning “Coffee Hours,” and “Bring and Share” meals following the Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts—we need to keep strictly to the traditional disciplines of the Fast so that those who are following those norms will not be placed in any sort of awkward situation.

That being said, we must remember that the purpose of fasting (along with its "siblings" among virtuous acts—almsgiving, and prayer) is to make us better able to carry out the two great commandments of our Savior, that is, to love God and to love our neighbor. If we fast from food, but do not increase in love for God and others, our fasting is without purpose. The same is true for both charitable giving (almsgiving) and prayer. Love is the highest rule, above and beyond any other pious disciplines.

Therefore, a consistent teaching of the saints is that, while we are to make every effort to keep the Fast, the law of love teaches us that we are not to make a spectacle of ourselves in our fasting and if we are presented with a situation where love requires us to break the fast, then we must do so, and make up for that break in discipline through our care for one another.

Fasting, of course, does not concern just changes in our diet. When we fast we should be making a concerted effort to change our entire style of life. Just as when we embark on a program of physical fitness we not only adjust our diet, but also other facets of our lifestyle including exercise and rest, so too when we fast we are called to make changes in our entire life.

The point of Great Lent is to restore our life to its proper state through a process of repentance that involves and encompasses our whole person. Therefore, when (not if!) we fast, we must also redouble our efforts in prayer and charity. We must “re-program” ourselves, and consider carefully our use of time. We must consider not only what we are allowing to enter us as food, but also what is entering us through what we read, hear, and watch. We must make and keep a plan of renewal during Great Lent that encompasses our whole person and life. This plan should have as its aim not just to redeem the time of Lent, but also to help us make lasting changes in our lives for the sake of our salvation and the salvation of those around us—positive changes that will persist even after Great Lent is over.

A holy person of our time has pointed out that when we judge other people, we often lose the opportunity to love them. Let us all remember during Great Lent to open ourselves with honesty and humility to God’s judgement and leave the judging of others to Him: He is the only just judge and only He knows the true condition of a man or woman, His creature. Let us receive the coming of Great Lent and Lenten fasting with joy, with “bright sadness,” grateful for this time of repentance and renewal made possible by God’s perfect love for us, His humble and unworthy servants. – Fr. John H.



Learn more about the Orthodox Faith

Follow this link, to be taken to a section of the official Orthodox Church in America website at which you can access the Daily Scripture Readings, the Lives of the Saints arranged day-to-day throughout the year, catechetical (instructional) material about the Orthodox Faith, and section featuring Questions and Answers about the Orthodox Faith:

<https://www.oca.org/orthodoxy>



The End

Glory be to God, for all things!