

G R E A T L E N T

WHY DOES GREAT LENT EXIST ?

- 1- Lent is a time of spiritual renewal, of spiritual preparation for Holy Week & Easter- Pascha!
- 2- Lent is a stimulus for the improvement of our christian life. Hopefully, our "lenten pilgrimage" will be one of lasting growth, where by, the religious knowledge gained, the spiritual heights attained and the religious renewal will become part of our total life all year long.

The Utimate Goal of Lent is: preparation & renewal. At lent, the Church ask each faithful Orthodox to..... "clean house," to clean up our lives wherever it is needed to establish a change of life, to improve our life from a christian perspective.

WHY MORE CHURCH SERVICES ?

The limitation of social functions and the celebration of more services in church is because Lent is a period of time when we are to be more conscious of our spiritual character and of our contact with God.

The special lenten services of Great Compline, Pre-Sanctified Liturgy and the Salutations are very meditative, so as to provide the faithful with the opportunity to review and renew their lives.

The special lenten melodies of these services are slow, deep and solemn- they are a great aid to meditation.

WHY A 40 DAY FAST ?

- 1- In remembrance of the 40-day fast that Jesus observed.
- 2- The fast is actually the- application of discipline. (Fasting is not prescribed by the Church to make people suffer. But, rather to aid the christian to control the body in all aspects..... what we do, think, see, say and eat.)
- 3- As for eating.....yes, we fast from various foods. This is done to let the spiritual mind control the physical self.

HOW SHOULD I FAST ?

Again, the word "fast" denotes= food, as well as word, deed and thought; what is seen, read, spoken and even what is heard. They are all to be observed; not one aspect substituting the other as some might say.

1- Fast as much as you can. (The more the better.)

As regards food.....

2- Eat no meat as a basic minimum, but try to be as strict as you can as often as you can without harming your body. (A strict fast denotes- no meat, dairy or blood fish products.)

Special attention should be given to the 1st week of lent (known as KATHARA EVTHOMATHA- Clean Week) to eat only only clean (pure), natural foods; such as: fruits, vegetables and greens, as well as to each Wed & Fri. as special emphasis.

NOTE: that Wed(s) & Fri(s) are normal fast days anyway. During lent, we should fast more than just on Wed & Fri(s).

IF- you feel you cannot fast all 40 days, at least select 3 or 4 days per week or perhaps plan several meals per week as fast meals.

(You'd be surprised however, how more and more people are finding out that the 40 day fast is not at all out of the question, and in fact very rewarding.... it's all - mind over matter. It is good for the soul and really cleans out the body from impurities!

- 3- In your food fast (what ever extent you do), do not substitute one food for another. Be concerned with the volume of food you eat.
- 4- Be sure to suit your food fast to your work, but avoid luxury.
- 5- Be respectful of others.....do not criticize those who ignore the fast, neither discourage those who do keep the fast. If you have occasion to share a meal with fellow Orthodox Christians.....include fast items amongst the offering.

As regards the food fast, we should also keep in mind another aspect of fasting. This is- fasting has always existed in the Christian Church- from day one. Fasting is observed:

- a) in remembrance of Christ
- b) as discipline of the body
- c) and in charity.

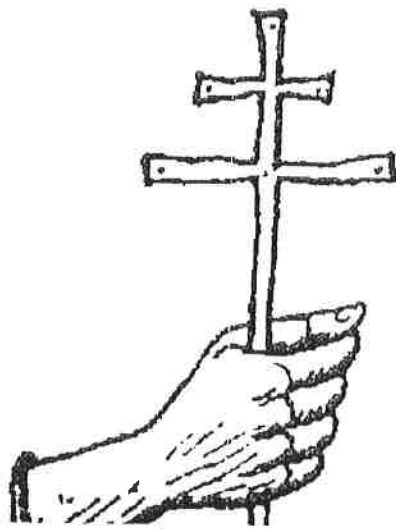
What is meant by- "in charity" ? ? ?

Fasting in charity is the concept of fasting (limiting what you eat, so you can then give to the hungry.)

This means- fasting- is eating less amounts- and what you do not eat- reserve it to give to the poor. (Or set aside that amount of money that you did not spend on food, to give to the poor.)

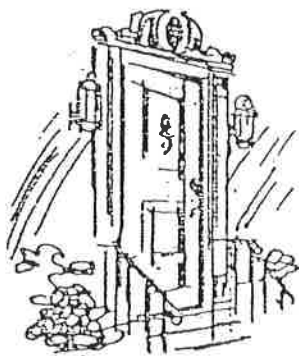
This is "fasting in charity." It is a very vital christian virtue! And think about it- don't we so very often over eat ? ? What good does it do us ? except give us an upset stomach or make us sleepy and lazy ? While in the meantime.....there are people around who ate very little or nothing at all.

So in your food fast....also fast in charity. Perhaps many of you have been doing this; great! Let's all consider it seriously this year, and let us all do something united in our "Charity Fasting" this year.



MAKING LENT MEANINGFUL AT HOME

Great Lent is the most significant time of the year in the spiritual life of Orthodox Christians. As parents, we have an opportunity to teach and reinforce its importance and significance to our children so that they may always love and appreciate this holy period. Here are some things to consider...



- Purchase an Orthodox prayer book if you don't have one, and use it.
- Plan which services you can realistically attend each week as a family (try for at least one).
- Parents, read a book on Great Lent to understand it better
- Try as much as possible to keep the fast in an appropriate way for your family (perhaps try keeping a strict fast on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays if you can't do more).
- Curb or eliminate television, movies, etc.; replace with biblical movies, or read Scripture or other spiritually edifying materials.
- Periodically light incense and keep a lit candle or vigil lamp in front of the holy icons (help create a more spiritual atmosphere at home as much as possible).
- Plan on going to confession as a family during Lent (parents are the example in everything to their children – don't rob them of this spiritually beneficial opportunity).
- If properly prepared, receive Holy Communion more frequently as a family during Lent.
- Choose one or more charities that the family would like to support financially or otherwise (involve children as much as possible with this process).

THE LENTEN WORSHIP ATMOSPHERE



The distinctive lenten worship services are celebrated Monday through Friday. The week-ends are always in commemoration of the Resurrection and are joyous and bright.

The "Lenten worship atmosphere" is one of "BRIGHT SADNESS."

- A certain quiet sadness permeates the service
- The church is dimly lit/ vestments are dark
- The services are longer than usual
- The services are filled with Old Testament Readings
- There is little apparent movement in the service and a sort of monotonous quality exists.

It is exactly this "worship atmosphere," the length, the quality of monotony, that enables us to fully experience Great Lent.

- For normally, our day is almost entirely one of fuss, noise, rush and of the cares of the world.
- In Great Lent...we must first, QUIET DOWN...to restore in ourselves a measure of inner stability! Our earthly cares should be laid aside so we can begin to feel free, light, and inwardly happy! A happiness that is not, however wordly, but rather, a deep, inward happiness that comes from our soul having "touched the other world."

Thus, as we experience this mysterious liberation, the monotony and sadness of the service acquires a new significance.

- What at first appeared as monotony....now is revealed as peace!
- What sounded like sadness....is now experienced as the very first movements of the soul seeking renewal and reunion with God!

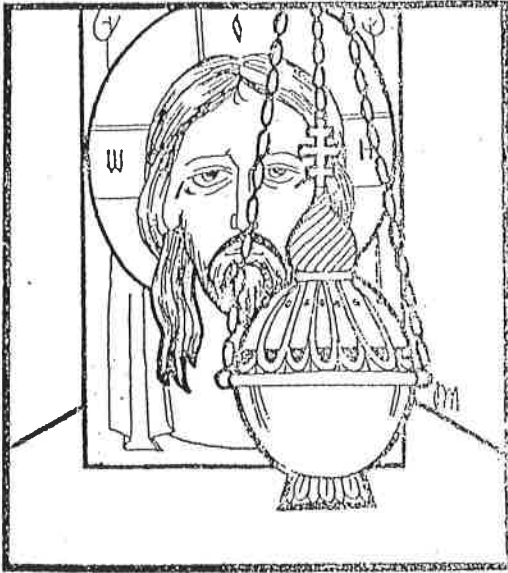
The "SAD BRIGHTNESS" of Great Lent is:

- The SADNESS of exile from God, of the wastefulness in life.
- The BRIGHTNESS of God's presence, of forgiveness, and the joy of the desire to encounter God more fully!

THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF GREAT LENT IS:

Preparation, yes; Renewal, yes; with the hope that we can all grow closer to God, and establish a great love of God and of man. The Church asks us all to "CLEAN HOUSE," to clean up our lives wherever it is needed to establish a CHANGE OF LIFE, to improve our lives from a Christian perspective and meet the Resurrected Lord!

HOW TO KEEP
THE
GREAT LENT



Great Lent is the time of preparation before Holy Week and Easter.

Lent lasts for 40 days, which leads into Palm Sunday week-end and Holy Week, which of course leads into Easter, PASCHA.

When we say Great Lent is the "time of preparation," we simply mean that we must GET READY for Easter.

We must dedicate these days to spiritual growth and renewal of our life. It's the time of the year to really dedicate our actions to living as good christians and hopefully applying this to our life all the time all year long.

WHAT CAN YOU DO DURING GREAT LENT ???

1- Realize that you are made of a body and a soul, two parts make up your body; the physical body AND the spiritual body. Dedicate Lent to growth of the spiritual body; feed the soul and live a good christian life.

2- WHAT DO WE MEAN.... Feed the soul ?

Just as our body lives on food, recreation and sleep, our soul lives on prayer, good deeds and should receive the first attention in our life.

To feed the soul, you should:

- a) Pray more during Great Lent, both at home and by attending the special lenten services at the church, usually celebrated on Wednesday and Friday evenings during Great Lent.
- b) Take a good look at your life and your habits. Do you treat other people in a good manner, are you concerned about other people, do you get along with other people, your parents, your brothers or sisters?
- c) If you have room for improvement in your life, then IMPROVE IT during Great Lent. Go out of your way to be nice to people.

3- LIVE A GOOD CHRISTIAN LIFE.

Treat other people as you want them to treat you in return. Don't create trouble. Be concerned about people less fortunate than you are; pray for them, and make a donation from your allowance to help agencies that exist to help the less fortunate, such as orphanages, Red Cross Society and etc.

4- Apply the following Lenten practices to your life:

- a) Fasting - On the first day of Lent, known as CLEAN MONDAY (in Greek, KATHARA THEFTERA), eat only clean, natural foods, such as fruits, vegetables and greens.

Try to do this as much as you can during Great LENT, especially on Wednesdays & Fridays. If this is difficult for you, at least fast from meat products. (Teenagers should be able to do this without any problem.) View your food fasting as "discipline of the body" and not simply as an item of sacrifice.

- b) Reading - Give yourself time each day to do some religious reading. Just as you prepare yourself for school each day, prepare your soul and mind for a good christian life. Get a religious book and read a chapter everyday. Read a chapter from the Bible everyday.

To do this, simply, close your TV or Stereo for 30 minutes each day during Great Lent, and dedicate this time to reading religious items.

- c) Living - Apply what you learn from your reading to your life, LIVE IT. Change your life, make it better, make yourself happier. We all can ALWAYS improve our life, so let's do it during Lent and make it become our life style all the time, all year long. Plan to see your priest and receive the Sacrament of Confession.