How many of us are ready for Spring? After an unusual 71 degree day in February, many are ready for Spring to come. We can sense that a refreshing spirit comes with the change of weather - a lightness, a newness, an excitement, a blooming welcome to a new season. In fact, one of the beauties of living in New England is that we get to experience each of the four seasons in their fullest, with each season bringing its own tone or spirit, which even affects our pace of life.

Of course, it’s not just the physical seasons of the year that bring about their own change and tone of life. In our Church calendar, we also have different seasons which try to direct our way or pace of life according to the preparation or celebration of a particular event. We have fasts which lead to feasts, we have preparation which end up in celebration, we have moments when we deprive ourselves, not because things are bad, but to help us better appreciate what we often take for granted. And obviously, periods of fasting will surely carry different tones than periods of celebration.

Well, we began the season of Great Lent on February 27th. From then until April 16th, the Church challenges us to change our pace of life, and maybe even alter its direction, by focusing on what is essential and eternal instead of what is urgent and too often superficial, to do whatever we can to look at where we are going, and try to reorient our lives more towards our Creator.

Lent is a season when the Church challenges us to live up to our Christian faith. Of course, we’re supposed to live our faith each and every day throughout our lives, but we all realize how hard that is to do. And sometimes we need a special reason, a little “push,” an added incentive, to get us back on track in our spiritual journey. That is the purpose for Lent – a limited period of time – to not only get us back on track, but to also prepare us for the greatest feast of the year, Christ’s Resurrection! So, what should we do to get the most out of this time of year?

The Church understands well that we humans are psycho-somatic being. Our bodies and minds are interrelated; we can’t separate the two. What affects our body will have an impact on our minds, and vice-versa. Translating this into religious terms, we could say that
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The mission of Sts. Constantine and Helen Church is to proclaim the Good News of Salvation through the Orthodox Christian Faith for the glory of our Triune God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We are a community of believers who journey towards our Lord Jesus Christ and one another through our WORSHIP, FELLOWSHIP, SPIRITUAL GROWTH, WITNESS, and SERVICE. We invite all people to join us on this journey in the Kingdom of Heaven.

We are under the jurisdiction of
His Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew
His Eminence, Archbishop Demetrios of America
His Eminence, Metropolitan Methodios of Boston

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our spiritual and material worlds deeply intersect with one another. This is why Lent combines spiritual exercises with physical ones – we combine prayer with fasting; we participate in more worship as we strive to increase our almsgiving. We understand that we can’t grow in spirit, if we’re not consciously attending to our material being. So the Church advises us to deliberately attend to our mind, body, and spirit throughout Lent.

First, we journey through Lent with a spirit of “JOYFUL SADNESS.” Even though we are depriving our bodies from certain foods and limit the entertainment in our normal lifestyle, still our spirit should be one of joy. We’re striving to enter into deeper communion with our Creator, who is the source of joy, as well as journeying towards the greatest event in history, the joyous resurrection of our Lord. So let us never forget to carry with us, and radiate onto others, the spirit of joy, no matter how hard our Lenten journey may seem.

But this joy is combined with a certain SADNESS. Not a sadness about changing our lifestyle, but a sober reflection on our life, with all its sins and shortcomings. Lent is a time of serious reflection and evaluation of one’s own life. Where have we fallen short in God’s eyes? Where have we not fulfilled our potential as holy saints? Where do we need to repent and change our direction, so that we can draw closer to our Lord instead of falling away from Him? This sober sadness should not lead to despair, but should guide us to a refreshing and renewing change, to a deeper life in Christ!

Along with this spirit of joyful sadness, other essential attitudes to cultivate throughout Lent are of mercy and compassion, forgiveness and reconciliation. It is not by coincidence that the Sunday before Lent is called the Sunday of Forgiveness. We cannot journey closer towards God if we are not ready to forgive one another. Lent is a time of reconciling with those from whom we have distanced ourselves.

Along with carrying a certain spirit, the Church also teaches us to practice concrete Lenten disciplines – both spiritual and physical. The traditional holy triad of disciplines for Lent are PRAYER, FASTING and ALMSGIVING. During this 40 day period, let’s try to increase our discipline of prayer. How do you pray, typically, each day? Try to discipline yourselves to actually pray each day. Get a prayer book, or if you need some guidance, come and talk with me, but begin saying and even increasing your prayers each day throughout this Lent. As we increase our personal prayers, Lent also calls us into a cycle of more communal prayers. We will have additional Church services throughout Lent – a Great Compline, our weekly Wednesday Pre-Sanctified Liturgy, our Friday Salutations to the Virgin Mary, along with our Sunday Liturgy. Make it a point to participate in at least one additional Church service as a part of your prayer discipline during the seven weeks of Lent.

Along with prayer, the most obvious aspect of Lent is fasting. For those who can follow a strict fast, this means not eating meat or dairy products for the entire Lenten period. If this seems too much for some, though, then try a limited fast – maybe fasting strictly during the first week of Lent and Holy Week, and then during the rest of Lent fasting only from meat. Remember, though, that fasting is not only about the types of food you eat, but also about the amounts of food. One saying of the Fathers put it this way, “Get up from the table always being a little hungry.” Fasting helps us learn to discipline ourselves, as well as to make us conscious of our dependence on God. We overcome the dictatorship of our bodily needs to focus on our spiritual needs. This implies not only fasting from food, but fasting from sinful habits as well!

Finally, together with increased prayer and fasting should come more generous almsgiving. Let us give more of our finances, our time and our talents to those in need. Our Lenten journey towards God can never be seen separate from our journey towards the other, especially those in need. Lent should be a time when we try to visit the sick or the lonely, reach out to someone in need, give from the many blessings we have to those less fortunate.

May our Lord guide and bless each one of us to carry the proper spirit and to practice the helpful disciplines so that our Lenten journey may be one that draws us closer to our Creator, and allows us to prepare carefully for His Holy Resurrection!

With love in Christ our Lord,

+Luke
When I was hired at Fordham University in 2000, I was told that I was to teach the core freshman theology course, Faith and Critical Reason. I guessed that many students in the class would resent being forced to take a theology course as a core requirement, for two reasons: (1) many students would be burned out on the theology courses they might have taken in a private Catholic high school; and (2) some students would question how theology could be taught in an academic setting when it is a matter of private, subjective “opinion.” The study of theology is virtually absent in schools at all levels in the United States, and many students find it an affront that Fordham would dare defy that consensus on the moratorium on the study of theology. These students, I thought, would be on the defensive, having already decided that taking this course was simply the price they had to pay for attending Fordham.

I structured my course to address this resistance by making students aware of how they arrived at their own ideas about theology... My goal in this part of the course is to make students aware that their ideas about theology, their interpretation of the religious experience in terms of being religious versus being spiritual, and their resistance to and caricatures of what it means to be religious did not emerge in a vacuum. Where they stand in relation to theology has much to do with a process that began almost 400 years ago with the scientific revolution and the Enlightenment. They are products of this history as much as they are actors in it. I end with a discussion of fundamentalism to demonstrate that what students see as the dominant face of religion is, ironically, a modern phenomenon. In making students more critically aware of the context within which they construct their own ideas about theology and religion, I help them to be more open to thinking otherwise. My goal is to show the students that it could be otherwise.

This “otherwise” is an understanding of the human being as called to a relationship of communion with God. I emphasize an understanding of the God-world relation in terms of theosis, which I prefer to translate as divine-human communion. Practices like prayer and fasting were not developed to prove something to God or to score points with God. They are time-tested practices that rewire the body to make it available to the always-on-offer presence of God. It is at this point of the course that my own Orthodox Christian faith is most apparent.

I want to show my students that their understanding of bad religion is based on bad theology—a nominalist, dualistic conception of a God who stands over and against the world, creating the world, dictating rules, and moving souls around after death. I hope to persuade them that good theology attempts to make sense of how God can be in relation to the not-God, the world, and still be God, or how the world can be in communion with God without being consumed by divinity...

I try to lead students away from overbearing überstructures designed to force people to think a cer-
tain way or think they are never doing enough. Instead, I lead them toward an understanding of being religious that has to do with formation of the person to be in a certain way—a being that is in communion with the divine. Being religious is less about agreeing to certain ideas or following certain rules, and more about transforming one’s mode of being in the world. Being religious is much like being an artist.

I use dance as an analogy. I ask the students whether someone who has studied dance but has never danced “knows” dance as well as someone who has trained as a dancer. They immediately and instinctively answer that the trained dancer knows more about dance. I then try to lead them to articulate what this knowing entails, if it’s not simply reading books about dance and attending performances. A dancer must submit to a regimen of training that usually begins with basic practices that must be mastered to the point where they are performed without thinking. This training is done under the tutelage of a teacher, who has been through the training. The student of dance then progresses to more advanced practices, still under the guidance of a teacher, struggling to integrate techniques of dance into their very being as a dancer.

All this training is usually done within an institutional setting, where there are clear hierarchies, boards of directors, politics, a community of dancers that don’t all like one another, dancers who are more concerned with their ego than simply dance for the sake of dance. And yet, in the midst of all this ugliness, there is a tradition of formation in dance that is passed on from generation to generation. It is time-tested, and through it one may emerge as a dancer, but it could not have been formed without institutionalization. It’s only by submitting to this tradition that one can lead oneself to a kind of performance where a dancer is not aware of the audience, is not dancing to the audience, but is dancing simply for the sake of dance. This is the kind of performance where the dancer doesn’t control the choreography; rather, the choreography and all that it attempts to express has seized the dancer. Those capable of this kind of performance are usually the saints of the tradition of dance. They don’t attempt to reify the past, but they add to the tradition while always remaining within it. This kind of performance could never be possible without submitting to the training, and it’s only through the practices of the tradition that one can hope to be this kind of dancer.

Being religious, then, is about being in a way that embodies the divine presence, and working toward being available to the divine presence in and through religious practices and tradition. Being religious is not a set of rules one must follow or a bunch of propositions to which one must assent; it is first and foremost an art form, an expression of beauty that is also truth and goodness. The rules and propositions of the tradition—and every tradition has its rules and propositions—aim at the production of the person as a work of art.

To illustrate this, I turn explicitly to the Christian commandment “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind . . . and . . . love your neighbor as yourself” (Mt 22:36–39). I pose a hypothetical to the students: If I had a neighbor whom I hated and toward whom I felt anger, but I gave that neighbor $5,000 so that he or she could avoid being “whacked” for not paying gambling debts, have I fulfilled the commandment? The students are smart enough to know that just giving money out of kindness or out of sympathy does not fulfill the commandment. I then tell them that, hypothetically, as a Christian, I have a problem—I know in my heart that I have hate and anger for my neighbor. As Maximus the Confessor says, “The one who sees a trace of hatred in his own heart through any fault at all toward any man whoever he may be makes himself completely foreign to...
continued from page 3

the love for God, because love for God in any way admits of no hatred for man.” How, then, do I change that? Once we get past comments like, “Well you can love someone without liking them,” students start to get the idea that love is something that one works toward, something that is realized in a way that has depth in and through certain practices. My hate for my neighbor may be overcome if I force myself to have conversations with him. Conversation is a practice. Students understand that two people who celebrate 50 years of commitment have a love that is different than when they first met. Such a celebration does not necessarily mean that the relationship was free of moments of temptation and possible betrayal. But students understand that for two people to celebrate such a love that has achieved a depth not present at the start of the relationship, practices had to be performed. These practices both sustain the relationship and make it possible for love to reach such depths.

Maximus is constantly in the back of my mind as I try to explain to the students that practices help to form virtues such as patience, kindness, honesty, empathy, forgiveness—to name only a few—that are needed to make growth in love possible and to avoid vices such as dishonesty, fear, anger, hatred, and self-loathing, which destroy relationships. The Christian commandment to love is a calling to a certain kind of relationship with God, a realization of love. Since God is love, it’s a relationship of communion with God, of experience of God, of theosis. This relationship, however, requires work. Not to merit the love—as if love could be merited—but to make oneself available for the fullness of love that God offers, which is nothing less than God’s very life.

Students are not quite sure what to say when I ask them how a practice like fasting contributes to the learning of love. I explain that fasting is linked to something we consume every day, food; that every time we fast, it’s an occasion to bring God to our awareness; and that this awareness helps sustain a relation with God that makes love possible. This makes sense to the students. If two people had a relationship of distance and never wrote to one another, then forgetfulness would be likely, and love could not grow. Since God is invisible, forgetfulness of God is one of the greatest human temptations. Fasting helps to mitigate that forgetfulness and, in so doing, makes love for God possible. In addition to memory, fasting as a discipline helps form the virtues mentioned above, which, again, are the condition for the possibility of realizing a depth of love.

There are plenty of Christians who follow all the rules and assent to all the required propositions but cannot seem to get past anger and hatred of those who disagree with their propositions and rules. And there are Christians who use faithfulness to rules and propositions as a platform for attacking others. But in the end, to be Christian is not simply to follow rules and assent to propositions; to be Christian is to love in the form of the greatest commandment. Like being a dancer, it is to perform love in such a way that love (God) has seized our being.

The question of this generation of college students is not “why God?” but “why religion?” My hope, perhaps overly optimistic, is to introduce a different way of understanding being religious, one that entails an experience of the living God. The possibility of such an experience requires tradition, institutionalization, and practices. But this experience emerges in a way that allows one to manifest the beauty of the tradition even amid its ugliness and to situate oneself in relation to this ugliness without anger, hatred, or self-righteousness.

My students are searching for purity. They need to learn to live with ambiguity. What I want them to see is that humans are created for communion with the living God. There is a way of being religious that is the experience of God, and it is this experience that gives them the greatest hope to negotiate the ambiguity in the world.
DISCIPLINES FOR GREAT LENT

Few people would disagree that life is too busy. We all keep up a hectic pace. Technology has brought many blessings, but has also made our lives run 24/7. Cell phones, texting, twittering, facebook, internet surfing, constant music and TV, along with incessant talking and never ending busyness.

Great Lent is a time when we try to take control over our lives. The Church challenges us to limit the control other things have over us. This means making a conscious decision to change our lifestyles to a slower, less active, quieter pace.

Not only will this give us a chance to rest, but more importantly it places us in a position to hear the voice of God. We cannot hear God in the midst of noise. God speaks to us in a quiet, still voice. Thus, we must create an atmosphere in our lives to allow this voice to be heard.

Here are some concrete ideas for changing your lifestyle during Lent:

1. Devote time every day to pray - 10 minutes, 15 minutes, half hour or even an hour per day. Get an Orthodox Prayer Book and be disciplined in your morning and evening prayers.

2. Read the Bible every day during Lent. We usually read the Old Testament books of Genesis, Proverbs and Isaiah during this period, but if you are not a regular reader of the Bible, begin by reading one of the Gospels - Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

3. Free up your schedule so that you are not in such a rush. Make time in your daily schedule to think more about what the meaning of life is. Where are you going in life? What are your goals and dreams? If you are at the latter stage of life, how are your preparing to meet Your Creator

4. Commit to coming to Church every Sunday and receiving Holy Communion. Attend also one extra weekly service - the Pre-sanctified Liturgy on Wednesday, or the Salutations on Friday, or Vespers on Saturday.

5. Go to Holy Confession. As hard as this may seem, make a decision to make an evaluation of your own life, go to a priest, and confess your sins in this Holy Sacrament.

6. Make the decision to watch no TV or movies for 40 days. Eliminate social media during Lent. Or drastically cut back. If this seems impossible, try to turn off the TV and internet for the entire first and fourth week of Lent, as well as during Holy Week.

7. Don’t listen to the Radio when you drive. Say the Jesus Prayer and other prayers. Try to create an atmosphere of silence outside, so that you can focus on the silence from within.

8. Fill your day with meaningful experiences and positive people. Do a good deed for another person each day

9. Try to control your speech, limiting meaningless conversations, joking, and a lack of seriousness. Fulfill St. Paul’s advice to bless people with every word that comes out of your mouth.
LENT - A TIME OF LIBERATION
Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco

“Let us keep the Fast not only by refraining from food, but by becoming strangers to all the bodily passions; that we who are enslaved to the tyranny of the flesh may become worthy to partake of the Lamb, the Son of God, slain of His own will for the sake of the world, and spiritually may celebrate the feast of the Savior’s Resurrection from the dead. So shall we be raised high in the glory of the virtues, and through our righteous actions we shall give joy to the Lord who loves humankind.”

A Lenten Hymn

As we embark on the journey of Great Lent, it is good and edifying to pause and reflect on the true significance the spiritual endeavor that lies before us. The Church's hymnography is a trustworthy guide, steering us away from all caricatures of Lent, reminding us of the full scope of our pilgrimage. Great Lent is a time of retreat to help us confirm our life to Christ. Great and Holy Lent is designed to be a period of transformation for us – yes, a time of struggle, but a joyful struggle to become more Christ-like in all that we think, in all that we do, and in all that we say.

Let us keep the Fast not only refraining from food. All too often we focus almost exclusively on what we eat and do not eat. This is important, but it is only part of our task. As Saint Basil the Great wrote, "Fasting is the strength-training of the godly....It is clear that fasting would not only teach self-control in relation to all kinds of foods, but also how to entirely escape and get rid of covetousness, greed, and all kind of evil."

Let us keep the Fast...by becoming strangers to all bodily passions. A fundamental concept in understanding Orthodox Christian spiritual life is passions. These are natural things necessary for life that have mutated and taken control of our lives. We must eat in order to live, but when our life is dominated by food we succumb to the passion of gluttony. Money is a necessity but when our life is centered on the acquisition of wealth, we are controlled by the passion of avarice. Humans need to love and be loved, but often times that love is deformed and we become slaves to the passion of lust. Lent is a time to practice self-control in order to tame these passions that have enslaved us to unhealthy cravings and disorient our life.

During this period of Great Lent, let us examine the essential values that guide us in our actions. Let us reorient our lives so that they are guided by God and His love rather than passionate desires; let us desire nothing more fervently than God and His love. Great Lent is a time of liberation, when we free ourselves from the shackles of things and desires, pursuing single-mindedly a deeper union with God and a more authentic reflection of God's love. Lent is a time to rejoice that, through self-discipline, we have grown closer to God and have become a more perfect image of God's compassion, mercy and love. As such, regardless of the struggle, this is a time of joy and hope. Embrace it as such and the joy of the Resurrection will fill the very depths of your existence.

Liberating ourselves from the slavery to passions of the flesh frees us to love God. Without the distractions of the passions, we can be more attentive to our relationship with God. Without destructive passionate goals, our lives are free to be guided by Christ's command to love God and our neighbor. This is the true meaning of μετανοια (repentance): a reorientation of our lives. And so the Church instructs us that a pure fast includes attentiveness in prayer and works of mercy to the poor.

Let these simple insights guide us during the coming 40 days. Be aware not only of ourselves but of others. Let us be attentive in all aspects of our life not only to our own needs but to the needs of others. Let this be a time when we not only curtail that which impedes us but a time when we develop the things that make us more Christ-like.

With these few thoughts I invite you to embark joyfully on the journey of the Great and Holy Lent. Do not be burdened by the discipline, but be renewed by the opportunity to grow into deeper communion with God. The discipline is neither easy nor always pleasant, but the results will bring joy to you and those around you. May this be a time of profound spiritual joy for you, your community, your family, and your loved ones. Our hope is in the Lord who never fails.
Repentance is expressed by the Greek work, *metanoia*. In a literal sense, this means a change of mind. Repentance is a change of one's disposition, one's way of thinking; a change of one's inner self. Repentance is a reconsideration of one's views, an alteration of one's life.

How can this come about? In the same way that a dark room into which a man enters is illumined by the rays of the sun. Looking around the room in the dark, he can make our certain things, but there is a great deal he does not see and does not even suspect is there. Many things are perceived quite differently from what they actually are. He has to move carefully, not knowing what obstacles he might encounter. When, however, the room becomes bright, he can see things clearly and move about freely. The same thing happens in our spiritual life.

When we are immersed in sin and our mind is occupied solely with worldly cares, we do not notice the state of our soul. We are indifferent to who we are inwardly, and we persist along a false path without being aware of it. But then a ray of God's Light penetrates our soul. And what filth we see in ourselves! How much untruth, how much falsehood! How hideous many of our actions prove to be, which we fancied to be so wonderful. And it becomes clear to us which is the true path.

If we then recognize our spiritual nothingness, our sinfulness, and earnestly desire our amendment, then we are near to salvation. From the depths of our soul we shall cry out to God: "Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy according to Your mercy!" "Forgive me and save me!" "Grant me to see my own faults and not to judge my brother!"

This spirit of self-evaluation, self-knowledge, and authentic repentance and turning back to God is the essence of our Lenten Journey. Lent is a time for us to prepare for the life to come and, more immediately, to prepare for the Glorious Resurrection of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Just as a stairway is constructed within a tall building in order to enable one, by climbing the steps, to easily ascend to the top, so, too, the various days in the year serve as steps for our spiritual ascent. This is similar to the role in our lives of the days of Great Lent and holy Pascha. Through Great Lent, we cleanse ourselves of the filth of sin. At Holy Pascha we experience the blessedness of Christ's Kingdom that is to come. In climbing a high mountain, one tries to eliminate all unnecessary weight. The less a person carries, the easier it is for him to climb, and the higher he is able to climb.

So, too, in order to ascend spiritually, it is necessary first of all to free ourselves from the weight of sin. This burden is taken from us through repentance, provided that we banish from ourselves all enmity and forgive each person whom we consider to be at fault before us. Once cleansed and forgiven by God, we are prepared to greet the Bright Resurrection of Christ. And what a priceless gift of God we receive then, at the culmination of our Lenten struggle.

Communing of the Body and Blood of the Risen Christ, unto life eternal – this is the aim of the Holy Forty Days. Not just on Pascha does one commune. On the contrary, on Pascha those people should commune who fasted, confessed and received the Holy Mysteries during Great Lent. In the last moments and days before Pascha, there is little opportunity for a proper and thorough confession; the time and the priests are occupied with the Passion services. We must prepare ahead of time.

Each time we receive the Mysteries of Christ, we are united with Christ Himself; each time it is soul-servning. This is an irreplaceable gift of Christ, an incomparable good. Let no one deprive himself of this joy and, instead of receiving Holy Communion on Pascha night, rush out of church early to eat meat and other foods! Communing of the Holy Mysteries on that night prepares us for the banquet in the eternal Kingdom of God.

As we continue in our journey of Great Lent, let us hasten to keep the spirit of forgiveness within us. May we constantly remember the words of the Gospel for Forgiveness Sunday, "if you forgive men their debts, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you forgive not men their debts, neither will your Father forgive your debts" (Matthew 6:14,15). May God grant us all the grace of this blessed time of repentance, and guide each of us closer to Him as the Feast of His Holy Resurrection approaches!
I WON’T FORCE MY KIDS TO GO TO CHURCH
By Ruth Meyer

“My parents forced me to eat three times a day growing up. No joke. Three times. Every. Single. Day. And it wasn’t always stuff I liked, either. Matter of fact, I complained a lot about what my mom made. ‘Ewww, gross! Meatloaf? Seriously? Mom you know we hate this stuff!’ So as I approached adulthood I made an important decision. Since my parents forced me to eat while I was growing up, I decided I was done with meals. Oh, here and there I’ll eat out of obligation. I mean, family traditions like Thanksgiving and Christmas, yeah, I’m there. But daily eating? No way. I’m done.

Set in any other context, excuses people make for not going to church sound completely ridiculous. But set in the context of Christianity, people say these things in all seriousness while others nod sagely in somber agreement.

“My son told me a few weeks into school that he didn’t like the teacher. He wasn’t getting excited enough about learning, and he didn’t really feel connected to the other kids in his class, so I told him he never had to go back to school again. Who wants to waste their time going somewhere they aren’t being fulfilled?

“We’ve never forced our daughter to stay off the road when playing. We don’t want to restrict her imagination. We allow her the freedom to make her own choices in life.”

Now maybe the above analogies sound ridiculous. I’m sure you’re probably thinking, “No loving parent would let their kids decide whether to go to school or not, and they definitely wouldn’t let their kid play in traffic. That’s endangering their lives. It’s a matter of life or death.” And that is exactly the point. This is a matter of life or death for your child. Eternity is at stake.

In our family, church is a non-negotiable. It’s a non-negotiable because we understand that how we raise our children, and what we teach them (or don’t teach them) about Jesus carries eternal consequences. And as parents we have a responsibility to share with them what God has done in our lives through the love of Jesus. So we read the Bible together at night and we pray together. We go to church. We talk about God at home and in the car and at the park. Will they always be excited about getting up and going to church? I hope so, but I doubt it. But regardless, my wife and I still make them go because we are their parents and we know what’s best for them. And so, when they complain we will tell them why gathering together with other believers is a non-negotiable. Just like when they complain that we serve them healthy meals we explain why we eat vegetables and not just cake. We take them to school every morning, no matter how much they complain or bellyache. And we explain why school is so important. We set boundaries and limits while they are playing outdoors. We tell them to look both ways when they cross the street, not because we said so, but because to do otherwise means possibly being hit by a car. We do these things because we love them and we are looking at the long term outcome, not what will make them happiest in any given moment.
“Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.”
Proverbs 22:6

Will all of that ensure that they turn out to be the model upstanding citizens that my wife and I hope? No. It’s even possible for children to be brought up in a loving Christian home and still turn away from Jesus later. That is out of our control. As parents, our responsibility is to teach our children about the world and about God.

We teach them how God created this world perfectly. We teach them how the world became broken through that first sin of Adam and Eve. When their own brokenness shows itself, we point it out, and then we point to the One who came to heal that brokenness: Jesus. And they are never too young to begin learning these things. Each of our children learned to pray while still in highchairs.

Our responsibility as Christian parents is about so much more than just taking our kids to church on Sunday mornings.

To say, as a parent, “I won’t force my kids to go to church. I’ll let them decide on their own,” sounds so enlightened. But it’s the most dangerous thing a parent could say. It would be safer for you to let your children play on the highway in rush hour traffic than to let them decide whether or not they wanted to go to church. One of those options carries temporary consequences (if you let your child play on the highway in rush hour traffic they will die), and the other carries potential eternal consequences.

Church isn’t just one good choice among many. Church isn’t a building. Church, properly understood, is the body of Christ, the gathering of believers in a specific place. And as such, it is a place where we all belong. We are all equally sinful before God and equally in need of a Savior. Church isn’t just a place you go. It’s not a place that you go to feel better about yourself. It’s not entertainment. Its purpose is not to give you ten easy steps to fix your marriage. Church is the gathering of believers to receive what God has come to give in Jesus.

Jesus Himself said, “For where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I among them.” Matthew 18:20

So when we come together as the body of Christ, the church, we confess our sins. Then, having confessed our brokenness and need, we hear those great and unfathomable words of forgiveness. We hear that, though our sins are many, and we in no way deserve grace, God in Jesus has forgiven us. We hear God’s word spoken to us as Scripture is read, and we speak those words to each other through various parts of the service. We sing songs and hymns praising and proclaiming what Jesus has done for us. We hear sermons that proclaim the good news of forgiveness in Jesus.

Don’t give up and don’t give in to those outside voices that tell you how much more important sleep, or schoolwork, or band, or sports, or anything may be than coming together for worship each week. Instead, “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” (Hebrews 10:23-25)
Come to our annual Lenten Retreat

Why Be Orthodox: Understanding Orthodox Spiritual Practices & Why Are People Leaving the Church and What We Can Do About It

9:30am-12:30pm Saturday, March 11

OUR GUEST SPEAKER, ARISTOTLE PAPANIKOLAOU, is Professor of Theology and the Archbishop Demetrios Chair in Orthodox Theology and Culture. He also co-directs the Orthodox Christian Studies Center at Fordham University. He is a "PK" (priest's kid), and graduated Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology with an MDiv in 1991. He received his PhD from the University of Chicago. He is the author of The Mystical as Political: Democracy and Non-Radical Orthodoxy. He loves Byzantine Music, Russian literature, and is a bit of a foodie.

Other Lenten Talks:

“Practicing the Spiritual Disciplines”

6:00pm Wednesday, March 1
Parenting Toward the Kingdom: 
*Orthodox Christian Principles of Child-Rearing*

Dr. Philip Mamalakis, PhD, offers a practical and enlightening book to help parents raise their children according to our Orthodox tradition.

The Orthodox Christian tradition is filled with wisdom and guidance about the biblical path of salvation. Yet this guidance remains largely inaccessible to parents and often disconnected from the parenting challenges we face in our homes.

Parenting Toward the Kingdom will help you make the connections between the spiritual life as we understand it in the Orthodox Church and the ongoing challenges of raising children. It takes the best child development research and connects it with the timeless truths of our Christian faith to offer you real strategies for navigating the challenges of daily life.

6:00pm 
Wednesday, March 15th.

Dr. Mamalakis will be speaking in our Church about this book on Come and hear him!!!

You can purchase this book at our Holy Wisdom Church Bookstore.

“How To Live a Spiritual Life in a Secular World”

Fr. Ephraim Peters
6:00pm Wednesday, March 22

“How Contemporary Miracles”

Fr. Dimitrios Moraitis
6:00pm Wednesday, March 29
HOLY WISDOM BOOKSTORE

I just wanted to send out an informative announcement to let everyone know what we have to offer in our Holy Wisdom Bookstore. We begin our Lenten journey on Clean Monday, February 27, and hopefully we all will take our spiritual journey seriously. One way to do this is by reading a spiritual book. Pascha is right around the corner and we all want to be prepared as much as possible for this blessed time. We can better understand our journey, and be better prepared by reading some of the great books we have in our bookstore.

Here is a small sample of some of the items and books we have to offer you. Books on Spirituality, Scripture, Prayer, Lives of Saints, and Theology. We also have Cookbooks, Icons, Egg Wraps, Prayer Ropes, Car Icons, Incense burners, Religious music CDs and more.

Here is a small description of just a few books that would be appropriate for our Lenten journey, which we have in our Holy Wisdom Bookstore:

**THE LENTEN SPRING**
by Thomas Hopko

Meditations for the modern reader presenting the relevance of the church’s understanding and traditions related to Great Lent, the Services, the Spiritual Disciplines, which all help us journey for 40 Days up to Holy Week, and then to experience our Lord’s Passion and Resurrection.

**THE JESUS PRAYER**
by Frederica Mathewes-Green

A comprehensive book helping the reader understand and practice the Jesus prayer. The history, theology, and spirituality of this rich Orthodox tradition, with practical steps for making it a part of your everyday discipline.

**THIRTY STEPS TO HEAVEN**
by Vassilios Papavassiliou

Written for the ordinary Christian to apply the lessons of St. John Climacus’ *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* to their everyday life.

And there’s so many other great books for spiritual reading!

Please feel free to find me in coffee fellowship if you would like to purchase any item for our new store.

May we all have a Blessed and Holy Lenten Journey towards Pascha.

Lorna McWilliam
Parish Council Corner

Years ago we used to have encyclopedias to refer to when we wanted to find the answer to something. Now we have Google that can search for an answer to our question just by speaking into our cell phone! If you're like me, I find it easier just to pick up a book and look for the answer to my question.

I have discovered a really great resource book that we are selling in our Church’s Holy Wisdom Bookstore.

"A Guide to Greek Traditions and Customs in America". Even if you are not Greek, but are looking for a guide to our Orthodox Faith or you have married someone who is Greek Orthodox, this book will guide you to the traditions we follow. I have bought this book as a Baptism gift for my great niece, a Christmas gift for my goddaughter, and an engagement gift to someone who is marrying a Greek Orthodox.

This book is an easy-to-read guide and it will give you an explanation of why, how, and when traditions are followed. Feast days, Name days, Holidays, customs when planning a Wedding or Baptism, what to say on special occasions, the history of the Orthodox Church, Orthodox beliefs on death, and everything else you may want to know, but didn't know where to find the answer.

Now that Lent is here and you might be looking for an Easter gift for someone special, I highly recommend this book. Stop by our Bookstore during coffee hour and pick one up from Lorna McWilliam.

We have some very exciting events coming up this year, fundraisers and time for fellowship and fun! I look forward to sharing these events with you in the upcoming months.

To all those celebrating a special occasion, may God grant you many blessings!

My condolences to the family of Charlie Chito. May his memory be eternal.

I wish you all a Kali Sarakosti (Good Lent)!

Lisa Healy
Parish Council President

Philoptochos News

We will be having our next Philoptochos meeting on March 6th at 6:00. We will be discussing all our plans for 2017. Please come and bring new ideas for things for us to do throughout this year.

We will be discussing our plans and agenda for Easter, as well as our Spaghetti Dinner, which is set for April 29th.

Also I was notified by the Metropolis Philoptochos that this is an election year, so we will be having elections in June.

Please come so we can discuss what we have to do.

Stay healthy and happy.

With love and appreciation,

Evelyn Pappas

SAVE DATES FOR SUMMER

Metropolis of Boston Summer Camp
Week 5 - July 31 - Aug 6
Dear Beloved Parishioners

Our Church will once again sponsor a MISSIONS TEAM TO MEXICO to serve our Lord Jesus Christ and His Church in a cross-cultural setting.

This will be the SIXTH TIME our Church will send such a group. We have 20 people participating in this exciting mission (and more on our waiting list):
The Veronis Family,
Neal/Olivia/John Nesluson,
Lisa Healy, Nicole Wilson,
Steve/Louisa Foisy, Kara Bilis,
Tony/Maia Beaudry, Smaranda Cojocaru,
Matvey Zhuk, Bill Thompson, Dimitri Gaginas, Please keep our team in your prayers!

As in past years, we will travel to Mexico and work with the PROJECT MEXICO, while staying at the St. Innocent Orphanage. We will go from July 21-27, 2017.

Our primary goal will be to help construct a home for a needy family in Rosarito. The week we are there, we will work with 125 Orthodox Christians from around the country, and will build FIVE SIMPLE HOMES. We will also spend time with the teenage orphans at the St. Innocent home, as well as share our faith and spend time with the local people we meet.

In order for our group to participate in this mission trip, WE ARE RAISING $20,000, which will pay for the supplies and materials needed to build the house, our food and lodging at the orphanage, our flights to San Diego and the van we must rent for Mexico.

Would you prayerfully consider becoming a spiritual and financial partner with us on our mission?

As a financial partner, you can send a tax-deductible donation to Sts. Constantine and Helen Church. Please write Project Mexico in the memo line of the check. You can learn more about Project Mexico on their website www.projectmexico.org.

Thank you for helping our Church fulfill its part in our Lord’s global mission and outreach!!

In Christ’s love,

+Luke
MAKE A SPECIAL DONATION DURING LENT IN HONOR OR MEMORY OF A LOVED ONE

Please see Fr. Luke or our Church Treasurers to dedicate your offering to someone.

- Lenten Altar Flowers - $40/week
- Fri Salutations Flowers - $30/week
- Cross Sunday Flowers - $75
- Incense (for a year) - $200
- Charcoal (for a year) - $150
- Altar Candles (for a year) - $100
- Garlands at Entry of Church - $40
- Palms & Trees - Palm Sunday - $200
- Bridegroom Icon Flowers - $40

LEARN TO PAINT YOUR OWN ICON

12 Three Hour Sessions
Over 6 Saturdays
or An Intensive Two Week
(3 hours/day) Class
(will start in mid-March)

Cost: $100 for all materials

Limited Space for 5 Students
Contact Fr. Luke if you are interested

With Iconographer Olga Poloukhine

Olga is a lifelong Russian Orthodox Christian born in France, who recently joined our Church. She is an iconographer and artist, who has painted icons in churches and for individuals. You can see her work at http://studio.poloukhine.com/
**USHERS & GREETERS SCHEDULE**

Mar 5 Arthur Bilis, Del Monroe, Chris Geotis, Thomai Gatsogianis, Trish Lareau

March 12 Marie McNally, Matt Benoit, Lisa Healy, Nick Seferi

March 19 Neal Neslusan, Mary Papageorge, Jimmy Karapanos, Cindy Johnson

March 26 Nicoleta Cojocaru, Zach Gianaris, Garry Ross, Jared Quill, George Kerbici

**COFFEE FELLOWSHIP:**

Mar 5 - Kathy Bilis, Sara Darligiannis, Marie Monroe, Charlotte Neslusan, Carolyn Niemeck, Stephanie Quill,

Mar 12 - Thomai Gatsogiannis, Trish Lareau, Irini Costomiris Deb Raymond, Evangeline Wilson

Mar 19– Donna Cooney, Athena Cooney, Leah Didonato, Jaime Ross, Betty Tonna

March 26 Marie McNally, Christa Benoit, Sandi Kunkel, Mary Seferi

**WEDNESDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY**

7:00 am - 8:00 am
Every Saturday
Come and Join Us.

**YOUTH EPISTLE READERS**

March 5 - Zach Beaudry
March 12 - Lily Mueller
March 19 - Maia Beaudry
March 26 - Theodora Veronis
April 2 - Panayiota Veronis
April 9 - Olivia Neslusan
April 16 - Gabriella Ross

**EYARLY RISERS BIBLE STUDY**

7:00 am - 8:00 am
Every Saturday
Come and Join Us.

**LENTEN SERVICES**

PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGIES (followed by a Pot-Luck Dinner)
Every Wednesday, 6:00 pm
March 1, 8, 15, 22, 29

SALUTATIONS SERVICE TO THE VIRGIN MARY
Every Friday, 6:30pm
March 3, 10, 17, 24

GREAT COMPLINE
Monday Mar 6, 13

THE ANNUNCIATION
Divine Liturgy 9:30
March 25
ORTHODOXY 101
Adult Catechism Classes

SUNDAYS
March 12 - 11:45am - 12:45
March 19 - 11:45am-12:45
March 26 - 11:45am-12:45

Eight Classes for all who want to Learn the Basics of our Orthodox Christian Faith

Everyone Welcome! Lifelong Orthodox as well as Non-Orthodox!!!

Look for our safe and convenient Online Giving at bottom left of Church webpage at www.schwebster.org

NEW YOUNG ADULT GATHERING
Everyone ages 18-30 come and join us for an evening of faith and fellowship.
7:30pm Thursday, March 23th

SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION

The Sacrament of Confession has always been a central part of an Orthodox Christian’s journey in Great Lent and the preparation for Pascha. Anyone interested in participating in this Sacrament of Confession and Reconciliation can plan on doing it after any Lenten Service, or make set a time with Fr. Luke.

Learn more about your Orthodox Faith.
Listen to Orthodox podcasts, music and interesting teachings:

www.myocn.net

www.AncientFaith.com
Remembering Our Church Family

Important Dates in MARCH:

Make a visit, give a call, or express your congratulations to members of our Church family who celebrate special days during this month.

BIRTHDAYS:

March 1     Amber Kelly
March 4     Nicholas Adamopoulos
March 5     Susan Rivelli
March 8     Lorraine Vesho
March 8     Tasi Vriga
March 10    Grady Ross
March 13    Marie Monroe
March 13    Nike Raymond
March 17    Liberty Brassard
March 18    Dan Healy
March 21    Betty Tonna
March 22    Gail Avlas
March 22    Jessica Awad
March 24    Jordan Bouthillier
March 25    Mary Fatsi
March 25    George Milios
March 27    Paul Xanthopoulos
March 28    Hanna Kunkel
March 28    John Grzyb
March 28    Lisa Healy
March 31    Rayne Seraphim Purcell

NAMEDAYS:

March 25     The Annunciation
             Evangelos Moutoudis
             Evangeline Wilson

March 26     Archangel Gabriel
             Gabriela Ross

Congratulations to Coral Cynthia Rose, Daughter of Amber & Dylan Breton On her 40 Day Churching!

A DAILY LENTEN PRAYER

Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of laziness, idle curiosity, lust for power and vain talk.

Give to me instead a spirit of humility, chastity, patience and love.

Yes Lord and King, help me to see my own faults, and keep me from judging what others do.

For you are blessed unto the ages of ages. Amen.
HOLY SCRIPTURE FOR OUR LENTEN JOURNEY

Not everyone who says to me “Lord, Lord” will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.

Matthew 7:21

Admonish the idlers, encourage the faint hearted, help the weak, be patient with all people

1 Thessalonians 5:14

“We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we life, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord.”

Romans 14:7-8

“And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. And may He so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints... For this is the will of God, your sanctification.”

1 Thessalonians 4:1

The Pre-Sanctified Liturgy & Pot-Luck Dinner Every Wednesday

THE PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGY (6:00pm - 7:00pm), is an opportunity to receive the life-giving and spiritually nourishing Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in the middle of the week. We will also hear a reflection to educate and inspire us in our Lenten journey.

Following the Liturgy enjoy a delicious LENTEN POT-LUCK DINNER AND FELLOWSHIP (7:00-8:00), which all who have participated before have thoroughly enjoyed, along with a talk.

These Wednesday evenings of WORSHIP, EDUCATION and FELLOWSHIP will enhance our spiritual journeys during Lent.

“A Lenten Hymn

“O Christ, in Your compassion, I entreat You through fasting and repentance to restore my soul, which has been slain by the fruit of disobedience. Grant that I may ever walk in the straight path of Your holy commandments, so that in the company of all who love You, I may share in Your divine glory and praise Your goodness towards all people, O Jesus.”

- A Lenten Hymn
Thank You to those who sponsor our monthly bulletin!

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www.sspcpa.com

Robert Mirandola D.C.
Newtonville, MA 02460, Dr.Mirandola@gmail.com

Thank You to those who sponsor our monthly bulletin!
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LENTEN FASTING & FEASTING

Lent should be more than a time of fasting. It should also be a joyous season of feasting. Lent is a time to fast from certain things and to feast on others. It is a season in which we should:

Fast from judging others; feast on Christ dwelling in others.
Fast from emphasis on differences; feast on the unity of all life.
Fast from apparent darkness; feast on the reality of light.
Fast from thoughts of illness; feast on the healing of God.
Fast from words that pollute; feast on phrases that purify.
Fast from discontent; feast on thanksgiving.
Fast from anger; feast on patience.
Fast from pessimism; feast on optimism.
Fast from worry; feast on God’s care over us.
Fast from complaining; feast on appreciation.
Fast from negatives; feast on affirmatives.
Fast from unrelenting pressures; feast on unceasing prayer.
Fast from hostility; feast on reconciliation.
Fast from bitterness; feast on forgiveness.
Fast from self-concern; feast on compassion for others.
Fast from personal anxiety; feast on eternal Truth.
Fast from discouragement; feast on hope.
Fast from facts that depress; feast on verities that uplift.
Fast from lethargy; feast on enthusiasm.
Fast from suspicion; feast on truth.
Fast from thoughts that weaken; feast on promises that inspire.
Fast from shadows of sorrow; feast on the light of serenity.
Fast from idle gossip; feast on purposeful silence.
Fast from overwhelm problems; feast on prayer that undergirds.

Let us fast, but also feast!!!