



### *Taking Lent Seriously con't*

perhaps we will be able to carry some of this over into the paschal season – and beyond.

What can we do? How do we not squander this time set aside for God?

- **Prayer** - Make provision to be in church for some of the Lenten services. Start with the first week of Great Lent and the Canon of Repentance of Saint Andrew of Crete. Assume or resume a regular Rule of Prayer in your home. Read the psalms and other Scripture carefully and prayerfully. Pray for others.
- **Charity** – Open your heart to your neighbor. If you believe that Christ dwells within you, then try to see Christ in your neighbor. Make your presence for the “other” encouraging and supportive. Restrain your “ego” for the sake of your neighbor. Help someone in a concrete manner this Great Lent.
- **Fasting** – Set domestic goals about the manner in which you will observe the fast. Test yourselves. Resist minimalism. If you “break” the fast, do not get discouraged or “give up,” but start over. Assume that your Orthodox neighbor is observing the fast. Seek silence. Allow for a different atmosphere in the home.

Jesus set the example of fasting for forty days. We imitate Him for the same period of forty days. If it was hard for Him, it will be hard for us— but not as hard as it was for Him. Jesus went to the Cross following His “holy week” in Jerusalem. We follow Him in our holy week observance and practices. Jesus was raised from the dead following His crucifixion, death and burial. We seek the resurrection of our spiritual lives here and now as we await our own death at the appointed time and the resurrection of the dead at the end of time.

“Taking Lent seriously”—Father Alexander Schmemmann’s phrase—is a concrete sign of taking God seriously. Our surrounding culture is not serious about taking anything too seriously. When serious issues arise, however, people have a difficult time dealing with them. Yet Jesus was very serious, especially when it came to issues of life and death – and God and salvation, and so forth. Great Lent helps us to focus on these very themes, thereby making it meaningful and important for our lives.

## **THE SYNODICON: THE AFFIRMATION OF THE ORTHODOX FAITH**

As the Prophets beheld, as the Apostles have taught, as the Church has received, as the Teachers have dogmatized, as the universe has agreed, as Grace has shown forth, as Truth has revealed, as falsehood has been dissolved, as Wisdom has presented, as Christ has awarded: thus we declare, thus we assert, thus we preach Christ our true God, and honor His Saints in words, in writings, in thoughts, in sacrifices, in churches, in Holy Icons; on the one hand worshipping and reverencing Christ as God and Lord; and on the other hand honoring as true servants of the same Lord of all, and accordingly offering them veneration.

This is the Faith of the Apostles; this is the Faith of the Fathers; this is the Faith of the Orthodox; this is the Faith which has established the universe

### **THE FIRST SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST**

By nature You are beyond measure, O Lord; yet in these last times You deigned to accept the limitations of the flesh. By your incarnation You assumed all aspects of our human nature. We now inscribe the image of your likeness so that we might worthily venerate it, and that we might be raised up to your love from which we draw your great mercy, according to the tradition of your holy Apostles. Vespers, at Psalm 140

### **QUESTIONS**

1. What do others see in me? Do they recognize the image and likeness of God?
2. How can I transform myself, my earthly canvas, into a heavenly image?
3. Is Christ really central to my whole life, in all I think, in all I say, in all I do?

### **TROPAR OF THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY**

We venerate Thy most pure image, O Good One; and ask forgiveness of our transgressions, O Christ our God. Of Thy good will Thou wast pleased to ascend the Cross in the flesh and deliver Thy creatures from bondage to the enemy. Therefore with thankfulness we cry aloud to Thee: Thou hast filled all with joy, O our Savior, for Thou alone hast come to save the world.

### **KONTAKION**

No one could describe the Word of the Father; but when He took flesh from thee, O Theotokos, He accepted to be described, and restored the fallen image to its former state by uniting it to divine beauty. We confess and proclaim our salvation in words and images.

**Martyr Kyriake of Rome**  
Commemorated on [March 20](#)

St Kyriake was the sister of the Holy Martyr Photina (Svetlana) the Samaritan Woman, with whom the Savior conversed at Jacob's Well (John. 4:5-42).

Summoned to appear before Nero, the emperor asked the saints whether they truly believed in Christ. All the confessors refused to renounce the Savior. Then the emperor gave orders to smash the martyrs' finger joints. During the torments, the confessors felt no pain, and their hands remained unharmed.

St Photina and her five sisters Anatolia, Phota, Photis, Paraskeva and Kyriake were sent to the imperial court under the supervision of Nero's daughter Domnina. St Photina converted both Domnina and all her servants to Christ. She also converted a sorcerer, who had brought her poisoned food to kill her.

Three years passed, and Nero sent to the prison for one of his servants, who had been locked up. The messengers reported to him that Sts Sebastian, Photinus and Joses, who had been blinded, had completely recovered, and that people were visiting them to hear their preaching, and indeed the whole prison had been transformed into a bright and fragrant place where God was glorified.

Nero then gave orders to crucify the saints, and to beat their naked bodies with straps. On the fourth day the emperor sent servants to see whether the martyrs were still alive. But, approaching the place of the tortures, the servants fell blind. An angel of the Lord freed the martyrs from their crosses and healed them. The saints took pity on the blinded servants, and restored their sight by their prayers to the Lord. Those who were healed came to believe in Christ and were soon baptized.

The sisters of St Photina also suffered terrible torments. Nero gave orders to cut off their breasts and then to flay their skin. An expert in cruelty, the emperor readied the fiercest execution for St Photis: they tied her by the feet to the tops of two bent-over trees. When the ropes were cut the trees sprang upright and tore the martyr apart. The emperor ordered the others beheaded, except for St Photina.

**Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-12:2 (Epistle)**

By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented – of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us. Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

**John 1:43-51 (Gospel)**

The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, "Follow Me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

And Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!" Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael answered and said to Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." And He said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

