

Sunday Bulletin – March 15th, 2026
Sunday of the Adoration of the Cross



Sts. Peter & Paul Ukrainian Orthodox Church
1025 N Belle Vista Ave, Youngstown, Ohio 44509



Sts. Peter & Paul Ukrainian
Orthodox Church

Українська Православна
Церква Св Петра і Павла

1025 N. Belle Vista Ave
Youngstown, OH 44509

Phone: 330-799-3830

Email: stspeterpauluoc@gmail.com

Fr. Mykola Zomchak
Pastor

Anna Anderson
Choir Director

Chuck Woloschak
President of the Parish

Ministries:

Altar Servers
Church Choir
Church School
Adult Education

St. Mary's Sisterhood
Sts. Peter & Paul Brotherhood
Senior UOL Chapter
Junior UOL Chapter
Youth Ministry

Orphanage Mission Ministry
Bingo Team

Fr Mykola Zomchak - Editor

Website:

<https://www.stspeterpauluoc.org>

STS Peter & Paul UOC

*Having suffered the Passion for us,
O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us*



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CHANGEABLE PARTS OF THE DIVINE LITURGY

Tone 6 Troparion (Resurrection)

By Your Cross You destroyed death. To the thief You opened Paradise. For the Myrrhbearers You changed weeping into joy. And You commanded Your disciples, O Christ God, to proclaim that You are risen,// granting the world great mercy.

Tone 1 Troparion of the Cross

O Lord, save Your people, and bless Your inheritance! Grant victories to the Orthodox Christians over their adversaries; and by virtue of Your Cross,// preserve Your habitation!

Tone 7 Kontakion (Cross)

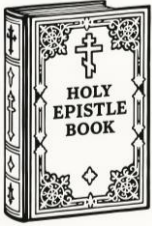
Now the flaming sword no longer guards the gates of Eden; it has been mysteriously quenched by the wood of the Cross. The sting of death and the victory of hell have been vanquished; for You, O my Savior, have come and cried to those in hell://
“Enter again into Paradise!”

(Instead of the Trisagion, we sing:)

Before Your Cross, we bow down in worship, O Master, and Your holy Resurrection we glorify.

Tone 6 Prokeimenon

O Lord, save Your people, / and bless Your inheritance!
V. To You, O Lord, will I call. O my God, be not silent to me!



The Reading is from the Letter of St Paul to Hebrews 4:14-5:6

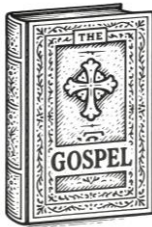
Brethren: Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness. Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins. And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: "You are My Son, today I have begotten You." As He also says in another place: "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek".

Alleluia and Verses Tone 8

V. Remember Your congregation, which You have purchased of old! (Ps. 73:2)

V. God is our King before the ages; He has worked salvation in the midst of the earth! (Ps. 73:13)

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia



The reading is from the Gospel according to St. Mark 8:34-9:1

When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." And He said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power."

(Instead of "It is truly meet...", we sing the following) Hymn to the Theotokos

All of creation rejoices in you, O Full of Grace: the assembly of angels and the race of men. O sanctified temple and spiritual paradise, the glory of virgins, from whom God was incarnate and became a Child – our God before the ages. He made your body into a throne, and your womb He made more spacious than the heavens. All of creation rejoices in you, O Full of Grace. Glory to you!

Communion Hymn

Praise the Lord from the heavens! Praise Him in the highest! (Ps 148:1)

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia

EMORY ETERNAL

PLEASE PRAY FOR RESTING OF THE SOULS

Robert Rudolph, Patricia Mogish, Helen Fusco, Maria Koval-Melnykovich, Peter Hucul, Mary Bobersky, Walter Duzzny, Dennis Currie, Julian, Vasyl Zomchak, Heather Rhodes, Joe Zemko, Jeff Ulrich, Judy Cebriak, William Zylka, Serhiy, Pat Mamajack, Arlene Hawryluk, Mary C. Moon, Lidiia Zabrodina, Metro Senedak. Victims of the war in Ukraine.





PRAYER LIST

PLEASE PRAY FOR HEALING, COMFORT, AND SPIRITUAL PEACE

Metropolitan Anthony, Archbishop Daniel, Sandy Burlock, Dominick Woloschak, Beth Zets, Shirley Duffy, Denny Lightner, Kevin Finnerty, Alice Dobransky, Jamie Maluk, Alexandr, Missouri, Jane, Sam, Lorenzo, Lori, Christine Kline, Larry, Soldier Ivan, Dolly Mehalco, Stephen Shonn, Thelma Zemko, Artur Bohuslav, Lori Hayda, Shirley Duffy, Michele (Senediak) Caulder, Dobrodiyka Lilya, Sandy, Marilyn O'Leary, Harold Owens, Marianne Carmack, Nicholas Yurchyk, Pauline Witkowsky, Eileen Maluk, Peter

Anderson, Albert Auden, Boris & Kathleen Vuksanovich, Kathy Zebel. People Suffering from any Illnesses. Ukrainian people suffering from war.

THIS MONTH OUR PARISH CELEBRATES



MARCH BIRTHDAYS

1 Kathryn Walcowiec	20 Kimberly S. Bobersky
3 Nadiya Lyubuska	23 Nicholas Majetich
7 Marcia Goodge	25 Boris Vuksanovich
7 Samuel Goodge	25 Katherine Zomchak
7 Theresa Semchee	28 Gregory Battisti
10 Luba Medved	28 Alice Mae Gregory
12 Ronald N. Kichton	30 Thomas Lane
12 Michael III Woloschak	30 Laura Zavadil
16 Karen Yuschak	31 Nicholas Inchak
20 Lindsay Anderson	

Dear Parishioners and Friends, WE NEED HELP!

Please offer your time to help at the Bingo kitchen on available dates (?)

BINGO KITCHEN WORK SCHEDULE 2026 (Updated Mar 6)

Date	Register	Server	Server
Mon., Mar. 16	Janna Williams	Carla Rogenski	Chris Buccino
Mon., Mar. 23	Crystal Walkowiec	Barb Ross	?
Mon., Mar. 30	Karen Semchee	?	?
Mon., Apr. 6	Crystal Walkowiec	?	?

Please call or text Annie Woloschak if you would like to help – 330-766-0182

OUR OFFERINGS TO THE LORD	On March 1	On March 8
General:	\$ 1958.00	\$ 1727.00
Renovation:	\$ 00.00	\$ 00.00
Online Donations on Tithe.ly	\$ 155.00	\$ 50.00

Most recent Pyrohy Sale - \$723.00

Liturgical Schedule & Feast Days

SERVICE AND FEAST DAY SCHEDULE



* (HEARING **CONFESSIONS** ON SUNDAYS BEFORE LITURGY 8:30AM - 9:15AM)

- Sunday, March 15, 9:30 AM – **Divine Liturgy, 3rd Sunday of Lent, Adoration of Cross** (Mk.8:34-9:1)
- Sunday, March 15, 5:00 PM – **Sunday Lenten Vespers**
– at Holy Trinity Romanian Orthodox Church at 626 Wick Ave, Youngstown OH
- Wednesday, March 18, 6:30 PM – **Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts. Potluck Dinner**
- Sunday, March 22, 9:30 AM – **Divine Liturgy, 4th Sunday of Great Lent, Ven John Listvychnyk** Mk.9:17-31
- Sunday, March 22, 5:00 PM – **Sunday Lenten Vespers**
– at Saint John the Baptist Orthodox Church at 2220 Reeves Road Warren, OH
- Thursday, March 26, 6:30 PM – **Penitential Canon of St. Andrew of Crete**
- Friday, March 27, 6:30 PM – **Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts. Potluck Dinner**
- Sunday, March 29, 9:30 AM – **Divine Liturgy, 5th Sunday of Great Lent, Ven Mary of Egypt** Mk.10:32-45
- Sunday, March 29, 5:00 PM – **Sunday Lenten Vespers**
– at Sts. Peter & Paul Ukrainian Orthodox Church at 1025 N Belle Vista Ave, Youngstown, OH
- Friday, April 3, 6:30 PM – **Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts. Potluck Dinner**
- Sunday, April 5, 9:30 AM – **Divine Liturgy, 6th Sunday of Great Lent**

PALM SUNDAY. THE ENTRY OF THE LORD INTO JERUSALEM.

Pyrohy Schedule

ORDER BY DATE:	WORK DAYS	PICK-UP DAY
March 16	March 17 & 19	March 20
March 30	March 31 & Apr 2	April 3
April 20	April 21 & 23	April 24
May 4	May 5 & 7	May 8
May 18	May 19 & 20 (Wed)	May 22
June 8	June 9 & 11	June 12



Baked Goods Schedule

ORDER BY DATE:	WORK DAYS	PICK-UP DAY
Paschas: April 1	Friday, April 3 rd at 9:00 am	Friday, April 3, 11:00am to 1:00pm
Kolachi: April 1	Saturday, April 4 th at 9:00 am	Saturday, April 4, 3:00pm to 5:00pm

To Place the Order Please use the attached Order Form, any questions? – 234-247-1534, Anna

Upcoming dates & events

- Sunday, March 15 – Sr UOL Meeting
- Saturday, March 21 – **UOL Lenten Retreat** at Community Resource Center at 320 Shenango Street Pulaski, PA 16143 (724) 652-6184. For registration call Shirley Duffy at (412) 518-0912
- Saturday, April 25 – **Super Bingo to sponsor a prosthetic for a wounded Ukrainian Soldier.**



Guest Speakers

Rev. Fr Timothy Paproski

St. Nicholas Orthodox Church, Warren, Oh

Rev. Fr. Yuri Bobko

SS. Peter & Paul UOC, Lyndora, PA

Youth Program

Rev. Fr. John Charest

SS. Peter & Paul UOC, Carnegie, PA

Host Pastors

Rev. Fr. John Charest (Western, PA)

Rev. Fr. Mykola Zomchak (Ohio)

Saturday, March 21, 2026

Schedule:

8:15 AM Registration & Continental Breakfast

9:15 AM Morning Prayers/Morning Session

12:30 PM Lunch

1:15 PM Afternoon Session,

followed at 3:30 PM with Vespers & Confessions

Children & Youth Program

(Preschool & Elementary and Middle School & High School Students)

River Valley

Community Resource Center

320 Shenango Street

Pulaski, Pennsylvania 16143 (724) 652-6184

Registration

Adults \$30.00 ■ College Students \$20.00

Registration by March 16

Youth (Ages 10 to 18) Free

For more information or request a registration form, call Shirley Duffy at (412) 518-0912 or send an email to shirleykduffyesq@gmail.com

<https://www.uolofusa.org/>

TO REGISTER, SCAN THE QR CODE



Bulletin Dedication

(in memory of a loved one, or in honor for an anniversary)

<u>Sun Mar 1</u> 1. Dedicated 2. Dedicated	<u>Sun Mar 8</u> 1. Dedicated 2. Dedicated	<u>Sun Mar 15</u> 1. Available 2. Available	<u>Sun Mar 22</u> Not Available	<u>Sun Mar 29</u> 1. Dedicated 2. Available
<u>Sun Apr 5</u> 1. Dedicated 2. Dedicated	<u>Sun Apr 12</u> 1. Available 2. Available	<u>Sun Apr 19</u> 1. Available 2. Available	<u>Sun Apr 26</u> Not Available	

Reflections:



Endurance is the quiet strength that allows the soul to remain faithful when the road becomes long and difficult. It is not loud or dramatic. Often it is simply the willingness to continue—one step at a time—when giving up would be easier. Endurance is the patience of the heart that refuses to abandon what is good, even when the reward is not immediately visible.

In every life there are seasons of struggle. There are moments when faith feels heavy, when prayers seem unanswered, and when the burdens we carry appear greater than our strength. In such moments endurance becomes a sacred act. It is the decision to remain steady, trusting that God's presence does not disappear simply because the path becomes hard.

Endurance does not mean the absence of weakness. It often grows precisely in moments when we recognize our limits. When we bring our fatigue, our doubts, and our struggles before God, He gives us the strength to continue. What seems impossible for us becomes possible through His grace.

A life shaped by endurance slowly becomes a life shaped by faithfulness. The small acts of perseverance—continuing to pray, continuing to forgive, continuing to love—build a strength within the soul that cannot easily be shaken. Over time, endurance transforms suffering into wisdom and trials into spiritual growth.

Do not be discouraged by the length of the journey. Every faithful step has meaning before God. Endurance keeps the heart steady when storms arise, and it reminds us that the road of faith, though sometimes difficult, always leads toward the light of God.

Choice is one of the greatest gifts God has given to the human soul. Every day we stand before many paths, some leading toward life and others leading away from it. Our choices, even the smallest ones, slowly shape the direction of our hearts and the character of our lives.

Often we think that the most important choices are the large, dramatic decisions we make only once or twice in life. Yet the deeper truth is that our lives are formed through countless small decisions made quietly each day. The decision to speak kindly instead of harshly, to forgive instead of holding resentment, to act honestly instead of taking an easier path—these choices gradually form the person we become.

Choice also carries responsibility. Freedom is not simply the ability to do whatever we desire. True freedom is the ability to choose what is good, even when it requires effort or



sacrifice. When we choose what is right, we align our lives with truth and strengthen the soul. Sometimes the right choice is not the easiest one. It may require courage to stand apart from the crowd, patience to wait for what is good, or humility to admit our mistakes. Yet every good choice brings a quiet peace to the heart, because it reflects the image of God within us. Guard your choices carefully. A single moment can change the direction of a life, but every new moment also offers the opportunity to begin again. When we seek God's wisdom and choose what leads to love, truth, and faithfulness, our lives slowly become a path that leads closer to Him.

Sunday of the Adoration of the Cross

Strength in the Middle of the Journey

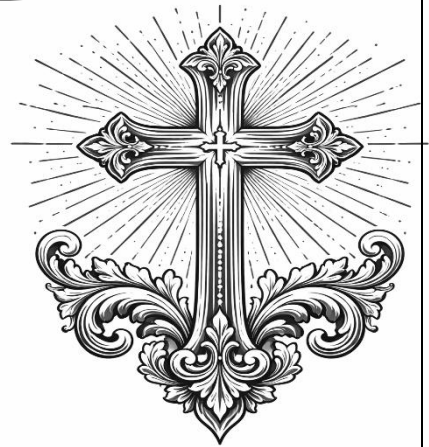
At the midpoint of Great Lent, the Church brings the Cross before us for veneration. This moment in the Lenten journey is deeply meaningful. The first weeks of Lent have already called us to fasting, repentance, prayer, and spiritual effort. Many of us begin this journey with enthusiasm and determination, but as the weeks pass, we often feel the weight of the struggle. Our weaknesses become more visible, our resolve may weaken, and the path can begin to feel long and difficult.

It is precisely at this moment that the Church places the Cross before our eyes and hearts. The Cross stands in the center of the church like a tree planted in the wilderness, offering shade, rest, and strength for those who continue the journey toward Pascha. Just as weary travelers in the desert find relief beneath the branches of a tree, so the faithful find renewal beneath the life-giving Cross of Christ.

This image of the Cross as a tree is not accidental. From the earliest centuries, the Church has spoken of the Cross as the **Tree of Life**. In the Garden of Eden, humanity lost access to the tree that gave life. Through disobedience, sin entered the world, and humanity was separated from God. But through the Cross, a new tree appeared in the world — the tree upon which Christ offered Himself for the life of all. What was once a symbol of suffering and death became the instrument of salvation. The Cross stands at the center of history as the place where divine love overcame human brokenness.

The Cross is not presented to us as a sign of defeat, but as a sign of victory and hope. In the eyes of the world, the Cross appears as weakness. It appears as failure. Yet the Gospel reveals that what seemed like defeat became the greatest victory. On the Cross, Christ conquered sin, destroyed the power of death, and opened the gates of eternal life. The Cross therefore stands as the throne of Christ's glory and the sign of His triumph.

That is why the Church does not hide the Cross during Lent but lifts it high for veneration. The faithful approach it with reverence, bow before it, and kiss it. This act is not simply a ritual gesture. It is a confession of faith. When we bow before the Cross, we acknowledge that the path of salvation passes through sacrifice, humility, and love. The Cross also reminds us that the Christian life is a journey. Just as travelers rest beneath a tree during a long road, so the faithful pause during Lent to draw strength from the Cross of



Christ. The Church, like a wise mother, understands our human weakness. She gives us this moment in the middle of Lent not to burden us further, but to encourage us and renew our strength for the remaining weeks of the fast.

Christ Himself prepares us for this reality when He says: "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me."

These words are not simply a call to suffering. They are an invitation to transformation. To deny ourselves means to set aside the false self that is ruled by pride, selfishness, and fear. It means learning to place God's will above our own desires and to seek what leads to life rather than what merely brings temporary comfort.

To take up the cross means to accept the struggles, sacrifices, and responsibilities that come with living a faithful life. Every person carries crosses in different ways. For some, it may be illness or physical suffering. For others, it may be loneliness, grief, disappointment, or the burden of caring for others. Sometimes the cross we carry is the quiet struggle to remain faithful in a world that does not understand or value faith.

The Cross also appears in the daily choices of our lives. It appears when we choose truth over convenience, humility over pride, and love over resentment. It appears when we forgive someone who has hurt us, when we show patience in the face of anger, when we remain honest even when it costs us something. These small crosses often go unnoticed by others, yet they are deeply precious in the sight of God. The Cross teaches us that love is always sacrificial. Christ did not save the world through power or force, but through self-giving love. When we take up our own crosses, we begin to participate in that same love. Our struggles, when united with Christ, become part of the mystery of redemption.

Yet the Cross is never meant to be carried alone. Christ does not stand at a distance watching us struggle. He walks with us. The same Lord who carried the Cross to Golgotha walks beside every believer on the path of life. When our strength fails, His strength sustains us. When our hearts grow weary, His presence renews us.

This is why the Cross we venerate is not only a reminder of suffering, but a sign of hope. It is the same Cross through which death was overcome and the Resurrection made possible. Without the Cross, there would be no empty tomb. Without the Cross, there would be no Pascha.

In the wisdom of the Church, the Cross is placed before us now so that we may remember where our journey leads. Great Lent does not end in sorrow. It leads to the radiant joy of the Resurrection. The Cross stands at the center of this journey, reminding us that suffering transformed by love becomes the doorway to life.

When we bow before the Cross during this holy season, we are doing more than honoring a sacred symbol. We are placing our own burdens before Christ. We bring to Him our fears, our struggles, our sins, and our hopes. In that moment of prayer, we remember that nothing in our lives is meaningless when it is offered to God. Every sacrifice made for the sake of truth, every act of forgiveness, every effort to repent, every moment of patience or humility becomes a step on the path toward new life. The Cross teaches us that love is stronger than hatred, humility stronger than pride, and life stronger than death.

Therefore, as we continue our Lenten journey, the Cross stands before us as a source of strength. It invites us not to lose heart, but to persevere. It reminds us that even when the road is difficult, the destination is glorious.

For the Cross is not the end of the story. Beyond the Cross shines the light of the Resurrection.

Orthodox Christianity 101

Fasting

Jesus Himself fasted and taught His disciples to fast.

And when you fast, do not look dismal like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by men, but your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you ([Mt 6.16–18](#)).

The purpose of fasting is to gain mastery over oneself and to conquer the passions of the flesh. It is to liberate oneself from dependence on the things of this world in order to concentrate on the things of the Kingdom of God. It is to give power to the soul so that it would not yield to temptation and sin.

According to Saint Seraphim, fasting is an “indispensable means” of gaining the fruit of the Holy Spirit in one’s life (cf. *Conversation with Motovilov*), and Jesus Himself taught that some forms of evil cannot be conquered without it ([Mt 17.21](#), [Mk 9.29](#)).

Man does not fast because it pleases God if His servants do not eat, for, as the lenten hymns of the Church remind us, “the devil also never eats” (*Lenten Triodion*). Neither do men fast in order to afflict themselves with suffering and pain, for God has no pleasure in the discomfort of His people. Neither do men fast with the idea that their hunger and thirst can somehow serve as a “reparation” for their sins. Such an understanding is never given in the scriptures or the writings of the saints which claim that there is no “reparation” for man’s sin but the crucifixion of Christ. Salvation is a “free gift of God” which no “works” of man can accomplish of merit (cf. [Rom 5.15–17](#), [Eph 2.8–9](#)).

Men fast, therefore, and must fast, only to be delivered from carnal passions so that the free gift of salvation in Christ might produce great fruit in their lives. Men fast so that they might more effectively serve God who loves them and has saved them in Christ and the Spirit. Fasting without effort in virtue is wholly in vain.

Why have we fasted, and Thou seest it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and Thou takest no knowledge of it?

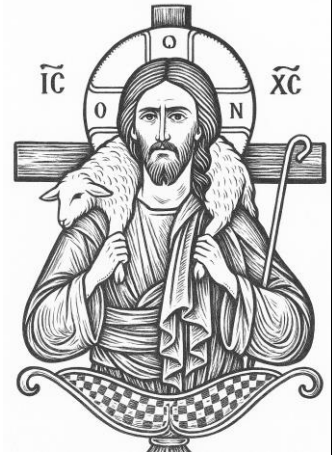
Behold, in the day of your fast, you seek your own pleasure and oppress all your workers. Behold, you fast only to quarrel and fight. Fasting like yours .??. will not make your voice to be heard on high.

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness to let the oppressed go free is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them .

Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall protect you. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; then you shall cry, and He will say: Here I am ([Is 58.3–9](#)).

“Fasting in the body, O brethren, let us also fast from sin.” This is the Church’s song in the lenten season of fasting. It is also the teaching of the saints.

in fasting one must not only obey the rule against gluttony in regard to food, but refrain from every sin so that, while fasting, the tongue may also fast, refraining from slander, lies, evil talking, degrading one’s brother, anger and every sin committed by the tongue. One should also fast with the eyes, that is, not look at vain



things .. not look shamefully or fearlessly at anyone. The hands and feet should also be kept from every evil action.

When one fasts through vanity or thinking that he is achieving something especially virtuous, he fasts foolishly and soon begins to criticize others and to consider himself something great.

A man who fasts wisely wins purity and comes to humility and proves himself a skillful builder (Saint Abba Dorotheus, 7th c., *Directions on Spiritual Training*).

Saint Paul himself fasted, and in his teaching on food insists that men fast and do so in secret, without mutual inspection and judgment.

Brethren, join in imitating me, and mark those who so live as you have an example in us. For many of whom I have often told you and now tell you with tears, live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things

All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be enslaved by anything. Food is meant for the stomach, and the stomach for food-and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body ([1Cor 6.12-13](#)).

Let not him who eats despise him who abstains, and let not him who abstains, pass judgment on him who eats, for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another?

He who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. He also who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God; while he who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God.

Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of him for whom Christ has died for the Kingdom of God does not mean food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, he who thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.

Do not for the sake of food destroy the work of God the faith that you have keep between yourself and God whatever does not proceed from faith [whether eating or abstaining] is sin (cf. Rom?14).

The spiritual fathers, as strictly ascetic as they were, are very clear in their teaching about fasting. They insist with the Lord and the scriptures that men must fast in order to be free from passions and lust. But they insist as well that the most critical thing is to be free from all sin, including the pride, vanity and hypocrisy which comes through foolish and sinful fasting.

eating beyond the point of being satisfied is the door of madness through which lust enters, for the belly is the queen of passions which man serves as a slave.

But you, firm in this knowledge, choose what is best for you, according to your own powers . for the perfect person, according to Saint Paul ought both “to be full and be hungry . and do all things through Christ who strengthens ([Phil 4.12-13](#)).

*Thus a man who strives for salvation . must not allow himself to eat to fullness .??. but should still eat all kinds of food so that on the one hand he avoid boastful pride and on the other not show disdain for God’s creation which is most excellent .Such is the reasoning of those who are wise! (Saint Gregory of Sinai, *Instruction to Hesychasts*).*

Saint Isaac of Syria says, “Meager food at the table of the pure cleanses the soul of those who partake from all passion for the work of fasting and vigil is the beginning of every effort against sin and lust . almost all passionate drives decrease through fasting.”

For the holy fathers taught us to be killers of passions and not killers of the body. Partake of everything that is permissible with thanksgiving, to the glory of God and to avoid boastful arrogance; but refrain from every excess (The Monks Callistus and Ignatius, 14th c., *Directions to Hesychasts*).

If such is the teaching to hesychast monks, it is certainly applicable to all Christians as well. The whole essence of the matter is put simply and clearly in these two short stories from the fathers of the desert.

A certain brother brought fresh loaves of bread and invited his elders. When they had eaten much, the brother, knowing their travail of abstinence, began humbly to beg them to eat more. "For God's sake, eat this day and be filled." And they ate another ten. Behold how these that were true monks and sincere in abstinence did eat more than they needed, for the sake of God.

Epiphanius, bishop of Cyprus, called the abbot Hilarion to see him. A portion of fowl was set before them and the bishop invited the abbot to eat. The old man said, "Forgive me, Father, but since the time I took this habit I have never eaten anything that has been killed."

And Epiphanius said to him, "And from the time I took this habit I have let no man sleep who has anything against me, and neither have I slept holding anything against anyone."

And the old man said to him, "Forgive me, Father, for your way of life is greater than mine" (*The Sayings of the Fathers*).

Sundays of Lent

Each of the Sundays of Great Lent has its own special theme. The first Sunday is called the Feast of the Triumph of Orthodoxy. It is a historical feast commemorating the return of the icons to the churches in the year 843 after the heresy of iconoclasm was overcome. The spiritual theme of the day is first of all the victory of the True Faith. "This is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith" ([1Jn 5.4](#)). Secondly, the icons of the saints bear witness that man, "created in the image and likeness of God" ([Gen 1.26](#)), becomes holy and godlike through the purification of himself as God's living image.

The Second Sunday of Lent is the commemoration of Saint Gregory Palamas. It was Saint Gregory (d.1359) who bore living witness that men can become divine through the grace of God in the Holy Spirit; and that even in this life, by prayer and fasting, human beings can become participants of the uncreated light of God's divine glory.

The Third Sunday of Lent is that of the Veneration of the Cross. The cross stands in the midst of the church in the middle of the lenten season not merely to remind men of Christ's redemption and to keep before them the goal of their efforts, but also to be venerated as that reality by which man must live to be saved. "He who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me" ([Mt 10.38](#)). For in the Cross of Christ Crucified lies both "the power of God and the wisdom of God" for those being saved ([1Cor 1.24](#)).

The Fourth Sunday of Lent is dedicated to Saint John of the Ladder (Climacus), the author of the work, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*. The abbot of Saint Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai (6th century) stands as a witness to the violent effort needed for entrance into God's Kingdom ([Mt 10: 12](#)). The spiritual struggle of the Christian life is a real one, "not against flesh and blood, but against .?.?. the rulers of the present darkness .?.?. the hosts of wickedness in heavenly places??.?" ([Eph 6.12](#)). St John encourages the faithful in their efforts for, according to the Lord, only "he who endures to the end will be saved" ([Mt 24.13](#)).

The Fifth Sunday recalls the memory of Saint Mary of Egypt, the repentant harlot. Mary tells us, first of all, that no amount of sin and wickedness can keep a person from God if he truly repents. Christ himself has come "to call sinners to repentance" and to save them from their sins ([Lk 5.32](#)). In addition, Saint Mary tells us that it is never too late in life-or in Lent-to repent. Christ will gladly receive all who come to him even at the eleventh hour of their lives. But their coming must be in serious and sincere repentance.