

# Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Church

1723 E. Fairmount Avenue, Baltimore, MD. 21231  
 410-276-6171 [www.HolyTrinityOrthodox.com](http://www.HolyTrinityOrthodox.com)



**Cheese Fare Sunday**  
**Expulsion of Adam from Paradise**  
**Forgiveness Sunday**  
**Tone 4**

**February 17/March 1, 2020**

Great Martyr Theodore of Tyre (306); Hieromartyr Hermogenes, Patriarch of Moscow and all Rus', the wonderworker (1612); Righteous Mariamna, sister of the Apostle Phillip (I); Finding of the relics (867-869) of Martyr Menas the melodious of Alexandria (313); Venerable Theodore, the silent of the Kiev Caves (13 c.); Hieromartyrs Michael and Paul, priest (1938); Martyr Anna (1940).

**Today's Scriptural Readings:**  
 Romans 13:11 - 14:4 / Matthew 6: 14-21

**LAST DAY FOR EATING DAIRY AND EGGS**  
**GREAT LENT BEGINS TOMORROW – MARCH 2<sup>ND</sup>**

This Week's Liturgical Calendar	
Sunday March 1 <sup>st</sup> – 6:00 PM	Vespers in Church <i>Rite of Mutual Forgiveness</i>
Monday thru Thursday – 7:00 PM <i>March 2-5</i>	Great Compline in Church Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete
Saturday, March 7 <sup>th</sup> – 10:00 AM <i>Confessions at 9:00 – 10:00 AM</i>	Divine Liturgy in Church <i>Blessing of Koliva</i>
Saturday, March 7 <sup>th</sup> – 6:00 PM	Great Vespers in Church <i>* Order of Confession *</i>
Sunday, March 8 <sup>th</sup> – 10:00 AM <i>Confessions at 9:15 – 10:00 AM</i>	Divine Liturgy in Church <i>Orthodoxy Sunday</i>

**Saints Peter & Paul Chapel**  
**Holy Trinity Orthodox Cemetery at Cathedral Gardens**  
**6480 Elibank Drive, Elkridge, MD. 21075**

**Divine Services at Holy Trinity are live-streamed at**  
<https://www.youtube.com/user/HolyTrinitySermons>

**Please Join us for the Bini Luncheon – Today after Services**

Sponsors for today: St. Catherine Sisterhood

**Blini Luncheon / Cheesefare Sunday – March 1<sup>st</sup>**

Sunday, March 1<sup>st</sup> is Cheesefare Sunday – the last day for dairy products before the start of the Great Fast. So, after Divine Services we will conduct a Blini Luncheon. Freshly made blini will be served with a variety of toppings of your choice, salads and other desserts. Contact Valentina Bosaya 443-742-6070.

**Website Working Committee – Church Communications Survey**

***Your feedback is requested by April 2, 2020.***

We are reviewing and updating our digital communications. Before we make any changes, we are asking for your feedback and comments. Please complete this short online survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/HTROC>. All responses will be held in confidence and used only to help us improve our communications. Thank you in advance for your response. To join the committee, contact Martin Masiuk 410-336-8909.

**Special Parish Meeting – March 8<sup>th</sup>**

NEXT SUNDAY. A special parish meeting will be conducted on Sunday, March 8<sup>th</sup> after coffee hour to decide on a proposal to replace the large wooden doors in the front entrance. Please take a look at the bad conditions of the current doors. For more information please contact Michael Mickel 410-666-2870.

**Church School Camping Trip – May 15-17, 2020**

The 20th Annual Church School Camping Trip at Camp Running Bear (formerly Camp Alkor) in Monkton, MD for children ages 6-12 will take place May 17-19. Our theme this year is “The Triumph of Orthodoxy.” **Registrations due by May 1<sup>st</sup>**. Registration forms are on the bulletin table. For more information contact Dr. Pat Disharoon 410-233-5337. \*Important\*, all adult chaperones/volunteers MUST register with Dr. Pat by May 1<sup>st</sup> to expedite background checks.

**Lenten Discussion Group**

During Great Lent after Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts each Wednesday evening, join us for a discussion on the book *My Life in Christ*, by **St. John of Kronstadt**. This is a classic book throughout the Orthodox world. It is a collection of St. John’s profound spiritual experiences and theological reflection. Please place your pre-order (hard or soft cover) with Vlad Volkov 410-262-3494 by March 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Saturday, March 21 – Kitchen Cleaning**

The Sisterhood is coordinating a comprehensive cleaning of the hall kitchen on Saturday, March 21. Please contact Natallia Makarava for more info: 443-625-8470.

**Kennedy Krieger Playground**

The Kennedy Krieger School does not allow us to use their children’s playground. Parents, please tell your children not to play or congregate at this playground. Our parish is allowed to use only their parking lot. Thank you.

### **Pre-Order Homemade Kolbasa for Pascha**

Submit your kolbasa pre-orders to Albert Blaszak 410-799-3226. This is the same as we make for the Festival. Order now so we know how much to make.

#### **\* Our kitchen needs onion peels \***

Please bring to our kitchen your onion peels – any type. We need them to color Paschal eggs.

### **Blessing of Koliva – 10:00 AM Saturday, March 7<sup>th</sup>**

On this day we bless koliva – boiled wheat sweetened with honey – to remind of us of how St. Theodore of Tyre miraculously appeared to the Patriarch of Constantinople warning him and all the faithful not to eat the food from the markets because of it being defiled by the pagans. This miracle also reminds us that food often prevents us from bringing fruits of repentance and from striving for spiritual perfection – hence the need for us to fast.

### **Lenten Charitable Project**

Our Sunday School is coordinating a toiletry drive to benefit the homeless families served by St. Vincent De Paul Baltimore. We are collecting travel size toiletry items, such as shampoo, soap, toothpaste, etc. All suggested items are listed on the flyer. Please bring your donated items by April 5<sup>th</sup>. The Sunday School students will collect everything in Ziploc bags for delivery. For more information, contact Katie Radchenko.

### **Pan-Orthodox Services – Great Lent 2020**

Orthodox faithful are warmly encouraged to attend special Pan-Orthodox services throughout Great Lent. Two churches will host Pan-Orthodox Passion Vespers Services on Sunday evenings during the Great Fast.

- **Sunday, 5:00 PM, March 22<sup>nd</sup>** at our parish – Holy Trinity: *Passion Vespers Service*. After the service we will conduct a light Lenten reception. *We will need volunteers to bring in Lenten dishes to share at the pot luck.* Please contact Anna-Zumrat Shkurba.
- **Sunday, 4:00 PM, April 5<sup>th</sup>** *Passion Vespers Service* at St. Andrew Orthodox Church, 2028 East Lombard Street, Baltimore, 410-276-3422 [www.standrew-baltimore.org](http://www.standrew-baltimore.org)

### **Pilgrimages in 2020**

As a part of the celebrations of the 50th Anniversary of the Founding of the Patriarchal Parishes in the USA, we will conduct a pilgrimage to St. Petersburg, Russia in July 2020. This is a unique opportunity, because we will have access to sites that are available only for pilgrims. The itinerary is on our website [www.holytrinityorthodox.com](http://www.holytrinityorthodox.com).

### **Cleaning Group – Group #1 / Join a Group – Help your brothers and sisters**

Group #1 will clean the week of March 2-7: Elena Loyko (captain), Ludmila and Igor Maltsev, Tamara Lipatova, Alla Gordon, Nikolai Tkeshelashvili, Victor Marinich, Dan Walsh. Please join a group. We need more members.

### **Birthday / Anniversary Celebrations: March 1-7**

We offer our best wishes and birthday congratulations to Dan Walsh (3/2), Anysia Materewicz-Sierakowski (3/4), Vera Yantsen (3/7) and Sasha Aleksandrovyeh (3/7). May God bless them with health, prosperity and many years. To include your birthday/anniversary in the bulletin call Fr. John.

### **Vigil Candles: On the Altar and near St. Barbara**

**March 1-7:** Candles offered by Alina Klimova for the health/salvation of the servants of God: Alina (Aleftina), Eva, Katrina (Ekaterina) and Zinaida. A \$15 donation will keep all three candles lit for one week. Schedule your candle offering with Elena Loyko 443-537-8978.

*If you truly seek God's forgiveness and want to cure your soul, you need four things. The first is to forgive your enemies. The second is to confess thoroughly. The third is to blame yourself. The fourth is to resolve to sin no more. If we wish to be saved, we must always blame ourselves and not attribute our wrong acts to others. And God, Who is most compassionate, will forgive us. **St. Cosmas Aitolos (+1779)***

### **Special Petitions for the Unity of the Orthodox Church**

Again we pray to the Lord and our Savior to preserve the Orthodox Church abiding in the whole world in unity and right belief, and to grant her peace and tranquility, love and consent, let us all say, Lord, hearken and have mercy.

Again we pray to look upon the Holy Orthodox Church with the goodness of heart and with mercy, and to preserve her from divisions and schisms, from hostility and disorder, so her unity will not be diminished or shaken, but Thine Thrice-Holy name be glorified in her, let us all say, Lord, hearken and have mercy.

### **Submit your 2020 Pledge**

The mission of our parish is to spread the Word of God, to grow, to expand, to improve and not just to preserve our traditions. Our parish shouldn't become stale, but pursue holiness. We strive to fulfill the mission of our parish, through prayer, work and sacrifice. Prayer – because we are called to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17); work – because we are taught to increase the talents given to us (Matt. 25: 14-30); and sacrifice – because “everyone to whom much is given, from him will much be required” (Luke 12:48). Please be generous as the Lord is generous to you. When completing your pledge for the new year, please consider raising your level of giving. Our church cannot operate without your financial contributions. Our parish will grow only through your prayers, work and generous sacrifice.

*When you are generous, you are not bestowing a gift, but repaying a debt. Everything you possess materially comes from God, who created all things. And every spiritual and moral virtue you possess is through divine grace. Thus, you owe everything to God. More than that, God has given you his Son, to show you how to live: how to use your material possessions, and how to grow in moral and spiritual virtue. **St. John Chrysostom***

### **Please Remember in Your Prayers...**

**Archpriest George Konyev; Deacon Michael Bishop; Mat. Myra Kovalak; Mat. Klavdiya Burbelo; Kh. Jocelyn Mathewes; Mat. Natalia Kosich; Mat. Catherine Kowalchik; Marie Vass; Charles Snipes; Arthur-Stephen & Evelyn-Evanthia Lisowsky; Yelena Radchenko; Lydia Zorina; Katherine Plaskowitz; Philip Plaskowitz;**

**Bernadine Borawick; Julia Aymold; Lilli Ann Hoffman; Lara Marinich; Ioann and Galina Zernetkin; Monika-Anastasia & Stephanie Handley; Blanche-Julia Stolkovich; Ekaterina Koroleva; Nina and Glen-Gregory Lewis; Lyudmila, Anton & Aleksander Karnup; John Alexander Bylen; Katherine Garrett; Stephen Kaminitzky; Kenneth Pukita; William and Ann Ferkile; Irina Kononova; Petr and Lyudmila Borodkin; Svetlana & Aleksey; Alla; Anna; Alla; Raisa, Zinaida; Pavel, Vladimir, Valentina, and Maria; Maria Pappas; Bonnie Duke; Diana Radchenko; Aleksey & Lidia Potapov; Oleg and Andrei; Vitaliy, Tatiana, Olena & Nicholas Berchuk; Cynthia and Bill (Basil) Popomaronis; Andrei, Marina, Valentina and Vladimir; Valentina Shultieva; Katherine Shultieva; Shanna, Stephen, Trent-Michael, Grant-Alexander, Adalynn Lisowsky; Julie Smith; Tayisia Solvieva; Leonid and Zoya; Jayne Sudol; Rita and Richard Herber, Mary Orzolek, George Matassov; Janice & John DesLauriers; Nicholas Rodzianko; Alexandra; Alexandra Vinogradova; Armen Nostrant; Vasiliy; Archpriest Michael, Alexandra, Larisa, Gabriel and Julianna; Elizabeth Wright.**

**Next Council Meeting: Thursday, March 26<sup>th</sup> – 7:00 PM in the Church Hall**

<b>Fr. John Vass, Rector 443-527-7067</b>	Fr. Deacon Michael Bishop: 410-563-0472
Victor Marinich, <i>Council President:</i> 443-512-0985	Vadim Radchenko, <i>Vice President:</i> 410-465-6172
Andrei Burbelo, <i>Recording Secretary:</i> 443-567-6031	Albert Blaszak, <i>Treasurer:</i> 410-799-3226
Anna-Zumrat Shkurba, <i>Stewardship Chair:</i> 443-857-8541	<i>Member-At-Large:</i> Vacant
Natallia Makarava <i>Sisterhood President:</i> 443-625-8470	Michael Mickel, <i>Cemetery Manager:</i> 410-666-2870

**Sunday of Forgiveness: Gospel of Matthew 6:14-21**

*For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

**St. Theophan the Recluse: Thoughts for Each Day of the Year**

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you; But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses (Matt. 6:14–15). What a simple and handy means of salvation! Your trespasses are forgiven under the condition that you forgive the trespasses of your neighbor against you. This means that you are in your own hands. Force yourself to pass from agitated feelings toward your brother to truly peaceful feelings—and that is all. Forgiveness day—what a great heavenly day of God this is! If all of us used it as we ought, this day would make Christian societies into heavenly societies, and the earth would merge with heaven.

**The Sunday before the Great Fast**

The last of the preparatory Sundays has two themes: it commemorates Adam’s expulsion from Paradise, and it is also the Sunday of Forgiveness. There are obvious reasons why these two things should be brought to our attention as we stand on the threshold of the Great Fast. One of the primary images in the Triodion is that of the return to Paradise. Lent is a time when we weep with Adam and Eve before the closed gate of Eden, repenting with them for the sins that have deprived us of our free communion with God. But Lent is also a time when we are preparing to celebrate

the saving event of Christ's death and rising, which has reopened Paradise to us once more (Luke 23: 43). So sorrow for our exile in sin is tempered by hope of our re-entry into Paradise.

The second theme, that of forgiveness, is emphasized in the Gospel reading for this Sunday (Matthew 6:14-21) and in the special ceremony of mutual forgiveness at the end of Vespers on Sunday evening. Before we enter the Lenten fast, we are reminded that there can be not true fast, no genuine repentance, no reconciliation with God, unless we are at the same time reconciled with one another. A fast without mutual love is the fast of demons. As the commemoration of the ascetic saints on the previous Saturday has just made clear to us, we do not travel the road of Lent as isolated individuals but as members of a family. Our asceticism and fasting should not separate us from our fellow men but link us to them with ever stronger bonds. The Lenten ascetic is called to be a man for others. **Metropolitan Kallistos Ware, The Lenten Triodion**

***The Condition Prior to Entering the Holy Forty Days Fast***  
**St. Ignatius (Brianchaninov)**

Beloved brethren! We have already reached the very gates of the holy fast! They are even now about to open before us! Already, according to the typicon of the Holy Church, we hear the instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ read to us today in the Holy Gospels about the correct way to begin the *podvig* of fasting.

*For if ye forgive men their trespasses, says the Gospel reading for today, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses* (Mt. 6:14–15). The holy Church greets us with this announcement at the gates of the fast! This is the requirement the Church offers us on the very threshold of the spiritual chamber of repentance. We intend to prove our repentance for various sinful distractions through various deprivations and wearing out of the body. The Gospels requires mercy from us before sacrifice, so that the sacrifice would be pleasing to God.

All who wish to begin this *podvig* of fasting and prayer, all who wish to reap abundant fruits of your repentance! Hear the word of God, hear God's commandment, and let go, forgive your neighbors their sins against you. *For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.* Amen.

***Cheese-Fare Sunday: Remembrance of Adam's Expulsion from Paradise***  
**Archimandrite John (Krestiankin)**

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!

The quickly flowing river of time rushes on to eternity. Only the Holy Church and God's feasts stop this motion momentarily, as if counting the time. And our entire life, from our birth to departure from it, is reflected in this yearly cycle; it reminds us and calls to us, "Know yourself,

look inside yourself, O man. Who are you, how do you live, and what awaits you ahead? You are rushing headlong with this flow of time to timelessness, to eternity.” So it is every day, every year.

Was it so long ago that the cry of the human heart, languishing in sins, rang out in the Church, “Open unto me the doors of repentance, O Giver of Life”? Our hearts trembled—the fast was already in the air. But now, the weeks of preparation for our field of repentance in Great Lent have passed, when:

—the Pharisee and the publican were the mirrors of our souls;

—we called out to the Heavenly Father with the voice of the prodigal son, recognizing also our distance from the Truth, our departure to a faraway land: “O God, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee; make me one of Thy hired servants.”

—a reminder of the terrible and glorious Last Judgment of the Lord, when the books shall be opened and all secrets revealed. Not yet frightening us, it calls us to knowledge of ourselves, to repentance.

Now we are at the last day of the threshold before Great Lent. On this day, the Church remembers the terrible tragedy that happened to mankind at the dawn of its history—its expulsion in the person of our forefather Adam from the face of God; the expulsion of Adam from paradise.

The vale of tears and sadness—the earth—received the outcast, so that at God’s commandment the transgressor would reap thorns and thistles, so that he would eat his bread in the sweat of his brow, so that in pain, tears, and sadness he would give birth to his children and feed them, so that he would reap all the bitter fruits of his disobedience to the Heavenly Father.

Adam wept in his exile, sitting “outside of paradise”; he wept, remembering what he was, what he possessed, and Who he lost. To this day, all mankind weeps and sighs over the first Adam, over the now elusive phantom of happiness. The whole world, harassed and weary, weeps because of its waywardness, because of its naked soul; because life is aimless and joyless. Nothing can fill our life so that we might unconditionally feel the fullness of true—not phantom—happiness; for this fullness is only in God.

But we are exiles. Paradise is far away, and the farther mankind lives from the time of the fall, the more shadowy that beautiful image of paradise becomes in him, the deeper is mankind’s pain and suffering, and the more the image and likeness of God is erased from his soul. The world would have perished long ago, had not the Second Adam, Christ, not reopened locked paradise and given man the opportunity to return to it.

We now bear the weight and sorrow of the life of an exile. Even we, who live the life of the Church, know also the paradisiacal joy of the open Royal doors, and the life-creating, jubilant words, “Christ is Risen!”; in them is the original nearness to divine love for man. But preceding this paradisaic joy on earth is Great Lent, and the Church continually teaches that what we have lost through sin, we can find and regain only through repentance, *podvig*, and ascetic labors of great temperance.

Just a few hours will pass, and we will all notice with amazement that something will change around us and within us; something will happen that will place a seal of particular

concentration and attention upon everything. And along with the Church, we must pass from the call to repentance to the very labors of repentance, to the work of repentance.

Our Mother-Church received the Lord's commandment of the healing fast, which could be heard in Old Testament times for the people of God through the Prophet Joel: *Now therefore, saith the Lord your God, turn to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with lamentation... sanctify a fast, proclaim a solemn service ... assemble the elders... and all the inhabitants of the Lord's house, Let the priests that minister to the Lord weep, and say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach* (Joel 2:12, 15, 16, 17).

The Second Adam, Jesus Christ, began the path of His labors with a great forty days fast, so that by His divine love for fallen man He might open again locked paradise and show the way by which man may return to it. The Holy Gospels testify that, *Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness... And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered* (Mt. 4:1–2). And the devil came to Him and tempted Him. Great is the audacity and blindness of the dark power. Having made progress in tempting man in paradise, it began to war against God unto blindness, not recognizing in Christ the Savior and Son of God; it approached His meekness, humility, patience, purity, and holiness with the darkness of temptations woven from pride, betrayal, conceit, and lies. But sinless Christ God, Who needed no purification, opposed the tempter with fasting and prayer, showing all of us who follow Him the path of struggle with sin. And the Lord confirmed by word and deed that this *kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting* (Mt. 17:21).

By prayer and fasting, the Christian receives the strength of the Spirit from the Lord for his struggle with the enemy; through fasting and prayer he receives the gift of discernment and the mind of Christ; prayer and fasting lights the light, which disperses the darkness of sinful life, for, *The light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not* (Jn. 1:5).

But by his will, man chooses between a path of corruption and incorruption, good and evil. If woe, suffering, and death entered life through the sin of disobedience to God, then only through obedience, prayer, and fasting—our living sacrifice of love for God—can the light of supreme righteousness, peace, and joy return. And this, my dear ones, is paradise on earth.

However, according to God's commandment, love for God on earth manifests only as love for people. The heart of a Christian can warm itself and burn only with a two-in-one love for God and people simultaneously. If our heart is hard and cruel toward our brother, to man, then darkened by dislike, coldness, and cruelty, it becomes indifferent or hypocritical toward God. And paradise, which could have been so close—in our heart—leaves and fades, and the sin of lack of love gives birth to disobedience, conceit, and self-love.

But how can we love a sinner? How can we love those who do not love us, our enemies? Here also, the Lord comes to our aid. He gives us the Lord's prayer. We hear every day, "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors..."

By this prayer the Lord is saying to us, look at yourself:  
—after all, you are that very debtor who needs to be forgiven;  
—you are that very sinner;



—you are the one who does not love—you love by choice;  
—you are someone’s enemy—you have offended someone, had contempt for someone, humiliated someone.

You yourself need forgiveness, you need condescending love. The words of today’s Gospel also resound: For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: *But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses* (Mt. 6:14-15). Forgive everyone everything, and you will be forgiven. Forgive, and you will be saved, and you will inherit paradise.

Following immediately after these words of the Lord about forgiveness are these other words: *Judge not, and ye shall not be judged* (Mk. 7:1). In these words the Lord shows a very short and most sure path to salvation, which opens to us the gates of the Kingdom of Heaven. The Lord shows us that virtue, without which all our ascetic labors and efforts in life in general, and during the Great fast in particular, will be in vain. Furthermore this is the only path—the path of love for people, beginning with non-judgment.

*Judge not, and ye shall not be judged...* In His first Coming, the Lord came not to judge the world, but to save it. He came to open locked paradise to it. After all, God gave all judgment to His Son at the Second Coming; but for now, *mercy rejoiceth against judgment* (Js. 2:13). Now is yet the time of God’s mercy. God still has mercy on us, but we judge and enforce. Having no doubts at all, we lift ourselves up in opinion and judgment over our neighbors, both near and far, small and great. We judge when we know much; we judge when we know nothing at all; we judge from other people’s words.

Just think, my dear ones, our judgment, as the judgment of an enemy, extends even to the Savior Himself. A person has sinned before God, before people, and we are witnesses of it. But we did not see how he repented, and we did not hear the priest’s consoling words pronounced over his head: “And by the authority given to me, I forgive and absolve all your sins, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” God’s mercy has already erased the handwriting of sins, but we continue to remember and judge. This is no longer judgment over a man, but a judgment over God, Who has been merciful and forgiven.

Thus, we perish by judgment. For where there is judgment, there is no love. Only love is capable of being at all times an advocate, and only love can cover our brother’s nakedness. But we judge! And this judgment becomes our own condemnation and sentence, which sounds like this: *For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy* (Js. 2:13)! And paradise cannot receive us, for we have no love in us. Where there is no love, there is no salvation.

Today, beginning with the *podvig* of Great Lent, let us, friends, resolve two major spiritual lessons: do not judge and do not tempt! So that we might root ourselves in saving, blessed non-condemnation, that we might place a beginning of this *podvig* during the very first days of Great Lent, we must learn to see, judge, and condemn only ourselves—the only person that we truly know, from all sides and deeply. This is where judgment without mercy will be unto salvation; for this is the only judgment that will lead us to true reason. It gives us a vision of that abyss on the

edge of which we stand, and which we dig out by our sins, our debts to God and people, and by our condemnation of others.

This judgment of ourselves will tear a living, saving cry from our hearts that will reach the heavens: “Lord! Have mercy on me. O God, be merciful to me, a sinner!” And the miracle of our salvation will begin. The Lord will console our repentant souls and hearts with peace, calm, and love. In the words of our dear elder, St. Seraphim of Sarov, “Acquire the spirit of peace, and thousands will be saved around you”—transformation will begin in life around us.

“Now is the spring of the soul!” Holy and Great Lent is at the doors. May the seed of our repentance and prayer sprout forth by it, and produce the saving fruits of our soul’s resurrection in God.

Children of God!

“May your mind fast from vain thoughts;

may your will fast from evil desires;

may your eyes fast from seeing evil;

may your ears fast from base songs and calumnious whisperings;

may your tongue fast from slander, condemnation, lies, flattering, and foul language;

may your hands fast from striking, and from stealing what does not belong to you;

may your feet fast from walking to evil deeds.”

This is the Christian fast, which the Lord expects of us.

Our friends, let us enter the Great Fast, let us enter the field of its ascetic labors—repentance, temperance, and humility—and confirm ourselves in them; so that having received forgiveness, we may meet Christ’s resurrection, Holy Pascha—the heavenly radiance on earth. Amen. *Given on March 13, 1994* <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/english/51820.htm>