



HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Parish Newsletter

RESTON

New Parish Center: 20937 Ashburn Rd., #110, Ashburn, VA 20 March 2021

FIRST SUNDAY IN THE GREAT FORTY DAYS

We keep the memory of the VII Ecumenical Council (787 A.D.) putting ikons back in place—literally back on columns—and, following still older traditions, we keep the memory of the priest-prophets Mose, Aaron, and Samuel with an eye to the Lord Jesus Christ—the “New Moses,” priest, prophet, and king.

READING FROM THE BOOK OF GENESIS.

(This reading pays into the reading from the Gospel.)

^{28.10} Jacob departed from Beer-sheba and proceeded toward Harán. ¹¹ When he came upon a certain shrine, as the sun had already set, he stopped there for the night. Taking one of the stones at the shrine, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep at that spot. ¹² Then he had a dream: a stairway rested on the ground, with its top reaching to the heavens; and God's messengers were going up and down on it. ¹³ And there was the LORD standing beside him and saying: “I, the LORD, am the God of your forefather Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you are lying I will give to you and your descendants. ¹⁴ These shall be as plentiful as the dust of the earth, and through them you shall spread out east and west, north and south. In you and your descendants all the nations of the earth shall find blessing. ¹⁵ Know that I am with you; I will protect you wherever you go, and bring you back to this land. I will never leave you until I have done what I promised you.” ¹⁶ When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he exclaimed, “Truly, the LORD is in this spot, although I did not know it!” ¹⁷ In solemn wonder he cried out: “How awesome is this shrine! This is nothing else but an abode of God, and that is the gateway to heaven!” ¹⁸ Early the next morning Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head, set it up as a memorial stone, and poured oil on top of it. ¹⁹ He called that site Bethel [*which means House of God*].

PROKIMENON, Tone IV

Reader: The prokimenon in the fourth tone: **Blest are you, Lord God of our fathers, * praised and glorified be your Name forever.** [v.26 oca]

CANTICLE OF THE FATHERS

Daniel 3.26–45 LXX [NS]

NOTE: This Prayer of Azariah—missing from English bibles—is a penitential song reminiscent of Psalm 50; herein confession seeks forgiveness and restoration, and sues for communion.

6Blest are you, Lord God of our fathers! Praised and glorified be your name forever! ²⁷You are just in everything you do to us; all

Sunday, March 21

Divine Liturgy at 10:00 a.m.
Penitential Vespers at 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday, March 24

PreSanctified Liturgy at 7:00 p.m.
(Father Paul will bring a pot of soup
—if anyone wishes to take some home,
bring a container.)

Let us hold unswervingly to our profession which gives us hope, for he who made the promise deserves our trust. We must consider how to rouse each other to love and good works. We should not absent ourselves from the [Eucharistic] assembly, as some are in the habit of doing, but encourage one another; and this *all the more* because you see the Day drawing near. —Hebrews 10.23–25

*The Pasch on our horizon
is the image of that inexorable
Tomorrow
that makes sense of Today.*

your works are true; all your ways are right; all your decisions fair.... ³¹Yes, everything you let happen, no matter what you've done to us—all of it, God, is just and right!...

³⁴For your name's sake, do not desert us! Do not dissolve your covenant, ³⁵nor take away from us your favor: for the sake of your beloved, Abraham, for your servant, Isaac, and for Israel, your holy one!...

³⁹But a contrite heart and a humble spirit—may these please you ⁴⁰as much as burnt offerings.... Today, may our sacrifice, our open loyalty please you as much, for there is never any disappointment for those who trust in you.

⁴¹So now, we follow you wholeheartedly, filled with reverence and awe, straining to catch sight of you!

⁴²Never let us be ashamed. Instead, deal with us as you used to: with infinite and tender love and mercy....

⁴⁴As for those who harm your servants—let them scatter in confusion, covered by their own embarrassment! Let their strength fail them, and reduce their might to nothing! ⁴⁵Let them know that you alone are God and Lord, the glory of the entire world!

Reader: Blest are you, Lord God of our fathers!
People: Praised and glorified be your name forever!.

READING FROM

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

Faith and Perseverance: two sides of the same coin.

BRETHREN: ^{11:1}Faith is the assurance of things hoped for and conviction of things not seen. ²Because of [faith] men of old won approval.

^{11:24}By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter; ²⁵he chose to be ill-treated along with the people of God rather than enjoy the fleeting pleasure of sin. ²⁶He considered the reproach of the Anointed greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the recompense.

³²What more can I say? There is no time for me to give an account of Gideon, Barak, Sampson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel, and the prophets, ³³who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained the promises, shut the mouths of lions, ³⁴put out raging fires, escaped the edge of the sword, drew strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, and turned back foreign in-

vaders. ³⁵Women received back their dead through resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing accept release, in order to obtain a better resurrection. ³⁶Others endured mockery, scourging, even chains and imprisonment. ³⁷They were stoned [to death], sawn in two, put to death at sword's point; they went about in skins of sheep or goats, needy, afflicted, tormented. ³⁸The world was not worthy of them. They wandered about in deserts and on mountains, in caves and in holes in the ground.

³⁹Yet all these, though approved because of their faith, did not receive what was promised. ⁴⁰God had foreseen something better for us, so that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

^{12:1}We too then, having such a cloud of witnesses around us—as we set aside every encumbrance and the disadvantage of sin—**with perseverance let us run the race that lies before us**, ²looking to Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith. For the sake of the joy that lay before him he endured the cross—ignoring its shame—and has taken his seat at the right of God's throne. ³Consider how he endured such opposition from sinners, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart..

ALLELUIA

Psalm 98

NOTE: A hymn in praise of the Lord as **king**, here with special emphasis on his holiness. We extol the Lord's majesty, his just rule, and his dealings with great leaders of old. Talk of **priests** brings Christ to mind.

The Lord is **king**; let people tremble! He is enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth rock with fear!

²The Lord of Sion is the greatest of all, exalted far above all peoples! ³Let them praise his name, so awesome and great! Holy is he!

⁴You are the mightiest of kings, and you love what is right! It is you who established justice, you who decide right and wrong in Jacob!...

⁶**Among his priests** were Moses and Aaron, and Samuel among those who called on his name; they called on the Lord and he answered them.

⁷From a pillar of cloud he spoke with them; they did his bidding; they followed the instructions he gave them.

⁸You answered them, Lord God! For them you were a forgiving God, though you punished their misdeeds....

READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN.

AT THAT TIME: ^{1.43}The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee, and he found Philip. And Jesus said to him, “Follow me.” ⁴⁴Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the town of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one about whom Moses wrote in the law, and also the prophets, Jesus, son of Joseph, from Nazareth.” ⁴⁶But Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come from Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.” ⁴⁷Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, “Here is a true Israelite [*There is double meaning here. Israel was a nickname for Jacob in the first reading, and Jacob was quite capable of “duplicity.” —Ed.*]. There is no duplicity in him.” ⁴⁸Nathanael said to him, “How do you know me?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Before Philip called you, I saw you under the fig tree.” ⁴⁹Nathanael answered him, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.” ⁵⁰Jesus answered and said to him, “Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this.” ⁵¹And he said to him, “Amen, amen, I say to you, [*the allusion to Jacob’s ladder follows —Ed.*] you will see the sky opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man” [*meaning Jesus, priest forever, is the living ladder joining humanity to God. Recall what Jesus says in the Gospel of John, “I am the way” to the Father. In those early days of Christianity, Christianity was called “the Way.” —Ed.*]

Troparion of the Restoration, Tone II:

We bow low before your most pure image, O Good One, * asking forgiveness for our failures, O Christ God. * For you gladly ascended the cross in the flesh, of your own free will, * to save us from Satan’s snares. * For this we thank you, O Lord, and we cry out to you: * By coming to save the world from sin, you have filled all things with joy.

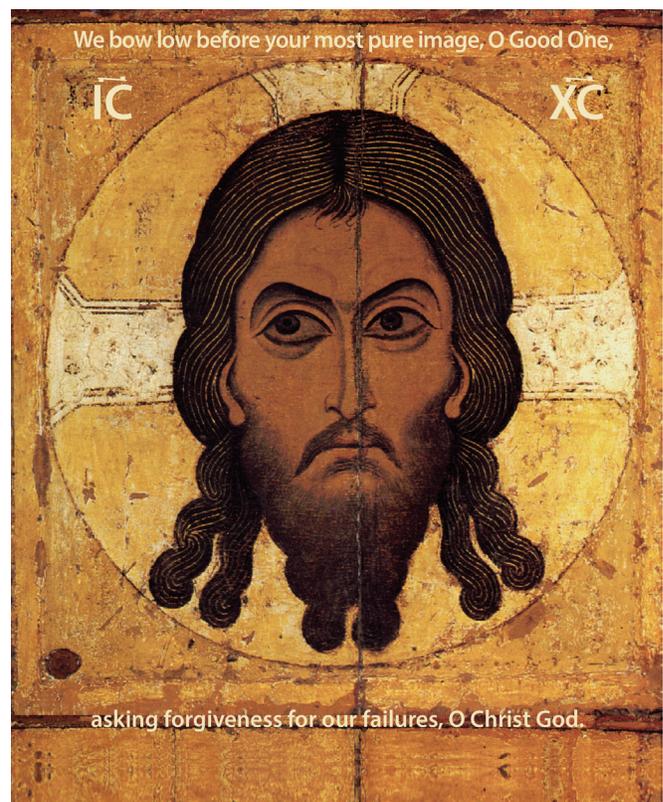
Glory: A new troparion for the day, Tone IV:

You, O Christ, are the living ladder in Jacob’s dream * for you yourself join earth and heaven. ^{Gen. 28.12} * You are the prophet of whom Moses speaks, ^{Dt. 18.18} * for you make the Father known. ^{Jn. 1.18} * You are the great high priest over all God’s house; ^{Heb. 4.14, 10.21} * You are the altar; ^{Heb. 13.10} you are the offering; ^{Heb. 9.12, 10.12} it is

you we receive. ^{Jn. 6.53} * In faith we echo Nathaniel’s cry: * You are the Father’s Son, you are the King of all who believe! ^{Jn. 2.49}

Both now: A new kondakion for the Sundays of the Fast, Tone VI:

At various times and in different ways * you spoke to our fathers through the prophets. * But in our own time you speak to us through your Son * through whom you made everything there is. * He is the radiant light of your glory. * He is the perfect copy of your very being. * By his powerful word he sustains the universe. * Now that he has destroyed the defilement of sin, * he has gone to take his seat at the right hand of your Majesty. ^{Heb. 1.1-3} * Father in heaven, * in this season of renewal * turn our minds more attentively to what we have been taught. * Do not let us drift away. ^{Heb. 2.1}



THE ÉKTENY or FERVENT PRAYER (Ancient Penitential Litany and Prayer)

Let us all say with our whole soul,
and with our whole mind let us say:
Lord, have mercy.

O Lord almighty! O God of our fathers!
We pray you. Hear us and have mercy.

Have mercy on us, O God,
according to your great mercy!

We pray you. Hear us and have mercy.

Again we pray:

- For devout and Orthodox Christians.
- For our Archbishop Tikhon.
- For Ed and Janet and Andrea, and for all who have asked for our prayers *NN...*: we pray for mercy, life, peace, health, salvation, visitation, pardon, and remission of their sins.
- For Orthodox Christians who are made to suffer on account of Christ, and we pray for those who persecute them.
- For Orthodox Christians and indeed all men who are victims of war and civil strife [and terror], of hunger and want, of intolerance and injustice.
- For physicians, nurses, care-givers, and all serving those infected with the virus; and for the thousands who have succumbed to the disease — and for all who will die today.

PRAYER OF THE ÉKTENY

Lord our God, accept this fervent prayer from your servants, and have mercy on us according to the greatness of your mercy. Send down your compassionate help upon us and upon all your people awaiting the rich mercy that comes from you.

For you are God, merciful and loving to man, and we render glory to you — to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit: now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Regarding the Eucharistic fast for the PreSanctifieds, and related matters.

As we have been doing these many years, there will be potluck meals following the PreSanctifieds. Bring what you can, *if* you can. But come. There is always plenty of food.

Regarding the fast (these are the guidelines put forward so many years ago by Bishop Basil Rodzianko), keep the Eucharistic fast as best you can. If not from morning, at least from lunchtime. (In point of fact, fasting for the entire day is not all that difficult, though some may disagree — *Ed.*) As for older children: let them have a small snack when they come home from school. (Fasting is not for younger children, the ill, or the elderly.) Common sense applies.

Keep it simple.

Here's what a modern *Priest's Service Book* (Church of Greece, Athens, 1962, pg. 211) has to say:

“The Divine Liturgy of the PreSanctified, realized for the sanctification of the faithful, is served every Wednesday and Friday of the Great Forty Days, ... Thursday of the Great Canon, [and] Great Monday, Great Tuesday, and Great Wednesday....

“The Divine Liturgy of the PreSanctified is served always after the Ninth Hour, at Vespers, **because of the all-day fast**. It is done usually by a single priest, alone, without a deacon....

“While the Ninth Hour is being read, priestly ministers take leave and enter the sanctuary and put on simple **black** vestments, but **no** [pectoral] **crosses** or priestly awards....”

Apostrophe on the word *fast*.

Fast is a Germanic word. Primarily it means abstaining from food; secondarily it means eating sparingly or abstaining from some foods. It comes into the Slavic languages as *post*. The Greek word is *nēsteía* and it means the same thing: not eating, and, secondarily, not eating some foods.

Everyone knows the basic meaning of the word *fast*. The doctor tells you he wants you to come in for a blood test *fasting*, you know he means that you should eat nothing when you get up on the morning and that you will have nothing to eat until after the test. Fasting is *not eating*. And, fasting is *from the morning* — *not the night before* — as some erroneously teach.

From antiquity Christians would keep a fast by not eating all day and then taking a meal in the evening.

It's the original idea behind the Wednesday/Friday fast. This is biblical stuff.

One can imagine that whatever spiritual benefits derive from fasting would come to a person regardless of how he broke his fast; in other words, regardless of what he ate.

One can fast for a day. One can fast for a period of time. The Great Forty Days (*cf.* Matthew 4.2, Luke 4.2) for example.

One may fast—not eat all day, then eat—Monday through Friday. One may not fast—not eat all day, then eat—on the Sabbath and the Lord's Day. The Church nixes Saturdays and Sundays. Not at first, but very early in her history. It's why the Liturgy is served Sunday *mornings*—to minimize and confine the Eucharistic fast. The first ecumenical council (Nikaia, 325 A.D.) makes an exception for the Holy and Great Sabbath which, a thousand years ago, was a day of fasting that concluded in the evening with Vespers with the Divine Liturgy during which neophytes were baptized and the Resurrection celebrated—everyone took holy Communion. (One can appreciate that the fast on this Saturday—like the eves of the Nativity and Theophany—was a *Eucharistic* fast leading into the feast.)

So. One fasts—one does not eat all day, then eats—Monday through Friday. Additionally, at the same time, one abstains from certain foods—*e.g.*, meat, dairy, *etc.* This is the only aspect of a fast period that continues over Saturday and Sunday [the question today is, Should it?]. To use more precise language for our situation today: one *fasts*—one does not eat, then eats—and one *abstains*—one does not eat certain foods. Together they make up the Orthodox Christian notion of keeping a fast. Interestingly enough, these terms turn up in the hymnography we sing during the time of the Great Fast.

Abstinence

For most of us today what “fasting” we do is better termed *abstinence*. Abstaining from meat. Abstaining from dairy. Unfortunately this has led to label reading as an exercise in seasonal piety. Furgedaboutit.

Fr. Meyendorff came down heavily on label reading. He called label reading phariseeism. “Do what you can,” he would say. Want to do more? Do more of what the Church's tradition counsels us to do. Enter more deeply into what the Church around the world is doing. Prayer. Fasting. Almsgiving. Eschew

silly—foreign—notions. Like “Giving up Coke.” Or “Giving up chocolate.” Or some such. Pious solipsism. What value can there be in that? Better, think of fasting as training for the race, for the Christian life. Think of it as the nourishment for a sovereign spirit (remember? Psalm 50?): for self-control, for prudence, and perseverance

We are a community of dependent creatures. No food and we're done for. Fasting and abstinence have worthwhile spiritual and moral goals. The Orthodox world is full of SOBs who fast by the book. And they are still SOBs. Let us do everything and anything to avoid that.

One last word.

Illness brings its own asceticism.

Fasting in the strict sense, as we said, is not for the old or the very young. Neither is it for the sick and those with chronic conditions. Some medications require food. Another example, a diabetic; his/her slowed-down digestion requires a number of small meals during the course of a day to ease up on one's pancreas and help manage the disease. So, nix to fasting. But yes to the self-discipline needed to manage disease.

On the other hand, while young growing bodies and organs need nutrition, a child 12 or 13 should be able to keep the Eucharistic fast on a Sunday morning. There are unofficial canons that would censure parents with a real fast for failing to observe this. —pnh