

GREAT LENT

Great Lent is our school of repentance. Repentance is not so much a regret for specific wrongdoings as it is reorienting our life back toward God, Who awaits us with outstretched arms. Though simple in concept, this is not so easy to do since ‘the world’ tugs on us in many ways. To help us on this journey the Church gives us three important tools: **prayer**, **fasting**, and **almsgiving**. Here are some simple guidelines that could be of help to us during Lent. Please feel free to discuss any or all of these with me further.

Prayer: to help us in communing/talking with God

- Add the prayer of St. Ephraim (see below), along with its prostrations, to both your morning and evening prayers.
- Try to add 5-10 minutes of silence to either your morning or evening prayers or mid-day, if that works better for you.
- Try to participate in several of the Wednesday evening Presanctified Liturgies (beginning at 7 pm) – these are put there by the Church to help us ‘recharge our batteries during the middle of the week’.
- Come to Confession at least once during Lent

Fasting: to show that the things of the world do not control us

- Step up your fasting from food by “one notch”. For example, if you don’t fast at all consider not eating meat on Wednesdays and Fridays; if you currently fast on those days, consider fasting the entire week; if you can already go 40 days without meat, consider fasting from dairy as well.
- Fast from anger and gossip. St. John Chrysostom says “What use is it to fast from eating meat, if you devour your brother?”
- Reduce the amount of your entertainment (e.g. reduced the amount of time you spend watching TV or being on the computer or reading novels) – give up something you ‘can’t live without’ to show that it does not control your life

Almsgiving: sharing God's love and bounties with others

- Try to perform a random act of kindness (even a smile) every day and try to make time each week to help someone in need (e.g. call or email someone who is 'house bound', or lonely, or simply down in spirits)
- Give the money you save by having simpler meals to the poor.
- Consider making a donation to support International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC), or Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC), or your favorite charity or local soup kitchen.

The Prayer of St. Ephraim

O Lord and Master of my Life, take from me the spirit of sloth, despair, lust of power, and idle talk. (*Prostration*)

But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to Thy servant. (*Prostration*)

Yes, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own errors, and to judge not my brother, for blessed art Thou unto ages of ages, Amen. (*Prostration*)

Lord have mercy (12x, *each time accompanied by a bow down*)

O Lord and Master of my Life, take from me the spirit of sloth, despair, lust of power, and idle talk; But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to Thy servant; Yes, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own errors, and to judge not my brother, for blessed art Thou unto ages of ages, Amen.

(*Prostration*)