

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE GREAT LENT:

It is possible for one who fasts not to be rewarded for his fasting. How? When, we abstain from foods, but do not abstain from iniquities: When we do not eat meat, but gnaw to pieces the homes of the poor, when we do not become drunkards with wine, but become drunkards with evil pleasures: when we abstain all the day, but all the night we spend in profane entertainment. Then what is the benefit of abstention from foods, when on the one hand you deprive your body of a selected food, but on the other, offer yourself unlawful pleasure?

St. John Chrysostom

THE SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION: This is one of the seven holy “Mysteries” of the church, e.g. Baptism, Eucharist, etc. It is also called the sacrament of Repentance, from the Greek word *metanoia*, a change, a turning around of our heart, mind and will. The Lord instituted this mystery when He conveyed His own Priesthood upon the bishops and priests of the Church, through His Holy Apostles. He breathed on them and said, *“Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”* (John 20:22-23) While confessing frequently throughout the year, the faithful are to do so, especially, during Great Lent!

PRESANCTIFIED GIFTS LITURGY: During Great Lent we do not celebrate the Divine Liturgy on weekdays, except for the Holy Feast Day of the *Annunciation of the Theotokos on March 25th*. This is because the Divine Liturgy is a joyous celebration and great Lent is a time for repentance of our sins. So that the faithful are not left without Holy Communion, the Presanctified Liturgy is usually celebrated on Wednesday and/or Friday. “Presanctified” means “already consecrated” because the bread and wine (Body and Blood of Jesus Christ) of Holy Communion were consecrated on the preceding Sunday. The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts will be served on Wednesday of each week during Great Lent at 6:00 p.m. (except the Wednesday of Holy Week). Fasting before the Liturgy should start at 12:00 noon (6 hours before receiving the Holy Sacraments). Confessions will be heard before Liturgy, or after, or by appointment.

FASTING AND RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION AT PRESANCTIFIED LITURGY: If you would like to take communion at the Presanctified Liturgy during Great Lent, you must fast by taking no food from 12:00 noon until you receive Holy Communion. Confession must be taken before Liturgy. If you have taken private confession or General Confession during a given month, or 4 weeks, then you may receive Absolution at the Presanctified Liturgy and Sunday Liturgies in that four (4) week period. We pray that many of our members will partake of Holy Communion more than once during Great Lent!

‘AGAPE MEAL’ - Each Wednesday, after Presanctified Liturgy, there will be a gathering of our members in St. Michael’s Cultural Center to partake of an evening meal. All who are at the Presanctified Liturgy, are invited to join in this fellowship meal. We only ask that each family bring a Lenten Dish (casserole, dessert, salad, bread). There is no fee. Our agape meals have always been enjoyed by all.

PROSTRATION: This is the act of getting down on one’s knees and touching the forehead to the floor in a great reverence. During Great Lent, and at all Lenten services, our Orthodox Faithful are reminded to prostrate (bow) to the floor before venerating the icon on the Tetrapod (at the center of church) when entering church. This has been the tradition in our Orthodox Churches for centuries. At the end of most services during Lent, the people prostrate (3) times while the choir sings **“Suffering Passions of our Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us!”**

SISTER IOANNA’S WEBSITE: Sister Ioanna has a website with many religious articles for you to read about the Holy Orthodox Church and Great Lent. If you are interested, please go to her website: stinnocentmonastery.org and read about the Orthodox church.