



THE GREAT LENT EPISTLE
OF THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS OF THE
UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE USA AND DIASPORA



“Let us observe a fast acceptable and pleasing to the Lord.”

Dearly Beloved Brothers and Sisters – Clergy and Laity - Faithful of our Holy Ukrainian Orthodox Church throughout the World,

CHRIST IS AMONGST US! IS AND ALWAYS SHALL BE!

As we embark on the sacred journey of Eastern Orthodox Great Lent, let us fast not only from food but from sin and everything that leads us into sinful behavior, belief and deeds; let us fast with love and humility as a means to an end and not an end in itself; let us reflect on the purpose of fasting, as a foundation of our spiritual growth and the desire to become one with God. Drawing inspiration from the Holy Fathers, who remind us of the transformative power of repentance, and Holy Scripture, which guides us on the path of humility, may this Lenten season be a time of profound self-reflection, prayer, and adherence to the teachings of our Holy Orthodox Tradition.

In the words of Saint John Chrysostom, “Lent is a healing therapy for the soul,” urging us to purify our hearts and draw nearer to the Divine. Let us heed the call of Saint Isaac the Syrian, who implores us to “make space for God within us.” Through fasting, prayer, and almsgiving, we strive to emulate Christ’s humility and seek a deeper connection with our Creator. The second Secretary General, Dag Hammarskjöld, of the newly created United Nations once expressed a profound thought – “The longest journey is the journey inwards, of him (or her) who has started upon a quest for the source of his (her) being.” As Orthodox Christians we are blessed daily in knowing the “Source of our being” through the Scriptural exposition of creation and God’s unending efforts to express His Love for us, even allowing the sacrifice of His Only-Begotten Son as a ransom for our salvation.

May the wisdom of the Holy Fathers and the guidance of Holy Scripture illuminate our Lenten journey, fostering spiritual renewal, repentance, and a profound sense of gratitude for that sacrifice of our Lord. As we walk this path together, let our collective

prayers and endeavors strengthen our faith, bringing us closer to the Resurrection and the eternal joy that awaits. Each of us must enter Great Lent with the intention to begin the journey inwards with more intensity than ever before in our lives.

Yes, let us honestly fast from food with the goal of physical, mental, and emotional effect as the first step in this journey inward. The effect should be hunger and comprehension of just how much our Loving God has provided for us. Then the fast must expand to include change of behavior – reading Holy Scripture, worshipping at all the Lenten liturgical services, and putting aside the things that will, without doubt, distract us from the inward journey: our mobile phones, tablets, all forms of social media, all forms of visual entertainment that will not deepen our journey inwards to unity with the Divine.

Is the Lenten journey inwards easy? NO! Our salvation, however, demands that we embark upon it to have any hope at all to experience God's energies. We cannot experience His Essence, but we can, having become one with Him at the core of our being, experience His uncreated and eternal energies or manifestations of His Divinity – as the Apostles Peter, James and John experienced His Divine Light – uncreated and pure – at the Transfiguration. May we all understand completely that the experience of the Apostles on Mt. Tabor is possible for each of us if our journey inwards is real, sincere, and filled with love for God and for each other.

We shall be praying fervently for all of you throughout this Great Lenten Fast-Journey and we beseech your prayers for us, your Spiritual Fathers...

In our Lord's All-Encompassing Love,

+ ANTONY

By the Grace of God, Metropolitan – UOC of USA and Diaspora

+ JEREMIAH

*By the Grace of God, Archbishop
Eparchy of South America*

+ DANIEL

*By the Grace of God, Archbishop
UOC of USA and Diaspora*

Given this 17th Day of March 2024 – Forgiveness Sunday
South Bound Brook, NJ

