

# OUR LADY OF THE CEDARS CHURCH

**A MELKITE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY**

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**RT. REV. ANDRE ST. GERMAIN (retired)**

**REV. DEACON ROBERT SPENCER**

**REV. ROGER BOUCHER - Weekend Ministry**

**REV. DEACON PAUL LEONARCZYK**

*"Enter the Church and repent for your sin; for here is the physician, not the judge.  
Here one is not investigated, one receives remission of sins." (St. John Chrysostom)*

**February 23, 2014**

**The Commemoration of the Holy Hieromartyr Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna**

## **THE SUNDAY OF THE LAST JUDGEMENT**

**Parish Advisory & Finance Council:**

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**Sunday School Coordinator: MARTHA DAGHER**

**N.A.M.Y. Advisor: ROBIN ANDERSON**

**HOLY MYSTERY OF CONFESSION: Sunday 10 AM & 12:45 PM, before or after any service, or by appointment;**

**HOLY MYSTERY OF CHRISTIAN ILLUMINATION: Please contact the clergy in advance to arrange for the required baptismal instructions;**

**HOLY MYSTERY OF CROWNING: At least six months prior to the proposed wedding, please contact the clergy to arrange for the required interview and instructions;**

**HOLY MYSTERY OF THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK: Please contact the pastor at any time when this sacrament is needed;**

**HOLY COMMUNION FOR THE SICK: Anyone too infirm to attend our services may receive Communion in the home. Please advise the clergy whenever this sacrament is needed.**

*Please remember to contact the church if a loved one is in the hospital and would like a visit from the priest. The hospitals do not always notify the church!*

# THE ORDER OF TODAY'S LITURGY

The Troparion of the Resurrection (7<sup>th</sup> Tone) Page 54

The Troparion of the Dormition of the Theotokos (1<sup>st</sup> Tone): Page 16

The Kontakion of the Sunday of the Last Judgment (First Tone)

When You shall come down, O God, upon earth in Your glory, every creature shall tremble before You. A river of fire shall flow before Your judgment seat, the books shall be opened and all secrets revealed. On that day, O Righteous Judge, deliver me from the unquenchable fire, and make me worthy to stand at Your right.

**THE PROKIMENON:**

**MY STRENGTH AND MY COURAGE IS THE LORD,  
AND HE HAS BEEN MY SAVIOR!**

*The Lord has chastised me through His teaching, yet He has not delivered me to death!*

**Today's Readings: 1 Corinthians 8: 8-13 and Matthew 25: 31-46**

## LITURGY INTENTIONS

**Saturday, 4:30 PM:**

For the repose of Lionel Shakra (15<sup>th</sup>), Donald Ganem (20<sup>th</sup>), Paul Kehriarty (18<sup>th</sup>),  
Pauline LeBlanc (7<sup>th</sup>), Shirkey George (34<sup>th</sup>), and Sophie Potoczny (17<sup>th</sup>)

**Sunday, 11:00 AM:**

For the repose of Archbishop Joseph Tawil (15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary)

For the repose of Fred Kfoury Jr., by Frances Hastings and family

**Next Saturday, 4:30 PM:**

For the repose of Fred Kfoury Jr., by his wife Lois

For the repose of Samuel Ashooh (74<sup>th</sup>), Joseph Abood (28<sup>th</sup>), Sara Anton(16<sup>th</sup>),  
Rose Solomon(16<sup>th</sup>), Ernest Elhady (16<sup>th</sup>), and Stewart Spencer (9<sup>th</sup>)

**Next Sunday, 11:00 AM:**

For the repose of Joseph "Mike" Duquette (40 Day Memorial),  
by Betty Ashooh



## **Ice Cream Party: Cheese-Fare Sunday**

Next Sunday at 6:00 PM all are invited to an ice cream party - a final celebration before Great Lent begins! If you are planning on attending please see Bridget Proulx to find out what you can bring. The party will be followed by celebration of Forgiveness Vespers at 7:00 PM, which ushers in the beginning of Great Lent.



## TODAY IS THE SUNDAY OF MEAT-FARE....

That means that Great Lent begins next Sunday evening. In this final week of preparation for the Great Fast, the traditional discipline suggests that we bid farewell to meat in our diet after today until Pascha, though eggs and dairy products are permitted every day during the coming week. This limited fasting prepares us

gradually for the more intense fasting of Great Lent. The way we decide to adapt this discipline to our own situation is a matter of individual choice. Of greater importance is the need to formulate a spiritual plan for the coming Holy Season. How will we make our return to the Lord? Plan now, and don't miss a day of the blessings of Great and Holy Lent!

### ... ALSO KNOWN AS THE SUNDAY OF THE LAST JUDGMENT

Today's Gospel reading is Matthew 25:31-46, the parable of the Last Judgment. It reminds us that while trusting in Christ's love and mercy, we must not forget His righteous judgment when He comes again in glory. Because He is a good and loving God who does not desire the death of a sinner, He calls us to turn from our wickedness and live (Ezek. 33:11). The time for repentance and forgiveness is now.

As Father Alexander Schmemmann reminds us in his book GREAT LENT (Ch. 1:4), sin is the absence of love, it is separation and isolation. We shall be judged on whether we have loved, or not loved, our neighbor. We show Christian love when we feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, visit those who are sick or in prison. If we did such things for the least of Christ's brethren, then we also did them for Christ (Mt.25:40).

**Knowing the commandments of the Lord, let this be our way of life: let us feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, welcome strangers, visit those in prison and the sick. Then the Judge of the earth will say even to us: "Come, you whom My Father has blessed, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you!"** *-From the Midnight Service*

**Attendance Last Saturday 4:30 PM: 5 Sunday 11:00 AM: 147**

**Last Weekend's Collection: \$ 1,048.<sup>00</sup>**

*The average Sunday envelope offering last week was \$39.<sup>13</sup>*

*The balance remaining on our mortgage is: \$ 344,477.<sup>47</sup>*

#### SERVICES FOR THE WEEK

*Weekday services will be held in the basement chapel*

Tues., Feb 25	8:30 AM	<b>Divine Liturgy:</b> <i>For the health of Loretto Gauvin</i>
Wed., Feb. 26	7:00 PM	<b>Vespers</b>
Thurs., Feb. 27	8:30 AM	<b>Divine Liturgy:</b> <i>For the health of Edmond George</i>
Sat., Mar. 1	4:30 PM	<b>Divine Liturgy: The Sunday of Forgiveness (Cheese-Fare)</b>
Sun., Mar. 2	10:15 AM	<b>Sunday Orthros</b>
Sun., Mar. 2	11:00 AM	<b>Divine Liturgy: The Sunday of Forgiveness (Cheese-Fare)</b>
Sun, Mar. 2	7:00 PM	<b>Vespers of Forgiveness: <i>Great Lent begins!</i></b>

## Notes on Fasting



Fasting from foods is intended as spiritual preparation for an experience of deeper communion with God. Each person is a unity of body and soul. A right spiritual diet and a discipline of fasting go together and strengthen each other. Just as prayer benefits not only the soul but also the body so also fasting from foods benefits not only the body but also the soul. Fasting and prayer make us more sensitive to God's personal presence. At important times of their lives the Prophets fasted and prayed. So did Jesus, the Apostles, Saints and Church Fathers.

**Fasting must be undertaken willingly and not by compulsion. God doesn't need our fasting. We don't fast as a kind of personal punishment for our sins.** We cannot pay God back for sins but we can only confess them to Him to receive forgiveness. Fasting with a willing spirit and not just with an attitude of fulfilling a religious obligation means that we keep the purposes of fasting always before us which is to develop self control and to remember God and His Kingdom. That way we fast not only in what we eat but also in how *much* we eat. Fasting is simplicity of eating. We leave the table not with loaded stomachs. Being a little hungry during the day becomes a constant reminder of God, of our dependence on Him, and of the fact that the Lord alone can give us "food that lasts for eternal life" (Jn 6:27). In fasting and prayer, he reveals Himself to us as our true food and drink.

<http://home.wavecable.com/~photios/fasting.htm>

## Reasons to Fast

God Himself established fasting. In the Old Testament, preparation for a special holy occasion included fasting and prayer. The New Testament often mentions fasting. Our Lord fasted Himself for 40 days before going out to preach. Fasting is clearly not optional inasmuch as Our Lord said, regarding fasting *When you fast* (Matt. 6:16), rather than *If you fast*. Our Lord, speaking of His disciples, said that after His departure, they would fast: *when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then they shall fast*.

Our Lord also said that we can overcome the devil only through prayer and fasting. When His disciples reported to Him that they had been unable to cast out a demon, Our Lord explained to them that *this kind* [the devil and his foul spirits] *can be cast out in no way but by prayer and fasting*. If we are given but two weapons--prayer and fasting-- in our battle against the demonic powers, we should not cast one of these weapons aside and ignore it. What soldier who knows only two weapons work against a particular enemy would throw one away?

Apostolic writings also mention fasting. St. Paul's first Letter to the Corinthians, speaking about marriage, counsels that husbands and wives not deny one another *except it be for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer, and come together again*. Clearly, fasting and praying together are a part of Christian marriage, according to the Apostle.

The original commandment that God gave to Adam and Eve was a fasting commandment: *eat of the fruit of all the trees but this one*. If the fall of mankind and the loss of paradise were the result of breaking a fasting commandment, we should probably not ignore the fasts.

-Father Alexander Lebedeff

# Saint Theodore's Meat Substitute

IN THE ROMAN PERIOD many ordinary people ate most of the meat they consumed at religious banquets. In both Judaism and the pagan religions animals would be sacrificed to God (or a god) and the blood would be poured out as an offering to the divinity. Certain parts would be given to the priests and the rest returned to the person offering the sacrifice to be served in a banquet to friends and neighbors.



This created the dilemma for the first Christians which St. Paul addressed in 1 Corinthians. Should a believer eat the meat that his neighbor had offered to Jupiter or any pagan divinity? Would that be an acknowledgement that there were many gods and goddesses as the pagans claimed? Would they be “taking communion” with these gods?

St Paul presents two important principles in his response. First he affirms that the idols which the pagans worshipped were nothing, so the food offered to them was nothing special either. Christians would not sin by eating their fill. But there was a more important consideration: what would less informed believers think if they saw their leaders eating at these festivals? They may be led to think that the pagan gods are real and their faith in one God may be weakened. “*Therefore,*” Paul affirms, “*if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat again, lest I make my brother stumble*” (v.13).

## Ordinary Christians vs. Gnostics

This controversy exposed a divide in the early Church between those educated in classical philosophy and ordinary believers. The educated considered themselves to be “Gnostics,” those in the know, and sometimes looked down on the rest. St Paul had little sympathy for them and spoke with some derision, “*For if anyone sees you who ‘have knowledge’ eating in an idol’s temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols?*” (v.10)

St John Chrysostom spoke even more harshly: “Don’t tell me that such a man is only a shoemaker, another a dyer, another a brazier: but bear in mind that he is a believer and a brother. Whose disciples are we? - of fishermen, publicans and tent-makers! Are we not followers of Him who was brought up in the house of a carpenter; and who deigned to have the carpenter’s betrothed wife for a mother; and who was laid in a manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and who had nowhere to lay His head—of Him whose journeys were so long that His very journeying was enough to tire Him down; of Him who was supported by others?” (20<sup>th</sup> Homily on 1 Corinthians). Followers of an itinerant carpenter-preacher have no cause to look down on fellow believers because they do not know philosophy. By God’s grace they know Christ.

Not a few groups of early gnostic Christians ended by devising their own belief systems, often denying that God was the source of the material creation, something they were too “spiritual” to admit. One could rise above the material by acquiring *gnosis* (superior knowledge) not obvious

to the ordinary man. They found their salvation, not in union with Christ but in the acquisition of gnosis. Groups of Gnostics could be found in the East until the rise of Islam.

St Paul's response to the elitism of the Gnostic Christians was to urge them to put the welfare of the weaker brethren ahead of their own. Yes, Paul said in effect, it's ok to eat food at pagan festivals but it's not ok to scandalize brethren who don't understand how this could be. And the reason for this is that we are all members of the one body of Christ: *"But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ"* (vs. 9-12).

St Paul would make this principle a cornerstone of his directions to the new churches he would organize. Not only should the intellectuals look out for the ordinary believer, those able to put their faith into practice should care for those who do not. As he told the Galatians, *"Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself"* (Gal 6 1-3). Not only the intellectual elite but the spiritually adept need an antidote to pride: caring for those less proficient than themselves rather than looking down upon them.

### **A Matter of Conscience**

St Paul characterizes those who may be scandalized at pagan banquets as having a *"weak conscience"* (v.9). In every man there is an understanding of right and wrong. Conscience has been described as *"man's most secret core and his sanctuary. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths"* (Vatican Council II). Deep within himself man discovers a law which he has not laid upon himself but which he must obey. When a person does this he is said to be *"following his conscience."*

Christians should feel obliged to form their conscience in accordance with the word of God rather than the dictates of the culture in which they live or their personal sentiments. Developing such a Christian conscience is one aspect of the believer's interior life. A person who ignores self-reflection remains weak and susceptible to every changing fad. When faced with a moral dilemma he is unable to make his decision based on clear principles – biblical or otherwise – and usually just does what *"everyone else"* is doing. Like their first century forebears, they have a weak conscience.

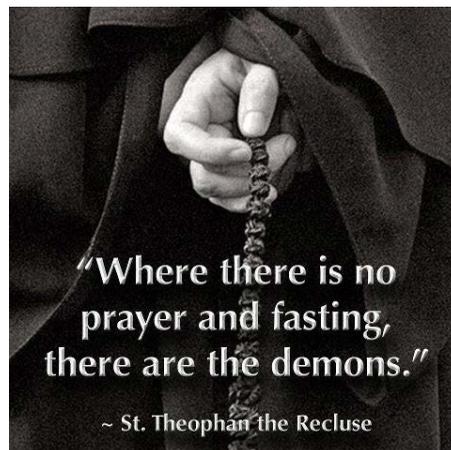
### **St Theodore and the Boiled Wheat**

The last non-Christian ruler of the Roman Empire, Julian the Apostate (361-363) sought to revive the ancient glory of Rome by restoring its ancient pagan religion at the expense of Christianity. During the first week of the Great Fast, when many people were not eating for much of the week, Julian ordered the Prefect of Constantinople to sprinkle all the food in the marketplaces with the blood from sacrifices offered to idols. People would have to eat this food on the weekend and thus, he reasoned, honor the gods that he worshipped. St Theodore the Recruit, martyred some 50 years before, appeared in a dream to Archbishop Eudoxius, ordering him to inform all the Christians that no one should buy anything at the marketplaces, but rather to eat cooked wheat with honey (kolyva) instead. Since the time of Patriarch Nectarios (381-397) the Byzantine Churches have remembered this event on the first Saturday in the Great Fast. The Canon to St Theodore is sung, then kolyva is blessed in memory of St. Theodore's intervention.

## **A WORD ABOUT LENTEN FASTING:**

The *traditional Lenten fast* consists of abstaining from all meat and fish and all dairy products throughout Lent. On weekdays there is a strict fast (abstinence from all food from midnight until noon), smaller meals are eaten, and there is abstinence from alcoholic beverages and from food between meals. Many follow a *modified fast*: abstaining from meat on all Wednesdays and Fridays and from all food and drink from midnight to noon (especially first day of Great Lent and on the last three days of Holy Week).

Whatever plan you choose to follow is commendable. You are free of course, to develop another plan that suits your own needs and spirituality. Remember - fasting is not a matter of legal observances or obligations, but an opportunity for spiritual renewal. Whatever you choose to do is a matter between yourself and God.



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**Please pray for the release** of Greek Orthodox Archbishop Paul Yazigi and Syriac Orthodox Archbishop Yohanna Ibrahim who were abducted on April 22 when gunmen stopped their vehicle near the battleground northern city of Aleppo, where both are based. Please pray also for their deacon who was driving their car and was shot and killed in the attack.

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### **Why do we fast, and what do we fast from, during Great Lent?**

We fast before the Feast of Feasts, the Resurrection of Christ, to prepare ourselves for the celebration of Our Lord's eternal victory over sin, corruption, and death, and in anticipation of our own resurrection. Hence, Great Lent is a time of preparation, during which we focus on and anticipate the resurrection of Our Savior by fasting, prayer, and almsgiving.

When we fast, we "shift our focus" from ourselves to God and others, spending less time worrying about what to eat, when to eat, how much to eat, and so on in order to use our time in increased prayer and caring for the poor. We learn through fasting that we can gain control over those things that we too often allow to control us—and for many people, food is a controlling factor. While fasting from food, however, we are also challenged to fast from sin, from gossip, from jealousy, from anger, and from those other things which, while well within our control, we all too often allow to control us.

Further, just as we would refrain from eating a lot before going to an expensive restaurant for dinner—if we "ruin our appetite" we will hardly enjoy our dinner—so too we fast before Holy Pascha in order to more fully feast and celebrate on the Feast itself.

During the Great Fast—and all lenten seasons—we are called upon to *abstain* from meat, dairy, fish, wine, and olive oil. At the same time, we are challenged, within this framework, to *fast* to the best of our ability, and to do so consistently. If we must modify the extent to which we fast within this framework, it is of course possible, but in every instance our fasting should be consistent and regular, for Christ does not see fasting as an option, but as a "must." In the Gospel of Saint Matthew, Our Lord says, "WHEN you fast, do not be like the hypocrites," not "IF you fast" or "IF YOU CHOOSE to fast."

**-Fr. Thomas Hopko, [www.oca.org](http://www.oca.org)**

**Please remember** to pray for the health and protection of Genevieve Allen, Elizabeth Ashooh, Elsie Ashooh, Louise Ashooh, Al Auclair, Alice Auclair, Erin Baroody, Michael Baroody, Ted Baroody, Betty Bilodeau, Anthony Blando, Helena Burkush, Danielle Caron, Meghan Connors, Lucy Corriveau, Julie Cullen, Theresa Cullen, Jamileh Dagher, Nicholas Daniak, Lynn Dargie, Marie Dargie, Sher Farrow, Declan Finn, Julie Fregeau, Mary Fregeau, Peter Fregeau, Christine Freitas, Anne Gallagher, Loretto Gauvin, Edmond George, Nick Haddad, Jean Hannoush, Lucille Harper, Howard Jabaley, Laura Jorba, Virginia Kearney, Cameron Kosinski, Shirley Lanoue, Roger Lawrence, Sadie Grace McCallum, Miriam McCallum, James McCloskey, Susan Merrill, Margaret Mitchell, Alfred Nasr, Afef Nasr, Blaise Notter, Steven O'Leary, Denis O'Keefe, Helen Baroody Payne, Josephine Paquette, Virginia Pichette, Jean Poleatewich, Sheila Quinn, Deborah Roberts, Adam Rubin, Robert Siwik, Nassim Sleiman, Salwa Sleiman, Tarrant Smith, Catherine Waldron, and Iris Angelina Velasquez.

**If you are visiting our church,** our parish family is delighted to welcome you here! Please give us the chance to get to know you by joining us for some coffee, pastry, and conversation in the church hall following the Divine Liturgy. If you would like to know more about the Melkite Catholic Church, check out the brochure entitled **“Welcome to this Holy House,”** located on the table in the back of the church.



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