

THE CORNERSTONE

ST. ELIAS ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

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April 2024

On Lent

His Eminence
Metropolitan Saba (Isper)

The joyful Lent is here again. Let us approach it with joy and eagerness. This season nourishes us spiritually, purifying us to rise to the level of life worthy of human beings created in the image and likeness of God.

In our Christian circles, Lent is often approached as a mere religious obligation or abstinence from certain foods and drinks for a period of time. In reality, it is an intensive and liberating spiritual exercise when believers lay aside their worldly concerns and replace them with a yearning for the heavenly realms and living according to their faith.

The idea of liberating ourselves from the ties that bind and enslave us to earthly things, which prevent us from realizing our full humanity and purpose of our existence, is crucial to our understanding of Lent. If we focus on minimizing the quantity and quality of food, it is precisely because this helps free us from a fundamental passion that grips human nature, namely gluttony. As

St. John Climacus said: "I wonder if anyone has gotten free of this master before settling in the grave" (The Ladder of Divine Ascent, Step 14:1).

Overcoming gluttony must lead us to freedom from other things that are not essential to our lives. This cannot be achieved if we are satisfied to limit fasting to food. Those who fast according to the rules of the Church experience how much lighter their bodies become as they approach Pascha. This lightness leads believers to more personal and communal prayer, to spreading the spirit of asceticism to many aspects of their daily lives, and to maximizing opportunities to perform acts of love in a variety of forms and ways, according to the ability of each believer.

A very important liturgical book that Orthodox believers cannot do without during Lent is the Triodion. It is the book for the period from the four weeks leading up to Lent, through all the weeks of Lent and Holy Week, until Holy Pascha. The prayers and

hymns in this essential book are organized by the daily services of Orthros, Vespers, and the Sixth Hour. Reading it daily helps us fast properly according to Orthodox spirituality. Some may make the mistake of limiting fasting to food, and some may make the mistake of limiting fasting to nice and civilized behaviors. Both attitudes are incomplete, and each dimension forgets the other. Most dangerously, these incomplete and misunderstood practices ignore the spirit and purpose of fasting.



The eschatological dimension of the Christian faith is essential, and to forget or neglect it amputates the Christian faith from its purpose and goal. What

is the meaning of salvation if our lives are limited to these short years we are given on earth? What is salvation if we do not hope for resurrection and life in the age to come, and therefore do not work and strive for it?

In Lent, we experience, both physically and practically, our longing for the life to come. Fasting keeps our vigilance alive lest we forget that we are created for eternity and life in the presence of God, where we move "from glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3:18), as the Apostle Paul teaches us. Fasting is a yearning and desire for a life beyond the mortal, physical life. It is an experience of death before it happens, and therefore an exercise to defeat fear of it. We should not be surprised when we read or hear about believers who have been called "fasters" because of the many fasts that have shaped their entire lives. These are saints whose longing for God and life with Him led them to abandon everything else and to be satisfied with God alone, neglecting all earthly things and turning to the heavenly ones.

Love is also one of the authentic dimensions of fasting as practiced by Christians since the beginning of Christianity. When someone was in distress, they would call for a fast on a specific day and bring the cost savings of that day's meals to the distressed person at church on Sunday morning. This is why the prayers and hymns of the Triodion often urge charity.

We also need to fast from so many things in these distracting times, such as television, social media, and entertainment, instead devoting the time we spend on them to more spiritual readings, prayer, and acts of love. This is how we experience Lent in its spirit and not just in its rules.

If in our Lent we experience true freedom, we experience the saying that "God alone is enough." If we experience true freedom, then we have entered into His spirituality, beauty and joy.

Read the article in Arabic by clicking here.



"This is the Faith of the Apostles, this is the Faith of the Fathers, this is the Faith of the Orthodox, this is the Faith which has established the Universe."

+ Confession of Faith of the Sunday of Orthodoxy



Sunday School children pose for a photo with Father Michael following the procession of icons on The Sunday of Orthodoxy, March 24.

SERVICES DURING GREAT LENT

Each Monday
Great Compline - 7pm

Each Wednesday
Presanctified Liturgy - 7pm
(March 20 & April 17- 6:30 pm)

Each Friday
Weeks 1- 4
Little Compline
with Akathist - 7 pm

[View Entire Great Lent Schedule](#)

[View Holy Week Schedule](#)

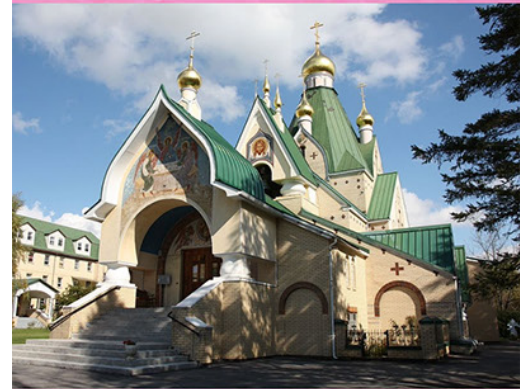
[View Pan-Orthodox Vespers Schedule](#)

**The Wheels Are in Motion!
2024 Saint Elias
Middle Eastern Festival**

We are proud to be co-chairing our 95th Annual St Elias Middle Eastern Festival this year! This festival brings together our parishioners & community to celebrate our culture through food and music. We are working diligently to continue the success that this festival has been for many years. The success of this festival is strongly dependent on each and every parishioner, and we look forward to working together!

Father Michael Ibrahim & Holly Kane

Join us for a
**Pilgrimage
to the
Holy Trinity
Monastery**



**Saturday, April 6th
Please be at the
Monastery by 10am**

Each person is responsible for his or her own transportation; carpooling is recommended.

Please consider offering to take those who cannot/do not drive.

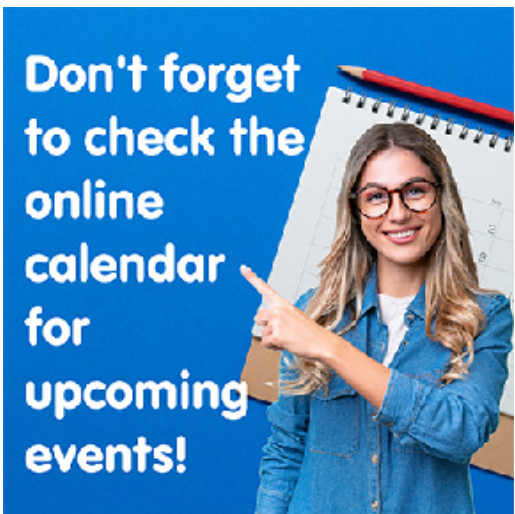
1407 Robinson Rd
Jordanville, NY 13361
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REGISTER TODAY

- doecuny.yam
- st.eliasteensoyo



Reserve Now



View Calendar

LENTEN PRAYER OF ST. EPHREM

○ 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.

Yea, ○ Lord and King, grant me to see my own transgressions, and not to judge my brother, for blessed art Thou, unto ages of ages. Amen.



St. Elias Antiochian Orthodox Church-Syracuse, NY

Syracuse Middle Eastern Festival

syracusemideastfest

