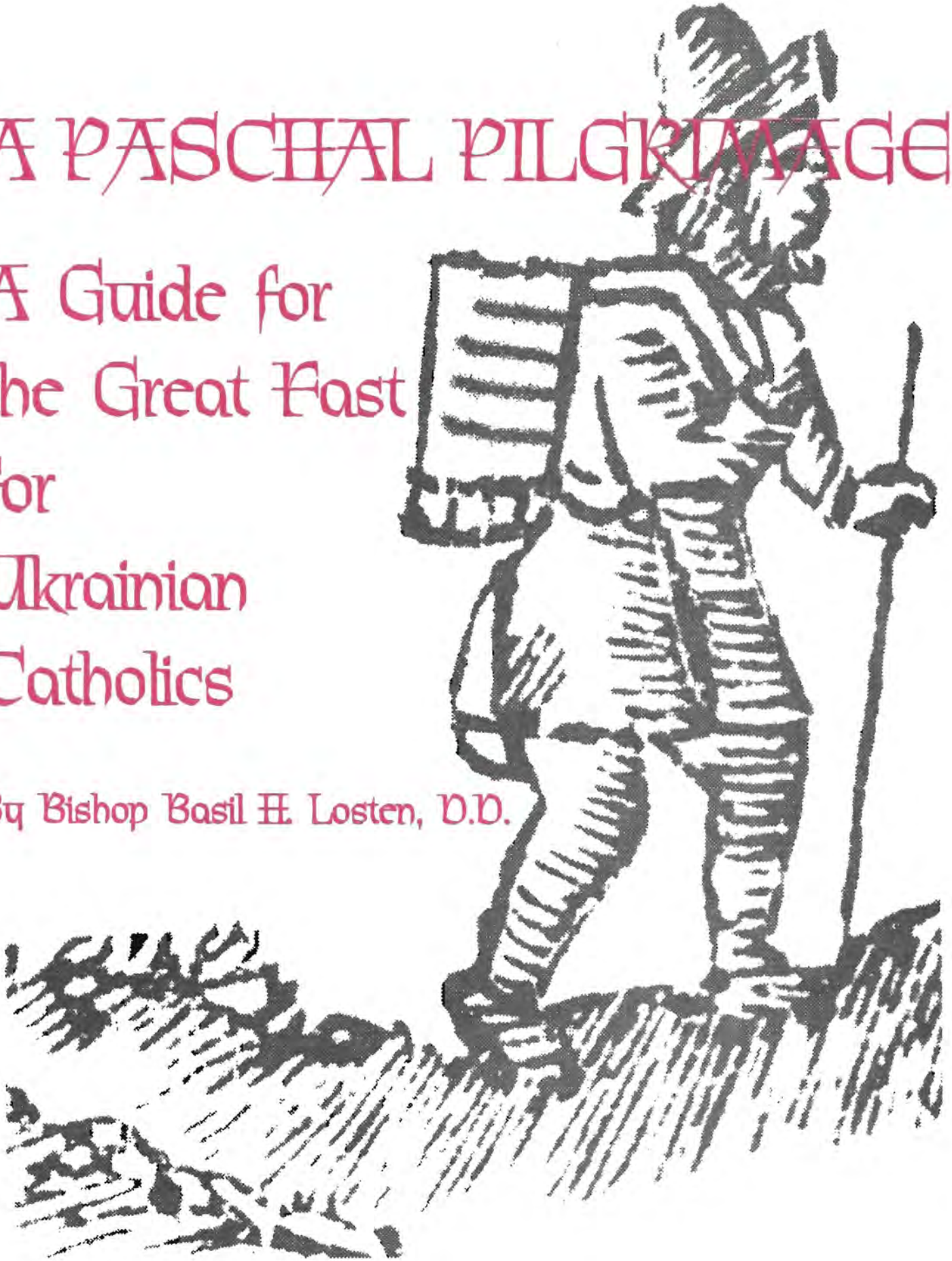
A PASCHAL PILGRIMAGE

A Guide for the Great Fast for Ukrainian Catholics

By Bishop Basil H. Losten, D.D.



Our Paschal Pilgrimage

By The Most Reverend Basil H. Losten, D.D.

INTRODUCTION

Holy Pascha,[1] the feast of feasts, is the greatest and most joyful solemnity of the Christian calendar. Pascha celebrates the Resurrection of Jesus Christ within the context of the salvation history of the Bible. In the Paschal mystery, we live through Creation, through the Fall and the promise of a Redeemer, through the calling of the Hebrews, and especially the first Passover:[2] the miraculous Crossing of the Red Sea by the power of God. The Hebrews were on their way to the Promised Land, to Jerusalem. And throughout all the ages that followed, right up until now, pious Jews wish to celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem.

Jesus Christ also wished to keep the Passover in Jerusalem with His disciples; it was necessary that He should be crucified, that He should die, and that He should rise again from the dead *in Jerusalem,* at the feast of Passover.

Jesus Christ gives us the sacraments of baptism, holy orders, and the Eucharist *within the feast of Pascha;* these sacraments are always within the Paschal mystery. Without Pascha there is no Christianity. As Saint Paul teaches, "If Christ is not risen then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain."[3] "But in fact Christ is risen from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep."[4]

Holy Pascha and the Paschal mystery are at the heart, the center, of our Christian Faith. I have said that pious Jews wish to celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem; for this godly purpose, they go on pilgrimage from every country on earth, not begrudging the time, cost, and trouble of the journey. And in every Jewish household, there is meticulous preparation for the Passover.

We Christians do the same, but in a different way. We wish to accompany the Lord Jesus Christ who tells us "I am no longer going to the earthly Jerusalem to suffer, but I am going to My Father and your Father, to my God and your God: *you shall go with Me to the heavenly Jerusalem* in the Kingdom of Heaven."[5] Saint John the Theologian describes it in this way:

"And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying 'Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them; He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, *and death shall be no more!*'"[6]

So our preparation for Holy Pascha is a pilgrimage, a pilgrimage to the New Jerusalem.[7] Our Paschal pilgrimage does not usually involve much geographical traveling.[8] But our pilgrimage involves a great deal of *spiritual effort.* Saint Athanasius the Great teaches us that,

"Just as Israel, advancing toward Jerusalem, was purified and instructed in the desert, so that they would forget the customs of Egypt, so it is right that during the holy Lent, which we have taken upon ourselves, we should give our attention to our cleansing and purification, so that setting forth from here and mindful of fasting we can ascend to the upper room with the Lord and dine with Him and share the joy in heaven. For otherwise, without keeping Lent, it would not be allowed us either to go up to Jerusalem or to eat the Pascha."[9]

We must prepare ourselves well, by repentance, by renewing and deepening our knowledge of the Christian Faith, by seeking greater knowledge and understanding of the Paschal Mystery as we find it in Holy Scripture and in the teachings of the Catholic Church.

The Guide Book

When we plan a long trip somewhere, we often wish to have a guidebook to give us practical information for our journey and to help us become better acquainted with the places we are to see. We wish to learn more so that our travels may be both more enjoyable and more profitable. For our Paschal pilgrimage, the Church provides us with such a guidebook, the *Lenten Triodion,* a service book we use from the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee to Lazarus Saturday.[10] [In 1995 the Sisters of Saint Basil the Great published an English translation of the *Lenten Triodion.*[11] This valuable book consists of the actual texts

of the prayers our Church invites us to use, prayers written many centuries ago by some of our greatest saints which have nourished countless generations of our faithful. I hope that many of our parishioners will obtain copies of the *Lenten Triodion,* and will put it to good use every year.]

The *Lenten Triodion* and its proper use in our prayer and worship are among the key elements in our tradition and our expectation of the heavenly kingdom. Pope John Paul II teaches that,

"If tradition puts us in continuity with the past, eschatological expectation opens us to God's future....

"The East expresses in a living way the reality of tradition and expectation. All its liturgy, in particular, is a commemoration of salvation and an invocation of the Lord's return. And if Tradition teaches the Churches fidelity to what gave birth to them, eschatological expectation urges them to be what they have not yet fully become, what the Lord wants them to become, and thus to seek ever new ways of fidelity, overcoming pessimism because they are striving for the hope of God who does not disappoint."[12]

This characteristic of our divine worship is particularly true of our celebration of Lent and Holy Pascha.

The universal Catholic Church places special emphasis on the tradition of the Eastern Churches, and stresses "that the full union of the Catholic Eastern Churches with the Church of Rome which has already been achieved must not imply a diminished awareness of their own authenticity and originality."[13]

Instead, we must be proud of our authentic tradition, realizing that we are "the living bearers of this tradition, together with our Orthodox brothers and sisters,"[14] and we should always "attain to an ever greater knowledge and more exact use"[15] of our authentic tradition.

One can take up this work at any moment; the riches of our tradition are always there for us. But Great Lent is a particularly appropriate time, because every year during Lent we try to renew ourselves, to seek freedom from habits which may keep us from God, and we try to grow in the love and knowledge of God. If we follow the "program" which the Church offers us in the *Lenten Triodion,* we shall gain a great deal, and find our Christian lives remarkably deepened. That program has several elements: liturgical prayer, private prayer, fasting, spiritual reading, and charity. In this present Instruction, I hope to provide some direction, some signposts, on the paschal pilgrimage. But all I can do is provide you with a road map. It is you who must make the journey!

Help is at hand. You would not be reading this, and you would not even be thinking about Lent and Pascha, if the Holy Spirit had not already moved you. The Holy Spirit will not leave you; you may not always be able to notice the presence of the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit will always be there. That does not promise an easy time; a good Lent is work and effort. But there is help. Do not be ashamed to ask God for that help when you need it. And do not forget the angels who announced the Resurrection, who ministered to Christ in the wilderness. Your own guardian angel is there to help you in this pilgrimage, and throughout your life. Remember the myriads of saints who have made this pilgrimage and who are glad to share it with you. And especially remember the Blessed Mother of God, the Virgin Mary of whom we shall speak later in this Instruction.

Fasting

Lent is a time of fast and abstinence.

St. Athanasius teaches us that "in no manner is it possible to go up to Jerusalem, and to eat the Passover, except by observing the fast of forty days."[16]

St. Gregory Nazianzen wrote: "Christ fasted ... before his temptation; we fast before Pascha. As far as the number of fasting days goes, it is the same,[17] but the difference in the significance is important: Christ fasted against temptation, but for us this fast is symbolic of dying with Christ, and this fast is a purification to prepare for the festival. Christ fasted totally for forty days, but we adapt our fasting to our strength, even though some are led by zeal to go beyond their strength.

Christ gave the Paschal Mystery[18] to the disciples in an upper room, after supper, and the day before He suffered; but we celebrate the Paschal Mystery[19] in churches,[20] and before food,[21] and after His Resurrection."[22]

The traditional fasting regulations required total abstinence from meat[23] from Meatfare Sunday until Pascha (eight weeks), and total abstinence from dairy products[24] from Cheesefare Sunday until Pascha (seven weeks). These regulations do *not* bind under pain of sin, and I have no intention of attempting to impose them on anyone. In contemporary society there are two serious impediments to the traditional fasting regulations: cost and time. It is possible to eat proper meals in accordance with the traditional regulations, especially with the array of fresh and frozen foods now available. However, many of the foods (particularly shellfish) which one would have to purchase to maintain such a dietary regime are so expensive that buying them on a daily basis would cause a severe economic hardship for most people. True, we should be prepared to make financial sacrifices for our faith. But it would be incongruous to go on an expensive diet of luxury foods and call this "fasting." The *Shepherd of Hermas* teaches that the money we save by fasting must be given to the poor;[25] Hermas would be quite impatient with the suggestion that one should plan to spend more money on food during fasting seasons than at other times of the year!

Nor should we overlook the matter of food preparation time. Cookbooks are available for those who wish to adhere strictly to the traditional fasting regulations. But to do this throughout Lent, one would spend an inordinate amount of time searching for unusual ingredients, and then preparing the meals. This, too, is self-defeating, concentrating our attention on food just at a time when the fast itself should

be directing our attention to other matters. The Holy Fathers would certainly not have taught anyone to spend more time shopping for food and preparing meals during Lent than at other seasons.

So I shall in this Instruction be referring to our traditional fasting regulations — because we can and must learn from them — without urging you to try and follow those regulations to the letter. But that raises a puzzlement: if we are not to follow the traditional regulations, what are we to do? It may be appropriate to change the manner of fasting; that does not mean that we should abandon fasting itself. Since church authorities have not yet given this matter sufficient attention, we must all accept a high degree of individual responsibility for our decisions on how we shall fast, keeping in mind our state of health, the demands on our stamina, the proportion of meals which we must eat outside the home (children often have their lunch at school; adults often have a meal at the workplace) and, above all, what in our particular circumstances will honestly constitute the abstinence and self-denial which are of the essence of fasting.

Here I can offer only a few general suggestions on the subject:

1. *avoid rich foods* as much as possible;
2. *abstain from meat* frequently;
3. *abstain from alcoholic beverages;*[26]
4. *do not eat between meals;* and
5. *reduce the amount of fried foods* as much as possible.[27]

In general, on fast days we should plan and eat modest, simple meals, adequate for sustenance.[28] We should make sincere efforts to conform more closely to the traditional fasting regulations during the first week of Lent and especially during Holy Week.

Saturday[29] and Sunday are not fasting days according to our tradition; the Typikon prescribes the celebration of the full Eucharist on these days, and the services do not have many of the Lenten characteristics which appear on weekdays of Great Lent. This does not mean that we should have no abstinence or self-denial at all on weekends, but this abstinence need not be as strict. Even during Lent, Sunday dinner should be a joyful occasion for our families.

Food is a good gift from God. We do not reject that gift; fasting is not an expression of contempt for food. On Holy Pascha, we bless the foods which we shall share, and all of us should know from experience that nothing else ever tastes quite so good as our blessed Paschal meal after the fast! There is a time to fast, and a time to feast. If we fast well, our feast will be all the more delicious. Both fasting and feasting in due season teach us to come to know God better through His creation.

St. John Chrysostom teaches: "The honor of fasting does not lie in abstaining from food, but in withdrawing from sinful practices. Whoever limits his fasting only to abstinence from foods is discrediting the fast. Are you fasting? Show me by your works! Do you ask 'what kind of works'? If you see a poor man, show mercy to him! If you see an enemy, be reconciled with him! If you see a friend gaining honor, do not envy him!"[30]

Services

I shall spend a considerable amount of time in this Instruction on the divine services which the Church prescribes for Lent. I fully realize that hardly anyone can manage to attend all of the daily services of Lent. In many areas there is scarcely a parish which can offer all the daily services of Lent. On the other hand, there is no one who cannot make an effort. Before Lent begins, and again well before Holy Week, we can look honestly at the calendar and plan how to do our best to take part in the worship services as often as possible, and to prepare for that worship properly. I shall discuss below how we may support that worship in our parishes. However, let me mention that many priests would like to have more of the Lenten services, but are apprehensive that there will not be adequate support from their faithful for the special weekly Lenten services.

Confession

The Church "strongly recommends that all the Christian faithful should receive the Sacrament of Penance frequently, especially during the times of fasts"[31] Great Lent is a particularly appropriate time to receive this sacrament. We should do so carefully, without hurrying, so as to have the maximum benefit of this grace.

In preparing for confession, we make an *examination of conscience.* Many prayer books contain outline forms of the examination of conscience, based perhaps on the Ten Commandments, on the Beatitudes, or on other Scriptural expressions of moral behavior. When we visit the physician for a checkup, we do well to reflect ahead of time and call to the doctor's attention any problems regarding our bodily health. It is the same with the spiritual physician: before we go to confession we should reflect, and call to the priest's attention any failings in our spiritual health.

Lent itself is an excellent preparation for confession. The Great Canon of Saint Andrew is a thorough examination of conscience; if we pray the Great Canon carefully and attentively, there is little risk that we will overlook any sins!

We may make our confession to any priest who has been authorized to hear confessions by the bishop.[32] Those who go to confession regularly and frequently, usually find that it is good to approach the same priest (even as one prefers to keep the same physician), and in that way make spiritual progress. Certain priests are blessed with special talent in hearing confessions, and certain monastic communities give their priests special training in this work. In many of our parishes, there is a mission preached during Lent, with a visiting missionary priest who gives special sermons and makes himself available for confessions. In larger parishes the pastor may invite several priests to come one evening to hear confessions in preparation for Pascha.

The actual time spent for sacramental confession is not

the same as that for spiritual direction. A good priest will do his best to give you some spiritual assistance, but it remains true that in sacramental confession the penitent should be comprehensive but brief. This is especially so when there are large numbers of penitents.

The practice of our faith cannot be confined to the Sunday Divine Liturgy at any time of the year, but that is especially true during Lent. The Sunday Liturgy is not "Lenten." If that is our only worship, we shall never experience Lent. If we want to know what Lent is, we must fast; we must find the time to pray and read the Scriptures; and we must take part in at least some of the special Lenten services.

Lent, Holy Week, and, above all, Pascha itself, should be with us all year round; we should be able to notice in our Christian lives that we have learned something and drawn something precious and essential from these celebrations. Lent, Holy Week and Pascha bring us ever closer into the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ, into the mystery of our redemption and salvation.

Lent is a time of grace, a time of awakening, a time of spiritual growth and real joy. So I wish everyone a very Good Lent, a Lent which will be spiritually profitable for your lives, in this world and in the age to come!

WEEKS OF PREPARATION

1. The Publican and the Pharisee

"Publican" is an old-fashioned word for a tax collector. Since the Publicans in Palestine at the time of Our Lord were collecting taxes for the Roman Empire, and, at times, took an exorbitant commission for themselves, most people held them in low esteem. The Pharisees took great pride in observing every detail of the Mosaic Law to the letter, and looked down on other people who were not so punctilious about it.

In his sermon at the Papal Mass in St. Peter's Basilica in 1995, Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople said that along with repentance we need "humility, the queen of Christian virtues." At the beginning of the Triodion, the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee reminds us of the crucial importance of humility. We could be tempted to think that by fasting, prayer, divine services and almsgiving we shall become "better" than other people, we could be tempted to look down on other people. When God gives us a greater abundance of grace, He expects us to *grow in humility*. We have no call to boast of our achievements, and still less do we have any right to judge other people; God will judge us all.

Humility, however, is a very powerful virtue. If we want to accomplish great things, we should aspire to humility. To be humble does not mean to think myself worthless, or to think that I am of less value than is truly the case. Both of these are temptations, not virtues. No human being is worthless; we have been redeemed by the Precious Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ. We have each a unique vocation from God. Trying to be "humble" by pretending to think myself of lesser value than I really consider myself to be, is nothing more than pride.

Genuine humility is *freedom from illusion*. The devil seeks to delude us, to deceive us. Jesus Christ seeks to bring us the Truth, to lead us into the Truth. For that, we must reject illusion, we must be humble. If we were to take pride in our Lenten observances, we would waste our time. Repentance involves liberating us from the devil's illusions and enabling us to see reality.

For this, we ask God's mercy. Our Ukrainian tradition in particular uses the Prayer of the Publican: "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner," quite often. We do not take pride in our virtues; the credit belongs to God. We do not seek to excuse our faults; we ask God to forgive us and show mercy to us.

On this Sunday, one of the most important liturgical features of the Triodion appears. At Matins the priest reads one of the Resurrection Gospels, as he does every Sunday. But today, after the lesson, while the Gospel Book lies in the nave awaiting our veneration, we sing the verse,

"Open to me the doors of repentance, O Giver of Life; my spirit seeks Your Holy Temple early in the morning, bearing the temple of my body all defiled. In Your compassion cleanse me by Your loving kindness and your mercy.... Guide me in the paths of salvation, O Theotokos!"[33]

This plea, asking God to open the way to repentance, will not go unanswered. God opens the way. We must walk that way and go through that gate, through Christ's Resurrection.

During the week between the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee and the Sunday of the Prodigal Son, the tradition of our Church is to have no fasting.[34] This also may teach us humility; by *not* fasting during this week we should learn that fasting in itself is not meritorious. Fasting is only a part of Lent; prayer, almsgiving, and, above all, humble repentance are all far more important than fasting.

2. The Prodigal Son

Who does not know this parable from the Gospels? Even non-Christians use the expression "prodigal son." But how often do we really understand it?

By our sins, but even more by our *forgetfulness*, we distance ourselves from God and His Kingdom, we go off alone to "a far country." We waste the talents which God has given us. And we become spiritually impoverished. We begin to be in want. This is unavoidable. We were created for God's Kingdom, so we are not capable of being truly happy and satisfied anywhere else. But we are afraid to turn to God, so we seek happiness and satisfaction from transitory things which can never satisfy us.

Some years ago there was a film[35] about an elderly couple in a dangerous, frightening situation. The husband said to his wife: "maybe we should pray!" The wife answered: "you haven't been near a church in fifty years; now you think you should ask God for help?" Well, yes! *Now* is

always the right time to ask God for help! The very thought that "maybe we should pray" is a sign that the Holy Spirit is moving our hearts; we could not even think of praying if God did not give us the impulse to pray.

On the Sunday of the Prodigal Son, and on the following two Sundays, we have a special part of our worship that never occurs at any other time: the solemn chanting of Psalm 136: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat and wept, when we remembered Zion!"[36]

This is the great gift we ask of God: that we may remember Zion, His Heavenly Kingdom. That we may not forget Jerusalem, the heavenly city which is the goal of our pilgrimage. Chanting this psalm, *we remember,* we realize that in this world we are all exiles, we are all "displaced" from our true Home in the Heavenly Kingdom.

That gift of memory, of understanding of our situation, enables us to resolve, as does the Prodigal Son:, "I will get up and go back to my Father!" With this realization, we resolve to *make the effort* of Great Lent, to *travel* this spiritual road back to the Heavenly Kingdom. It is not easy; it will take time and energy, and sometimes we shall be tired and weary. But we will not be alone; Jesus is with us, and so are all the saints, and the Father is awaiting us with loving, joyful welcome.

As Pope John Paul II teaches:

"We must show people the beauty of memory, the power that comes to us from the Spirit and makes us witnesses because *we are children of witnesses;* we must make them taste the wonderful things the Spirit has wrought in history; we must show that it is precisely Tradition which has preserved them...."[37]

So prepare well for Lent. Plan to put aside distractions to be able to take the time to pray, to read the Scriptures, to fast, to go to church (and to review the special services in advance). Plan how to regulate your household during Lent, especially to eliminate as much as possible such intrusions as television.

3. The "Saturdays of the Souls"

Our liturgical calendar prescribes special prayers for the dead on five Saturdays every year: the Saturday before the Sunday of the Last Judgment, the Second, Third, and Fourth Saturdays of Great Lent, and the Saturday before Pentecost. Except for the last, each of these Saturdays occurs during the Triodion. In Ukraine, these Saturdays are kept very solemnly.

One might ask, "why Saturday?" Surely we may pray for the dead – and we do – on any day of the week, and we pray for the dead at every Divine Liturgy. What is the special significance of Saturday for this purpose? Every Saturday of the year reminds us of two Saturdays in particular: *Lazarus Saturday,* when Our Lord called Lazarus back to life from the tomb after Lazarus had been dead for four days, and *Holy Saturday,* when Our Lord Himself "rested" in the tomb before His Resurrection. We shall speak more about these two Saturdays later in this Instruction. But their connection with the themes of death and Resurrection is obvious, and this moves us to pray for the dead on Saturdays.

The practice of submitting memorial lists of our deceased relatives and friends (called diptychs or hramoty) to the priest, who will read them aloud during services for the dead on these Saturdays,[38] is still widespread. His recitation of the names is of spiritual importance and is not by any means to be neglected, because every individual is precious to God and precious to the Church.

[A pastoral note: To enable the priest or deacon to read the names aloud intelligibly, it is proper to type the names, or at least print them very clearly. For this purpose, we use either the baptismal name or the monastic name of each individual ("John" or "Mary") but *not* the surname. We provide monastic or hierarchical designations ("the Nun Macrina," "the Deacon Stephen," "the Priest George," "the Bishop Daniel") but no secular titles. We do not use nicknames or diminutives.]

No priest will refuse to pray for those whose friends and relatives are unable to come themselves to Church for the service. But nevertheless I do ask everyone to try to participate in these services for the dead. We believe that those who have gone before us are consoled by our prayers and pray for us in return. We know that God wants us to pray for one another.[39]

4. Meat-Fare Sunday

As its name indicates, this is traditionally the final day for eating meat until Pascha. This additional week of abstinence from meat comes from the Monastery of Saint Sabbas, near Jerusalem. The monks are thought to have introduced the practice in expiation for a sin of the Emperor Heraclius when he recaptured Jerusalem from the Persians. But this is a historical matter of no particular importance, and is not even mentioned in the Triodion.

The real theme of this Sunday is *the Last Judgment,* which we read about in the Gospel at the Divine Liturgy.[40]

Fasting is a discipline, an aid to repentance. Repentance itself is the object of the exercise. Just before the Great Doxology on this Sunday we sing "If you fast, do not deceive your neighbor! If you abstain from food, do not judge others!"

Even Lent has its temptations: we may be tempted to believe that our religious practice of Lent somehow entitles us to look down on others, or somehow excuses us from serving others. Just the opposite is true. And this "Sunday of the Last Judgment" should keep before our eyes, all through Lent, the primary importance of caring for the needs of others, of recognizing in those in need, Christ Himself. Lent should teach us humility; God forbid that Lent would become an occasion of pride!

The week following this Sunday, the last week before Lent itself, has some interesting features. Wednesday and Friday are "aliturgical days," which means that no celebration of the Divine Liturgy[41] is foreseen by the calendar,

and there are no readings from the Scripture for the Divine Liturgy.[42] Saturday, the day before Forgiveness Sunday, is kept in honor of the monastic saints, the Holy Ascetics, because particularly during Lent we strive to follow their good example.

In *Orientale Lumen* Pope John Paul II devotes much attention to our tradition of monasticism,[43] which the Holy Father calls "a reference point for all the baptized, according to the gifts offered to each by the Lord."[44] I should like to encourage all the clergy and faithful of the eparchy to read *Orientale Lumen* during Lent. It is the monastics who have given us much of our Lenten practice, and this Saturday just before Lent is a moment when we offer the monastic saints our thanks for all that they have done, for all that they mean to the Church. This Saturday also is a reminder to our contemporary monastics, including even those who serve in our own diocese, that they are the heirs and custodians of a most glorious spiritual heritage which the Church expects them to cultivate and share.

This Saturday, finally, reminds us of Pope John Paul II's exhortation:

"With regard to monasticism, in consideration of its importance in Eastern Christianity, we would like it to flourish once more in the Eastern Catholic Churches, and that support be given to all those who feel called to work for its revitalization.[45] In fact, in the East an intrinsic link exists between liturgical prayer, spiritual tradition and monastic life. For this reason precisely, a well-trained and motivated renewal of monastic life could mean true ecclesial fruitfulness for them as well. Nor should it be thought that this would diminish the effectiveness of the pastoral ministry which in fact will be strengthened by such a vigorous spirituality, and thus will find once more its ideal place. This hope also concerns the territories of the Eastern diaspora, where the presence of Eastern monasteries would give greater stability to the Eastern Churches in those countries, and would make a valuable contribution to the religious life of Western Christians."[46]

In response to this teaching of the Holy Father, we should pray for an abundance of monastic vocations, and for the strong, authentic monastic witness which *Orientale Lumen* describes.

5. Sunday of Forgiveness

On the final day before Great Lent, the Gospel teaches us the importance of *reconciliation* with one another, of mutual forgiveness. Vespers and Matins for this Sunday sing about the Garden of Paradise, which we lost through the Fall of Adam and Eve. Again this reminds us that in this world *we are exiles*, that our true home is in the Eternal Paradise, the Heavenly Kingdom, and that the Paschal Pilgrimage leads us toward our eternal homeland.

This Sunday is also called *Cheese-Fare Sunday*, because according to the traditional rules of fasting, this is the last day when dairy products may be eaten. Some parishes have a meatless dinner on this day, to consume any remaining dairy products.[47] Great Lent begins with Vespers on the evening of Forgiveness Sunday. The service is dramatic: begins with the priest and deacon in bright vestments though for a feast. At "Lord, I have cried," we sing

"Let us abstain from passions as we abstain from foo and persevere, to be worthy to see the Holy Passion of Chri our God, and the joy of His Holy Resurrection."[48]

The Royal Doors are opened, and there is an Entranc

Suddenly, everything changes. We sing the great Prok men: "Turn not Your Face away from Your servant, *for am in trouble*, pay attention to me, draw near to my soi and redeem me!"[49] Lent has arrived. The priest remove his bright vestments and puts on a dark epitrakhil, the Roya Doors are closed, and the rest of Vespers follows the Lente pattern. The responses are sung according to the uniqu Lenten chant.

"Behold, this is the favorable time, the season of con version. Let us turn away from the works of darkness, an clothe ourselves with the armor of light, so that *crossin the ocean of the Fast*, we may come to the harbor of th Resurrection...."[50]

Just before the end of Vespers, the priest offers the Praye of Saint Ephrem the Syrian. This is the first time this typi cal prayer of Lent appears in our worship. I shall discuss i in a moment.

After Vespers, as we begin Lent, we offer one another *mutual forgiveness*. In our Lenten repentance, we are asking God to forgive us; God requires us to forgive one another as well. Mutual forgiveness is not easy; it requires the grace and help of God.

OUR LENTEN WORSHIP

1. The Prayer of Saint Ephrem

O Lord, and Master of my life,
give me not the spirit of
slothfulness, faintheartedness,
lust for power, and vain talking;
but instead, grant to me, Your servant, the spirit of
integrity, humility, patience and love;
O Lord and King, grant that I may see my own
transgressions, and not judge my brother,
for You are blessed. Amen.

Unlike most prayers offered aloud in our services, the priest recites this prayer in a speaking voice, audibly but not very loudly. Customarily we make a prostration after each clause, three in all. We repeat this short prayer at virtually *every* service on the weekdays of Lent,[51] so the church attaches great importance to it. It is *the* typical prayer of Lent. Because it is so short, it is easily memorized. If we cannot come to church on a given day, we may offer this prayer in our homes. We may use it quietly throughout the day, wherever we happen to be.

The Meaning of the Prayer

"O Lord and Master of my life." This short phrase *con-*

fesses that we depend utterly on Jesus Christ our God. We acknowledge again what we acknowledged at baptism, that our first allegiance is to God, that God has given us life, that we must live in accordance with God's will, and that it is for God to call us from this earthly life.

In these few words we turn away from all idolatry, we reject everything which might take the place of God.

"Give me not the spirit of slothfulness" or in plain English, laziness! Life, especially the Christian life, is an effort. That does not mean at all that we should never "enjoy life"; Christ promised to give us joy.[52] But real joy has nothing in common with laziness. Laziness steals our time and gives us no joy at all; one only discovers that one has done nothing, neither what one should have done nor what one might have done. Exercise is a good cure for laziness; Lent is a spiritual exercise, to cure us of spiritual laziness.

"Faintheartedness" is a vice or temptation allied to laziness. This is the notion that we cannot accomplish anything anyway, so why bother to try? What for? We will only fail, so why make the effort? *Those are the questions of the devil.* Even in ordinary life, the person who really never succeeds is the person who never tries. And in the Christian life, there is good news: God does not demand that we must always succeed! When we try, and fail, God is always there to "pick us up" with His love, and help us try again. A sinful Christian, who has tried all his life to lead a Christian life and thinks that he has never really succeeded but still keeps trying will have a place of honor in the Kingdom of Heaven.

But that is only part of the good news. God is with us, and God is there to help us. The help does not come on our schedule, but it comes. When we make the effort persistently, even though we fail, *God replaces our failures with Christ's Victory!* In the long run, if we will only try, God will *give* us the success that we cannot achieve for ourselves. So, deliver us from faintheartedness, and give us the strength to make a beginning and try again!

"Lust for power." Most of us would say at once "that's not me; I'm not important enough to be lusting for power!" Well, think again. The original temptation to the sin that deprived the human race of paradise was the lying promise of Satan "you shall be as gods!"[53] And the ambition to be gods is still one of the most basic temptations of the human soul. In our fallen state, each individual wants to be the center of the universe. Even an infant wants the whole world to revolve around him. How often, if we are honest, do we not find ourselves trying to manipulate other people into doing what we want? How often do we not abuse other people? How often do we not abuse creation? All this is *lust for power.*

Repentance, with the grace of God, can *undo* the original sin for each of us, as Jesus Christ has undone original sin for all of us. But we must ask God's help to put aside this lust for power, this ludicrous desire to be the center of the universe, and instead we must allow God to be truly "the Lord and Master of my life," all day, every day.

"And vain talking"! This gets right down to business. How much damage do we do by idle chatter, let alone deliberately vicious slander? Ask the bishop, if you wish, and I will tell you that I cannot begin to count the harm done to families, to parishes, to communities, and to individuals by foolish words, often spoken in haste. How truly does the Epistle of James[54] teach that anyone who does not sin in speech must be perfect!

Vain talking also involves vain listening, at least most of the time. How much idle listening do we do? How often do we watch television or listen to the radio, not to learn something, not to enjoy something, but just "to kill time." God gives us time to *use,* not to kill. Lent is a good occasion to begin to keep track of the "idle talk" that comes in through our eyes and ears, as well as the idle talk we generate ourselves.

Consider also the reverse: what is more precious than a reputation for speaking the truth, with love and respect for others? How much do we admire people who never speak slightingly of others?[55]

So we ask God to deliver us from these four sins and temptations. We also ask for specific virtues:

"Integrity."[56] We all admire this virtue. When we call someone a person of integrity, we are paying a high compliment. Integrity is the virtue by which we recognize God's plan for us and do our best to live in accordance with that plan. By the virtue of integrity, we understand that sin not only damages other people, but that sin damages the sinner. When I commit sin, the very act of sin *diminishes me.* God, however, can restore me to my lost integrity, and is willing, even anxious, to do so if I will only ask it and cooperate with His grace.

"Humility." In common speech, this might sound like almost the opposite of integrity. When we say that someone is a person of integrity, we imply that this person has great dignity. Yet we often think of humility as lacking dignity. Genuine humility is not at all undignified; as I said above, humility is *freedom from illusion.* Humility is clear-sightedness. Consider a very simple, homely example. Some people waste money by purchasing overpriced merchandise because they do not know the real value of the goods, and because they wish to display their wealth. Prudent people who *do* know the value of the goods, and who shop carefully, will receive real value for money. The careful, informed shopper who obtains good value is far more dignified than the show-off who ostentatiously wastes money.

So, likewise, if we have an accurate view of life, spiritual and temporal; if we have the humility from God to enable us to see ourselves and everything else with realism, we have authentic dignity instead of pretentiousness.

"Patience." What an essential virtue, and what a difficult one! We naturally want everyone and everything to run on our own schedule. Yet reality does not run on our own schedule. We must be patient with God, we must be patient with others, we must even be patient with ourselves.

To be patient with God: for how many years have I not asked people to pray for the persecuted Church in Eastern Europe? And as the years went by, it grieved me to hear, sometimes, the answer "Bishop, please don't ask us that. We have prayed, and it does no good. God is not listening to our prayers!" This is a frightful temptation, and a very painful one. God always hears our prayers, and responds to them. But there is no guarantee that the response will be what we happen to want at the time. God knows better than we do when He shall do this and when He shall do that. We are not forbidden to ask Him to hurry, and indeed the Gospel teaches[57] that God shortens the time of trial for the sake of His faithful. But we must be patient, as God is patient with us, and we must know that God's schedule is not our schedule. God is the Author of times and seasons; He is not bound by them.

And, conversely, we must be patient with God! When God did reveal that He had heard our prayers, and brought down the Communists, and restored freedom to the Church, what did I hear then? "It's too fast!!" Again, sometimes God moves too fast for our convenience. We must believe that God knows better than we do, and we must adjust our schedules accordingly! We must be patient, whether God seems too slow or too fast.

We must be patient with each other. There is almost no need to elaborate; it's remarkable how quickly people sometimes excuse their own faults but nevertheless require the highest standards of behavior from those around them! Lent is especially a time when we should practice patience towards one another. A good test of our fasting is our behavior towards each other. If we find ourselves becoming more irritable and cross with one another, our fasting is doing us no good and we should look again, very carefully, at how we are keeping Lent.

And, strange as it may sound, we must be patient with *ourselves*. That is to say, we must persevere in the effort of repentance, the effort of virtue and Christian living, even though we fall many times. We must be convinced that we *can* do better, and that God loves us and values our effort. When we seem to be getting nowhere, when we are tempted to believe that we are as good as we are ever going to be, we must be patient with ourselves and keep trying!

"Love"! We ask for the gift of real, authentic love. Christian love is not a sentiment or an emotion; Christian love is an act of the will, a virtue. Christian love is a gift of God's grace, but we must make the effort to exercise that gift of grace. We must love God, and we must love one another. If we do that we shall live according to the law of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Whoever wishes to know what Christian love is should read the thirteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. In two thousand years, no one has ever improved on Saint Paul's discourse on love. I could wish that we all knew it by heart, and that this passage were written indelibly upon our souls as well.

After praying for these four virtues, we make two more requests of God:

"O Lord and King, grant that I may see my own transgressions, and not judge my brother,"

How often do we not do the reverse? We overlook our own transgressions completely, or cover them with lame excuses that we would never accept from anyone else, and then we turn around and judge others by the very highest standards, never thinking of mitigating circumstances, and of the likelihood that we are quite wrong anyway.

I need to see my own transgressions for two good reasons: to teach me to know myself honestly, without dissembling, and to enable me to improve my Christian life. If I conceal my sins from myself, I will never overcome them. A person who has convinced himself that he has never told a lie in his life is unlikely to become more truthful! And so it goes. A serious examination of conscience, in the light of God's loving truth, is an indispensable part of repentance, just as a serious physical examination is an indispensable part of good medical treatment. We must know what is wrong before we can put it right.

"And not to judge my brother" – The Bible asks us "who are you that you should judge another man's servant?"[58] Each of us shall answer to the Lord; God forbid that we should judge each other. We should be afraid ever to judge others, because Jesus Christ himself warns us: "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged!"[59] When we realize how harsh we are in judging other people, it is terrible to think that God might judge us in the same way.

So instead of judging, let us pray to God to make us always merciful, as God is merciful to us.

2. The Great Canon

Our Ukrainian Catholic Church has the tradition of reading the Great Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete during the first week of Great Lent in four sections, on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings, as part of Compline.[60] The Great Canon is one of the masterpieces of Christian liturgical poetry; scarcely a verse does not make a direct reference to Holy Scripture. The Canon leads us slowly, through the Biblical understanding of sin and repentance. The Canon is a patient Scriptural examination of conscience, enabling us to understand how and why we are in need of repentance. The Great Canon should set the "tone" for our entire keeping of Lent. We may fruitfully use portions of the Great Canon for our private prayer[61] all through Lent, and the Church reads the entire text of the Great Canon on Thursday,[62] during the fifth week of Lent.

Most of the Great Canon is chanted in monotone; we sing the simple refrains as a response.[63] As one would expect a penitential service to be, this service is subdued.

3. The Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

If the Prayer of Saint Ephrem is the "typical prayer" of Lent, the Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts is the "typical" worship service of Lent.[64] In the circumstances of the emigra

tion, the Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts largely fell out of use for a time.[65] During the last thirty or forty years, however, there has been a striking revival of this service. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, several people had a particular role in this revival. We remember especially our own Metropolitan Constantine Bohachevsky, who in the *Archeparchial Statutes* provided that,

"The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts shall be celebrated in every church with a resident priest during Lent, every Wednesday and Friday, beginning with the first Wednesday following Cheesefare Sunday, as well as the first three days of Holy Week."[66]

We must also recognize the wonderful acceptance of the Church's desire that we should receive Holy Communion more frequently; since the Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts is a Communion service the movement for frequent Communion has encouraged this celebration.

And the practice of celebrating in vernacular English or Ukrainian has made the Presanctified Liturgy[67] far more comprehensible to the faithful. Not least, during their seminary education many of our younger priests came to love and appreciate the Liturgy of the Presanctified;[68] after their ordination these priests worked to introduce the celebration of the Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts into the parishes so that our faithful might share in this spiritual treasure of our Church.

The canon quoted above, and the Triodion also, prescribe that we should have the Divine Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts every Wednesday and Friday during Great Lent, and on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of Holy Week. The Kievan Typikon[69] permits the celebration of the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts on all the weekdays of Great Lent.[70] Priests may accept offerings for the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, "if it is thus established by local custom."[71]

As its name indicates, we serve the Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts by solemnly bringing forth for Holy Communion the Holy Mysteries of the Body and Blood of Christ which have been consecrated the previous Sunday at the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom[72] or the Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great.[73]

The Church considers the celebration of the full Eucharistic Divine Liturgy too joyful and festive for the weekdays of Great Lent, but she wants us to receive Holy Communion as an encouragement on our Paschal Pilgrimage, so the Church prescribes the Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts. In this connection, Saint Cyprian of Carthage expounds the phrase "give us this day our daily Bread" as follows:

Christ is the Bread of Life ... and we ask that this Bread should be given to us daily, that we who are in Christ, and daily receive the Eucharist for the food of salvation, may not, by the interposition of some heinous sin, by being prevented, as being withheld and not communicating, from partaking of the heavenly Bread, be separated from Christ's Body.[74]

The service begins with Solemn Vespers. Following Psalm 103 and the Litany of Peace, we read or chant together the "Eighteenth Kathisma,"[75] the Psalms of Ascent. The Jewish people used to sing these Psalms[76] every year as they went up to Jerusalem for Passover. They resound with the joy of the journey to the Holy City, the anticipated joy of standing in the Temple, with confidence in God's protection and deliverance. We sing these Psalms on weekday evenings of Lent for the same reason: we are also on pilgrimage for Passover, and each day of Lent brings us nearer to our goal. Thus for us Christians, the joy of these Psalms is the joy of anticipation of the coming Paschal feast. May we all take comfort from these Psalms, and receive grace and strength from God to persevere!

As always at Vespers, we sing "Lord, I have cried,"[77] while the deacon censes the altar, the iconostasis, and the whole church. Towards the end of these Psalms, we chant poetic verses from the Triodion, on themes of repentance. We also chant verses from the Menaion[78] for the Saint of the day.

The Royal Doors are opened, and the deacon and priest make the Little Entrance, carrying in the thurible.[79] We sing "O Joyful Light,"[80] which is thought to be the most ancient non-Scriptural hymn in Christian use. In the fourth century, Saint Basil the Great mentioned this hymn, saying that,

"Our fathers thought that they should welcome the gift of evening light with something better than silence, so they gave thanks as soon as it appeared. We cannot say who composed these words of thanksgiving at the lighting of the lamps, but the people use these ancient words."[81]

Since we chant "O Joyful Light" at Vespers every day of the year, we may come to take it for granted. This short hymn has a remarkable attraction for Christians of various churches. Many Eastern churches use this hymn. In the West, it was unknown until the nineteenth century, when some Anglican hymnographers translated it into English. Today we find it in the evening services of the Episcopalians[82] and the Lutherans, and in several Protestant hymnbooks. "O Joyful Light" is a great spiritual treasure. An eminent contemporary Eastern Catholic authority on Christian worship has written about

"...the age-old Hymn of Light ... which for over sixteen centuries, day after day, without variation or change, has proclaimed that the light of the world is not the sun of creation by day, nor the evening lamp by night, but the eternal Son of God, 'the true light that enlightens everyone,' in the words of the prologue of St. John's Gospel.[83] I must confess that I find consolation in the company I am in when I intone this immortal hymn."[84]

Old Testament Lessons

On the weekday evenings of Great Lent, there are two Prokimen and two lessons from the Old Testament. For the lessons, we read from Genesis and Proverbs.[85] These readings from Genesis and Proverbs were an important part of the instruction which in the ancient Church the bishop used to give during Lent to the catechumens: Genesis formed the basis of instruction in salvation history, and Proverbs

formed the basis of practical instruction on how to live in accordance with the law of God.

At the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, between the two Old Testament lessons, the priest takes a candle[86] and the thurible together in both hands and blesses the faithful, announcing "the Light of Christ enlightens all!" This has little to do with the readings, but is the old rite of actually bringing in the light for the evening lamps. Today, during Lent, this blessing with the light at the Presanctified Liturgy serves to encourage us, reminding us of the joy which awaits us in the Paschal Light.

"Let My Prayer Arise"

Following the second Old Testament reading at the Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts, there is the offering of incense at the Holy Table, with the solemn chanting of *Let My Prayer Arise,* several verses of Psalm 140. This particularly striking incensation[87] and chant go back to the seventh and eighth centuries, if not earlier, and were originally done at Vespers even when there was no celebration of the Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts.[88] Our traditional books of chant give elaborate music for *Let My Prayer Arise* and its verses; it has become customary for the priest to sing the verses and the congregation to sing the response. There are also several choral settings of *Let My Prayer Arise.* This is one of the most beautiful moments of our Lenten worship.

At the conclusion of *Let My Prayer Arise,* we make three prostrations.[89] From this point in the service according to our Ukrainian tradition, the *chant* changes; special music is used for the intonations by the priest and deacon, and for the responses from the congregation. This music is not difficult, but it is distinctive, and serves to emphasize the unique style of worship at the Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts.

Special Prayers for the Catechumens

Usually there are no readings from the New Testament at this service.[90] We continue with the litanies. The Litanies for the Catechumens, however, have a unique feature at the Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts: after the third week of Lent there is a second litany, for those catechumens who will be baptized this year on Holy Saturday. This reminds us again of the *catechetical* nature of Lent itself; Lent is the time when those who wish to become Christians should have their intensive instruction, and Lent is the time when those of us who already are Christians should review our knowledge of the Faith and deepen that knowledge.

In most of our parishes, these prayers for the catechumens are omitted. And in very few of our parishes would we actually find adult baptisms on Holy Saturday. But this is *the decade of evangelism,* when all Christians are reminded that we may not keep the Gospel to ourselves. God has called us that we may call the whole world to Jesus Christ. We must become aware of this vocation to evangelize, to preach the Gospel. There are people in all of our towns and cities who need to know Christ, and to whom we should address this invitation.

This invitation should go particularly to two sorts of people: those who, for whatever reason, have become alienated from the church, whom we should seek out faithfully and with love, to assure them that they are missed and welcome; and those who are not baptized and have never been part of the church. Evangelization does *not* mean that we should proselytize or induce people who are already active in their own church to leave that church and join ours. Instead, we try to cooperate with the various churches in our communities to have common programs of evangelization, and to pursue ecumenism towards the goal of Christian unity.

Most important of all, evangelization means that we ourselves should know the Gospel better. The better we know the Gospel, the more effective our witness to Christ will be.

The prayers of the faithful at the Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts remind us that repentance involves turning away from sin. Thus the priest asks:

"Free all of our senses from deadening passions ...[91] Let our eyes be blind to every evil sight. Let our ears be deaf to every idle word. Let our tongues be cleansed of unbecoming speech, and purify our lips that proclaim Your praise, O Lord. Keep our hands far from every evil act, that they may do only what is pleasing to You."[92]

Then we ask the gift of Holy Communion:

"... make us worthy to receive Your only Son and our God, the King of glory.[93] Behold, Your pure Body and life-creating Blood are about to be brought forth and placed on this mystical table, ... grant that we may receive them without reproach."[94]

The Great Entrance

At the Great Entrance of the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, of Saint Basil the Great, and of Saint James, the priests and deacons carry to the altar the gifts of bread and wine which will *become* the Body and Blood of Christ. For the Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts, however, the Eucharistic Sacrifice has been accomplished already, on the previous Sunday, and the Holy Gifts which the priest carries in the Great Entrance are *already* the Body and Blood of Christ, which we are to receive in Holy Communion. Accordingly, the Great Entrance has some special features.

In place of the usual Cherubic Hymn, we chant:

"Now the powers of heaven are serving with us invisibly, for behold, the King of Glory enters! Behold, the Mystical Sacrifice is upborne, accomplished already. Let us draw near with faith and love, that we may become communicants of Life eternal!"

During the actual Entrance, as the priest is carrying the Presanctified Holy Gifts, the people prostrate, or at least kneel down and bow low in adoration of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Entrance itself is made in silence,[95] the priest offering no commemorations.

Holy Communion

When the Presanctified Holy Gifts have been set on the Holy Table and veiled, and the hymn "Now the Powers" has been concluded with a triple Alleluia, the clergy, the servers, and the whole congregation all make three prostrations in silence.[96] During the litany which follows, the priest prays,

"may we be united with Christ Himself, our true God, who said, 'Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in Me, and I in him.'"[97]

The Lord's Prayer and the usual order of Holy Communion for the clergy and the faithful follow.

The Ambon Prayer is particular to the Presanctified Liturgy, and says that God

"has brought us to these most holy days for the purification of our souls and bodies, the mastery of our passions, and the hope of Resurrection."

So, we ask God to "grant that we also may fight the good fight, finish the course of the fast, and remain in the true faith[98] ... that without reproach we may reach and worship Your holy Resurrection!"

This evening Communion is thus meant to sustain us and encourage us throughout our Lenten pilgrimage to Christ's Resurrection, to be our food along the way, even as God gave manna in the desert to the Hebrews, traveling with Moses from Egypt to the Promised Land. We should make the effort to receive Holy Communion at the Presanctified Liturgy at least one evening every week of Great Lent.

THE SIX WEEKS OF LENT

1. The Sunday of Orthodoxy

The First Sunday of Great Lent is kept as the anniversary of the restoration of the Holy Icons to veneration and honor after the final defeat of the iconoclast heresy. The Seventh Ecumenical Council[99] in the year 787 condemned the iconoclast heresy, but the final restoration of the Holy Icons did not take place until 843, with a solemn procession on the first Sunday of Lent in that year. Ever since then, all the churches of the Byzantine tr :dition, including our Ukrainian Catholic Church, remember that event joyfully. The reference to "Orthodoxy" in the title of this First Sunday of Lent is not denominational; it refers to all those who venerate the Holy Icons properly in divine worship. The Catholic Church fully accepts the Seventh Ecumenical Council[100] and the proper veneration and use of the Holy Icons. So the restoration of the Holy Icons is a cause of joy for all Christians who accept the proper use of the Holy Icons. In our own times, we rejoice further to see an increasing appreciation of the importance of the Holy Icons among Anglicans, Lutherans and other Western Christians.

The veneration of the Holy Icons is based on fundamental Christology, on our belief in the Incarnation of the Son of God, and on our understanding of salvation for the Holy Mother of God and the saints. In the Incarnation, God did not simply speak to us, or come to us intellectually; *God became Man.* The Second Person of the Holy Trinity, God the Son, by the Will of His Father and the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, took on Himself a human nature in the body of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who thus became *Theotokos*, the Holy Mother of God.

The human nature and the divine nature of Jesus Christ, Who is always One unique person, are never separated. Instead, human nature is *redeemed* by Christ's assumption of that human nature. When Jesus Christ ascended into Heaven, He did not leave His human nature behind; He brought that redeemed human nature with Him, and thus accomplished the plan of our redemption.[101] Thus it became right, appropriate, and necessary to venerate the humanity of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Likewise with the Blessed Mother of God and all the saints. To be a saint means that a Christian gains such holiness, such deep union with God, that the image of God in that person, given at creation, shines in and through that person without distortion. In venerating the icons of the saints, then, we venerate the image of God in the saints.

The root of iconoclasm, the denial of the Holy Icons, is a false Christology: either the iconoclast denies the full humanity of Christ, and therefore cannot venerate that humanity whose very existence he does not accept, or the iconoclast denies the full divinity of Christ, and naturally cannot give divine honors to someone whose divinity he does not recognize. But our Christian Faith teaches us that Jesus Christ is True God and True Man, One Person incarnate in two natures.

So we venerate the Holy Icons; we love them and we take pride in them. In the twentieth century there has been a remarkable revival of good iconography. Authentic icons are a powerful means of preaching the Gospel, of elevating our souls to God. Of course we wish to have the best icons in our churches, but icons should also be present in our homes. Every family can surely have at least one fine, hand-painted icon, in a place of honor, expressing our faith and reminding us of God's protecting love.

Naturally we venerate and enjoy the holy icons throughout the year. But Sunday of Orthodoxy is a day when we remember this in a special way.

2. Saint Gregory Palamas

The Second Sunday of Lent is kept as a feast of Saint Gregory Palamas, the Archbishop of Thessaloniki in the fourteenth century. Like the restoration of the holy icons, this memorial of Saint Gregory has to do with historical events, but also relates to our understanding of the Christian vocation, and the possibility for every Christian to achieve genuine holiness. Saint Gregory taught that *all* Christians are called to *union with God,* which is the object of the Christian life.[102] Saint Gregory was a great ascetic, and a great master of the monastic life, but he taught that this invitation to union with God is open to *every* Christian. This is the challenge of Lent, but that challenge faces us all year round. Likewise this is the challenge of monasticism, but not just for the monks and nuns. The Holy Father has expressed it very well:

"...in the East, monasticism was not seen merely as a separate condition, proper to a precise category of Christians, but rather as a reference point for all the baptized, according to the gifts offered to each by the Lord; it was presented as a symbolic synthesis of Christianity."[103]

A reference point and a synthesis. The monks and nuns must always remember that in this way they are responsible *to* and *for* the whole Christian people, and all of us should seek to nourish our Christian lives with the values which the monastics particularly exemplify.

Saint Gregory Palamas himself has enjoyed an increasing popularity in the past fifty years or so. His spiritual theology is not absolutely binding, but he is an important and influential figure in patristic spirituality. At one time, Saint Gregory's ideas were highly controversial, and his memorial was removed from our liturgical books after the Synod of Zamost'. But with the recent profound studies of Saint Gregory, and the deeper appreciation of the Christian East, the Holy See restored Saint Gregory's memorial on the Second Sunday of Great Lent in the *Anthologion* published by the Oriental Congregation.[104] Our own Patriarch Joseph Cardinal Slipyj made a strong and positive contribution to this restoration of Saint Gregory Palamas to Catholic liturgical practice.[105] So I am pleased to see that the new English translation of the *Lenten Triodion*[106] contains the full service to St. Gregory Palamas, and I am confident that this will increase our understanding of our spiritual and theological tradition.

3. The Holy Cross

Not only the Third Sunday of Great Lent, but the week that follows, are devoted to welcoming the Precious Cross of Christ. This adoration of the Cross does not have a penitential character, but rather the opposite: "through the Cross joy has come to the whole world."[107] Having reached the midpoint of Lent we take refreshment, as though at a spiritual oasis, in the shade of the Cross, which is the banner and emblem of Christ's victory. The Cross is a sign of our joy in Christ's triumph. The liturgical texts express this joy; all the hymns in praise of the Cross have a victorious note to them. The Canon of Sunday Matins[108] resembles the Paschal Canon of Saint John of Damascus.

Saint Hippolytus of Rome teaches:

"This Cross is the tree of my eternal salvation, nourishing and delighting me. I take root in the roots of the Cross; I am extended in the branches of the Cross; the dew of the Cross is my delight. The spirit of the Cross refreshes me like a lovely breeze. The shade of the Cross shelters me in my tent; when I flee from excessive heat I find the Cross a refuge, moist with dew. The flowers of the Cross are my flowers. The fruits of the Cross delight me altogether; the fruits of the Cross are always reserved for me, and I feast on the fruits of the Cross unrestrainedly. When I am hungry, the Cross is my nourishment. When I am thirsty, the Cross is my fountain. When I am naked, the Cross clothes me, for its leaves are no longer fig leaves, but the very breath of life. When I fear God, the Cross is my safeguard. When I falter, the Cross is my support. When I go into battle, the Cross is my prize, and when I triumph, the Cross is my trophy.

"The Cross is the ladder of Jacob; the Cross is the path of angels; the Lord is truly enthroned at the summit of the Cross. The Cross is my tree, wide as the firmament. The tree of the Cross extends from earth to the heavens, with its immortal trunk established between heaven and earth. The Cross is the pillar of the universe; the Cross is the support of the whole world; the Cross is the joint of the world, holding together the variety of human nature and riveted by the invisible bolts of the Spirit, so that it may remain fastened to the divinity and impossible to detach. The top of the Cross touches the highest heaven; the roots of the Cross are planted in the earth, and in between the giant arms of the Cross embrace the ever present breaths of air. The Cross is wholly in all things and in all places."[109]

For us Christians, the Cross of Christ is our boast! Saint Paul said, "God forbid that I should boast, except in the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ."[110] To show our pride in the Cross, just after the Great Doxology at Sunday Matins, we bring out the Cross into the nave of the church for veneration, and we adorn the precious Cross with flowers.[111] Thus we express our faith that what might have seemed to be the "dead wood" of the cross became the bearer of Life. Dry wood is highly inflammable, yet in the Kondak we sing that:

"... no longer does the flaming sword guard the gates of Eden, for in a strange and glorious way, the Wood of the Cross has put out its flames, and My Savior, You have stood on the Cross and called out to those in hell: 'enter again into Paradise!'"[112]

Our liturgical poetry about the Cross of Christ makes much of the many scriptural references to *wood*, since the Cross of Christ was made from wood. "The Tree of the Cross replaces the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil."[113] Thus it is best to have a suitable *wooden* cross for veneration on these feast days.[114] Many Christian cultures have a tradition of *carved* crosses; our Ukrainian carved wooden crosses are sometimes exquisitely beautiful.

The precious Cross remains in the nave of the church for veneration throughout the week, until Friday. Most of us are not able to come to church each day, but of course we can all pray at home, however briefly. So during this week, we should also have the cross in a place of honor in our home, with some flowers to adorn the cross, and be sure to kiss the cross and pray at least "We bow down before Your Cross, O Master, and we glorify Your Holy Resurrection!" Thus we keep the joy of the Cross throughout the week, and we strengthen the link between the family and the church.

4. St. John of the Ladder

Saint John, Abbot of the Monastery of Saint Catherine on Mount Sinai, who died in 603 AD, wrote an ascetic book called *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*. This book became one of the greatest classics of Christian spirituality

It has been translated into innumerable languages, both ancient and modern; one of the first books printed in the Western Hemisphere was a Spanish translation of the *Ladder.* For several centuries there has been a Church-Slavonic translation which our monks and nuns made use of; unfortunately, there is as yet no translation into modern Ukrainian.

While the *Ladder* is definitely an important work of the Eastern Christian tradition, it is by no means confined to the East. The Western Church also knows and honors this book. In the same way, while Saint John, who wrote the *Ladder,* was an abbot and a great master of the monastic life, his book is not just for monks and nuns! As Pope John Paul II has written:

"I will look to monasticism in order to identify those values which I feel are very important today for expressing the contribution of the Christian East to the journey of Christ's Church towards the Kingdom. While these aspects are at times neither exclusive to monasticism nor to the Eastern heritage they have frequently acquired a particular connotation in themselves. Besides, we are not seeking to make the most of exclusivity, but of the mutual enrichment in what the one Spirit has inspired in the one Church of Christ.

"Monasticism has always been the very soul of the Eastern Churches: the first Christian monks were born in the East and the monastic life was an integral part of the Eastern *lumen* passed on to the West by the great Fathers of the undivided Church."[115]

Saint John is one of the greatest of these Fathers. And his writings, like all good spiritual and ascetical writings, should move us to improve our Christian lives. It is impossible to be "static" in our Christian practice; either we ascend further towards God, or we fall back, we fall away.

In the monastic communities of the Byzantine Churches, including our own Ukrainian Church, Saint John's book *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* is read aloud every year, during Great Lent. Perhaps we may not necessarily read *The Ladder* in our families, but we should try during Lent to read some good book of our traditional spirituality. Such a book should not be read quickly, "in one sitting." Rather, we try to let such a book teach us, speak to us, and instruct us. For this purpose, we read only a little each day, and we pray, asking God and the Saints to show us, slowly perhaps, how we are to benefit from this instruction.

4 a. Again, The Great Canon

The fifth week of Great Lent is quite a challenge, liturgically speaking. On Wednesday night[116] the *Triodion* invites us to chant the entire Great Canon of Saint Andrew, the penitential prayer which has already been read in four parts during the first week of Great Lent. Just to pray the whole Canon is a spiritual exercise in itself. This time, coming towards the end of Lent, the Canon is an opportunity to take stock of what we have been doing during Lent, of how well (or poorly!) we have made use of the Lenten repentance.

In Ukraine, this service of the Great Canon during the fifth week of Lent brings people to church in large numbers. It is almost the final moment of "personal" repentance during Lent; after this, our attention will be drawn increasingly to the historical events of Christ's Passion, Death, and Resurrection.

It is better, of course, to join with the whole congregation in praying the Great Canon; there is strength in common prayer, and the music of the service, while simple, is beautiful and sustaining. But if you cannot actually come to the service, by all means pray the Great Canon at home.[117]

4 b. The Akathistos Hymn

We are never alone in the Christian life; we always have the company of the angels and saints, and first among them the Blessed Mother of God, the Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary. As Great Lent approaches its completion, we have "Saturday of the Akathistos,"[118] to sing the praises of the Blessed Mother of God, in the unparalleled poetry of the Akathistos Hymn.

Pope John Paul II has a strong devotion to the Akathistos Hymn, and, indeed, has asked that its use should be extended to the Roman Catholic Church, at least in all the cathedrals. The Holy Father personally has presided several times at the Akathistos Hymn, most notably on the Feast of the Annunciation and Vigil of Saturday of the Akathistos Hymn, 1988, for the Marian Year.[119] This should remind us of the great importance and value of this form of devotion to the Blessed Mother of God, and strengthen our commitment to propagate it.

We can, of course, pray the Akathistos privately. The text is found in many prayerbooks, and in separate pamphlets. But no private recitation is as joyful as the common singing of the Akathistos together in the church.

Only the Ukrainians have the practice of singing the Akathistos once during Lent, on the fifth Saturday or the preceding evening. However, they keep the custom of singing the Akathistos on other occasions during the year, as a paraliturgical devotion.

5. Saint Mary of the Desert

We are tempted to think of the saints as perfect people, who never did anything wrong. Since we are not like that, we might decide that we cannot become saints ourselves. This is, as I have just called it, a *temptation,* a deceit of the devil, the father of lies. There is no sinner who cannot repent, and become a great saint. To encourage us, on the fifth (and last) Sunday of Lent, the Church remembers Saint Mary of the Desert, Mary of Egypt as she is also called.

Mary of Egypt was a successful prostitute, and joined a pilgrimage boat to Palestine only in search of new customers! She had been baptized as a child, but she was not at all interested in the Faith. Then, however, in Jerusalem, God's grace moved Mary to repentance, and she went out into

the desert beyond the Jordan, where she led an eremitical life for many years. Shortly before she died, she met Saint Zosimas, of the monastery of Saint Sabbas, near Jerusalem; it was Saint Zosimas who gave her Holy Communion before she died, and who learned her history. Later another of the monks of Saint Sabbas became Patriarch Sophronius of Jerusalem; he wrote the life of Saint Mary. Because of her connection with the monastery of Saint Sabbas, the annual commemoration of Saint Mary of the Desert is an important one in all the Churches of the Byzantine tradition.[120]

From one aspect, there is nothing extraordinary about Saint Mary of the Desert; in every generation there have been sinners who repented and became saints. The eremitical vocation is less common, but hermits have never been lacking in the Church. Such people do not seek publicity or notoriety; during her lifetime Saint Mary would certainly not have wanted any attention. God chose to reveal this particular saint to the Church, so that we should know that we may never despair over our sins; the possibility of repentance is always open to us.

Also, of course, it is not without significance that the last of the major saints remembered on the Sundays of Great Lent is a woman. After singing the praises of the Mother of God, we at once sing the praises of Saint Mary of the Desert. This brings to mind the recent words of the Holy Father:

"I would also like to mention the splendid witness of nuns in the Christian East. This witness has offered an example of giving full value in the Church to what is specifically feminine, even breaking through the mentality of the time. During recent persecutions, especially in Eastern European countries, when many male monasteries were forcibly closed, female monasticism kept the torch of the monastic life burning. The nun's charism, with its own specific characteristics, is a visible sign of that motherhood of God to which Sacred Scripture often refers."[121]

Saint Hippolytus of Rome teaches:

"After His Resurrection, it was the women who were the first to see Him. Just as the first sin was introduced into the world by a woman, so it was also women who first announced life to the world. Accordingly they hear the sacred word 'Women, rejoice'[122] so that the primal sorrow might be swallowed up in the joy of the Resurrection."[123]

6. Palm Week

From Vespers on Sunday evening, we turn our attention to the events awaiting us in and around Jerusalem:

"let us begin the sixth week of the holy Fast... let us sing a hymn of praise to the Lord in preparation for the feast of Palms. For He comes in glory and the power of His divinity; He draws near to Jerusalem to conquer death!"[124]

This week concentrates on preparing us for the celebration of Palm Sunday, for our participation in the events of the Passion, and especially for the raising of Lazarus. Some of the liturgical poetry of Palm Week takes advantage of the coincidence of names between Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary (this is the Lazarus whom Jesus Christ raised from the dead), and Lazarus the poor beggar, who died and enjoyed a reward in heaven, whom Jesus Christ contrasts with a rich man who was punished for his lack of generosity.[125]

Throughout the week, we watch as Lazarus falls ill,[126] as Martha and Mary send for Jesus, in hope of healing for their brother,[127] as Lazarus dies[128] and is buried.[129] We hear Our Lord tell His disciples that He will go to Judea and raise Lazarus, even at the risk of His own life.[130] Martha and Mary weep for their dead brother; but Christ is coming! On Thursday and Friday we watch with them, as they lament at the tomb, but we also see Christ approaching with His apostles.

The Church stresses the eschatological significance of these events:

"Hell now awaits its destruction, for Life Itself draws near to raise Lazarus."[131] "O merciless Death, behold, your own end is near! Let the gate-keepers of Hell keep watch over all the bolts! For by the word of Christ your gates shall be broken down and Lazarus raised up!"[132] "Receive your King, O Zion! He already stands before your gates full of meekness, to raise up Lazarus and to destroy the kingdom of death."[133] "Christ arrives in Bethany to change grief into joy."[134]

LENT IS OVER

One might scarcely notice it. Great Lent, which begins so dramatically at Vespers on the evening of Forgiveness Sunday, ends on Friday evening of Palm Week. We shall continue to fast through Holy Week, and the services retain some of the Lenten characteristics, but Lent itself is finished for another year. We find this at once in the first hymn at the Presanctified Liturgy that evening:

"Having completed the forty days that bring profit to our souls, we beseech You in Your man-befriending love: *Grant us also to behold the Holy Week of Your Passion.*"[135]

For the next two weeks we shall pay almost no attention to the calendar of the Saints,[136] and we do not conduct services for individuals except in case of extraordinary need.[137] Everything focuses our attention on the events of Holy Week, beginning with the raising of Lazarus.

GREAT AND HOLY WEEK

Lazarus Saturday

This is a lovely feast, and a bit of a paradox: Matins has several characteristics of a Sunday service.[138] The long dramatic Gospel lesson[139] at the Divine Liturgy tells of Christ calling Lazarus out of the tomb.[140] The liturgical poetry enjoys playing on the two natures of Christ as defined by the Council of Chalcedon in 451. As a man, Christ asked where Lazarus was laid; as God he already knew. As a man, Christ weeps and prays at the tomb of Lazarus

his friend; as God, Christ calls Lazarus out of the tomb, back to life.[142] Christ wished to reveal both His divinity and His humanity. To show us His humanity He walked, He spoke, He wept. To show us His divinity He raised Lazarus from the dead.[143]

But there is more to it than that. This was not the only time that Jesus Christ raised someone from the dead. Jesus raised the daughter of the official;[144] Jesus raised the son of the widow of Naïn;[145] Jesus raised the daughter of Jairus;[146] and there were probably other occasions not mentioned in the Gospels. The raising of Lazarus, however, is different. The other times Jesus raised someone from the dead out of compassion for the family. This time, Jesus deliberately chose to raise Lazarus *in order to reveal the glory of God,*[147] so that the apostles[148] and all the people might *believe.*[149] The raising of Lazarus is thus a direct challenge to the power of death itself, a direct challenge to the devil. The raising of Lazarus is an assurance of the general resurrection.150

Christ weeping over the grave, therefore, is more than just the reaction of the Lord in His human nature to the death of a friend. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to redeem the whole human race. The ultimate sign of the Fall is death. In confronting the death of this one friend, Jesus Christ confronted the abyss of death which the Fall has brought upon humanity.

Jesus looks for His friend, and finds his friend is dead. Jesus looks for Paradise, and finds a cemetery. Jesus looks for the Creation that God called "good," and finds that "it stinks."[151] No wonder "Jesus wept!"[152] All of creation had turned into a cosmic graveyard! Yes, His tears were human; pure spirits do not weep tears. But His tears were also divine; He wept for the dead goodness of Creation, which He came to restore. The tears of Jesus express the infinite *love* of Almighty God for His people, love which brought us the Incarnation; love which was to bring Jesus into the tomb, into Hell itself, to save us.[153]

We shall return to this theme as we proceed with Holy Week.

Lazarus Saturday, as I said, is a joyful day. While we still keep some aspects of the Lenten abstinence, this is a "joyous fast!"[154] In some parishes, Lazarus Saturday has come to be kept as a special day for the children, with a Communion breakfast after the Divine Liturgy.

Palm Sunday

This is the authentic feast of Christ the King. On Palm Sunday, Jerusalem received Jesus Christ *as the Messianic King.* Even in the temple itself, the children cried out the royal acclamation "Hosanna," which had not been heard since the end of the Macchabean monarchy over a century before. The "authorities" were terrified; if the Roman governor were to take this as a challenge, which he might have done, blood would flow in the streets.

Just recently, we have seen a parallel of sorts. As the Soviet Union was crumbling, the forbidden Ukrainian blue and gold flag appeared again, here and there, and people began to sing the banned Ukrainian national anthem. Simultaneously people were joyful and apprehensive: happy to see and hear the symbols they longed for, but frightened over the possibility of retribution from the Soviet forces. There must have been similar ambivalence in Jerusalem that first Palm Sunday. It was joyful to hear the royal acclamation "Hosanna" and to see the palms, and the royal entry of Jesus Christ. But what might it portend? What was going to happen?

This royal entry was necessary; Jesus Christ had to fulfill the Messianic prophecies which we read at Vespers on the evening of Palm Sunday. The ruler's staff belongs to Christ the King, and He came to claim it, riding on the colt of an ass.[155] The King of Israel had come again to Jerusalem, bringing victory,[156] but it was to be a different sort of victory from what the Jewish people were expecting. Christ the King was simultaneously triumphant and victorious, but riding on the colt of an ass.[157] Divine royalty is humble; divine humility is regal.

After the Gospel at Matins, the bishop or the priest blesses the pussy willow branches,[158] and distributes them to all the clergy and faithful. We should hold the branches during the Divine Liturgy, and then take them to our homes, where we keep them with the Cross and the holy icons. What do these branches mean?

By accepting the blessed branch on Palm Sunday, we proclaim anew our *primary allegiance to Jesus Christ our King.* The blessed branch is like a "flag" for the Kingship of Jesus Christ. We acknowledge that Christ is our King, and that His Law, the Law of the Holy Gospel, comes first in our hearts and in our lives. And we keep the blessed branch in our home all year round, as a reminder of the loyalty we owe to Christ our King, and to the Gospel.

This is a matter of the utmost seriousness. Our prayer, fasting, and repentance during Lent should have brought us to realize that the Lord wants to reign in every aspect of our lives. Accepting the branch means accepting the royal authority of Jesus Christ in everything. We cannot promise to succeed, but we dare not take the blessed branch if we are not at least willing to try. By all means take the branch joyfully; the Kingdom of God is very joyful! But take it seriously too, and as you see it through the year remember what it stands for.

'The Bridegroom Cometh'

On Palm Sunday evening at Vespers we "pass from the feast of palms and branches ... to the saving solemnity of the sufferings of Christ."[159] On Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday morning of Holy Week, Matins is popularly called the "Bridegroom Service," because each time we sing the Tropar "Behold, the Bridegroom is coming in the middle of the night!" Each day the Gospel is read. There is Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts on Monday, Tuesday and

Wednesday; at this Liturgy the Gospel is also read, although there is no Epistle.

From Great Monday through Holy Saturday we read the books of *Exodus* and *Job* at Vespers. Exodus brings us directly into the narrative of the Crossing of the Red Sea, the first Passover, which prefigures the Passover of Christ: His death and Resurrection. Job teaches us that God's saving grace is a *mystery of love*. We do not always understand what God does or why God does it; we must trust in God and not pridefully think that we know better than God knows.

The first three days have an *eschatological* emphasis. They remind us that Holy Week and Pascha are not simply an annual religious celebration, a "time out" from our usual routine; Pascha is the reference point, the moment that fills our whole life with meaning, if our life is to have any meaning. We Christians, who experience the Resurrection, are in this world to announce and proclaim the Kingdom of God throughout our lives.

Holy and Great Monday

On Holy and Great Monday, at Matins we hear the Gospel[160] which recounts the lack of faith of the leaders, and the faith of the sinners. The lesson ends with the warning: "the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it." We must not be complacent, but always alert to witness to God's Kingdom.

At the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, we hear the Gospel[161] lesson in which Jesus announces the end of the world. We Christians should live in this awareness, that this world is passing, that our true homeland, our true citizenship, is not here but in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Holy and Great Tuesday

Today at Matins, we hear the Gospel[162] in which Jesus delivers a ringing, frightening denunciation of religious hypocrisy. We, who have the richest liturgical tradition in Christendom, should listen to this Gospel lesson attentively. Our wonderful, magnificent worship which we love will do us no good at all if we let it become an excuse for spiritual pride, for snobbery, for pretense, for avoiding our duty of justice, mercy, and good faith. Jesus does not teach us to neglect our liturgical worship, but He definitely teaches us to fulfill the Gospel law of service to others, as we saw on Meat-Fare Sunday, which is also called the Sunday of the Last Judgment. May God deliver us from permitting Holy Week to lead us into spiritual complacency.

At the Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts, this theme continues in the Gospel,[163] with the importance of staying awake and being ready for the coming of the Lord. We hear the story of the ten virgins, five wise and five foolish who were waiting for the coming of the Bridegroom; when he actually arrived at midnight, the foolish virgins did not have enough oil for their lamps, and were shut out of the wedding feast. This parable is remembered on each of these days in the Tropar "Behold, the Bridegroom comes at midnight, and blessed is the servant whom He finds watching!" Today the Gospel continues, and we hear the same passage we heard at Sunday of the Last Judgment (Meat-Fare Sunday), emphasizing the importance of the works of mercy.

On Tuesday, a verse is sung both at Matins and at the Presanctified Liturgy which perhaps deserves our attention:

"Come, you faithful, let us serve the Master eagerly, for He gives riches to His servants. Each of us, according to the measure that we have received, let us increase the talent of grace. Let one gain wisdom through good deeds; let another celebrate the Liturgy with beauty; let another share the faith by preaching to the uninstructed; let another give his wealth to the poor. So shall we increase what is entrusted to us, and as faithful stewards of His grace we shall be counted worthy of the Master's joy."

This verse emphasizes that no individual can do everything. In the Church, there are a variety of services. But no one is entitled to think himself better than someone else. Instead, we should take joy in giving honor to each other, and appreciating the work that others do.

Holy and Great Wednesday

Today at Matins we hear the Gospel[164] warning of the dangers of *rejecting* Christ, that we should not be like those who "loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."[165] We should be moved, yet again, not to take the grace of God for granted in our lives. Since we have known the Gospel, since we do know Christ, since we belong to the Church, our responsibility is that much greater. At Vespers and the Presanctified Liturgy we hear the Gospel[166] about the woman who came to the house of Simon the leper[167] in Bethany and anointed the head of Jesus with expensive, fragrant oil. The liturgical poetry combines this with the account of a similar event in Luke,[168] and another in John.[169]

Holy and Great Thursday

Let us be honest, and admit that Holy Thursday in the Byzantine liturgical tradition is not entirely successful! The day has become overloaded, and what should be the principal theme has suffered as a result.

That principal theme is, of course, the Last Supper, at which Our Lord Jesus Christ gave us the Holy Eucharist. Nothing could be more obvious than that our main service of the day should be the Divine Liturgy, and that this Divine Liturgy should be in the evening.

And that is what the service-books prescribe. On Holy Thursday we have the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great, beginning with Vespers. The *Triodion* already prescribes that Vespers should begin earlier than usual, at 2:00 PM.[170] But then matters became worse. Because of the Eucharistic fast from midnight, celebrations of the Divine Liturgy in the evening became less and less frequent, and finally ceased completely. The Council of Carthage[171] and

the Council in Trullo[172] both legislated to maintain the evening Divine Liturgy on Holy Thursday, but eventually the contrary custom prevailed, and the Divine Liturgy, even with Vespers, was pushed back to the morning.

Since in most countries Holy Thursday is a working-day, the inevitable result is that relatively few people are able to come to the Divine Liturgy on Holy Thursday. Ever since the Catholic Church restored the possibility of evening celebrations of the Divine Liturgy, in the reign of Pope Pius XII, there have been suggestions to restore the evening celebration on Holy Thursday, and in fact this has been done in most liturgical traditions.

For the Churches of the Byzantine tradition, however, there is an additional problem. For centuries it has become customary to serve Matins of Great Friday, with the reading of the Twelve Passion Gospels, on the evening of Holy Thursday. Our faithful are strongly attached to this service, and attend it in large numbers. This means that the evening hours are already occupied with a lengthy service, which makes it difficult, if not impossible, to serve Vespers with Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil on Holy Thursday evening.

Two other services have become aggregated to the Divine Liturgy on Holy Thursday: the washing of the feet and the consecration of the Holy Chrism. The Chrism is usually consecrated only by the Patriarchs, but in the Kievan tradition since 1590 diocesan bishops have been authorized to do this. The washing of the feet is in our *Archieraticon,* the service-book for hierarchs.[173] In many dioceses of the emigration the washing of the feet does not take place at all, because the priests cannot travel long distances to come to the Cathedral on Holy Thursday and still return to their parishes for their own services.

This is regrettable; the washing of feet should be an important occasion for all the clergy and faithful. Perhaps some consideration might be given to the possibility of transferring this particular service to another date in the ecclesiastical calendar, to facilitate the presence of the diocesan family.

At Vespers, which begins the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil on Holy Thursday, the liturgical poetry concentrates on the inconsistent behavior of Judas, who shared in the Last Supper and then went out to betray Jesus.

There are three lessons from the Old Testament: besides Exodus and Job we read from Isaias,[174] the first prophecy of the Suffering Servant. Later, at Matins, we shall sing some of these words. In the Epistle[175] we hear Saint Paul's account of the institution of the Holy Eucharist. The Gospel lesson is a cento, a combination of passages, from Matthew, John, and Luke.[176] In this, the longest Gospel reading of the year, we listen to the account of the Last Supper, the betrayal by Judas, and the arrest of Our Lord.

The use of the Anaphora, the Eucharistic Prayer, of Saint Basil the Great, adds to the solemnity of this Divine Liturgy. If you are able to come to this celebration, by all means do so; it is good to participate in the Eucharist on this day and to receive Holy Communion. A fourth-century pilgrim from Western Europe to Jerusalem wrote to her friends that on Holy Thursday in Jerusalem there was Divine Liturgy in the Church of the Resurrection, at an altar used only on this day, "and everyone receives Communion!"[177]

THE TWELVE PASSION GOSPELS

Holy Thursday night we come to church for what was originally an all night service and procession in Jerusalem. We no longer go on through the night, but even in parishes this is a lengthy service, and rather restrained. Still, as I have mentioned, our faithful come devoutly to this service in impressive numbers to listen to the Gospel account of the Passion of Our Lord.

An interesting play of darkness and light becomes noticeable at this service, and continues until the blazing brightness of Pascha itself. Watch, and see how very gradually, sometimes imperceptibly, the Light overcomes the darkness. Saint Irenæus teaches:

"To see the light is to be in the light and participate in its clarity; likewise to see God is to be in Him and participate in His life-giving splendor; thus those who see God participate in His life."[178]

Matins begins as usual, with the Six Psalms and the Litany of Peace. For the last time until next Great Lent, we sing "Alleluia" instead of "The Lord is God."[179] Then we chant slowly and solemnly the Tropar, "The glorious disciples were illumined by the washing of their feet at the Supper, but the disease of avarice darkened Judas the ungodly ..."[180] and the Priest reads the first Gospel lesson.[181]

After the first, second, third, fourth and fifth Gospel lessons, we sing "antiphons" about the Passion. The text of these antiphons is largely adapted from Scripture itself. In Jerusalem, these antiphons are sung as the procession moves about the Holy City.

Before the ninth Gospel Lesson, we sing the brief Hymn of Light:

"On this very day, O Lord, You graciously granted Paradise to the Good Thief. By the Wood of the Cross, enlighten me and save me!"

Several composers have written particularly beautiful music for this Hymn of Light; it is one of the most admired pieces in the corpus of Ukrainian liturgical music.

After the twelfth Gospel lesson, we sing the Tropar:

"You have delivered us from the curse of the law with Your Precious Blood; nailed to the Cross and pierced with the lance, You have poured forth immortality to all. Glory to You, our Savior."

We only sing this once a year, but the priest and deacon recite it before the Preparation of every Divine Liturgy; it reminds us of the connection between the Cross and the Eucharist.

By the time the service is over, it will be dark outside. We go to our homes and rest for a bit, before the services of the next day.

GOOD FRIDAY

On this day, there is no Eucharist.[182] Traditionally, this is a day of total fast and abstinence. We spend our time largely in church, sharing in the events of the Passion and Death of Our Lord, reflecting on those events through the Scripture and through the liturgical poetry based on Scripture.

THE ROYAL HOURS

The normally "little" Hours of the daily round of services: First Hour, Third Hour, Sixth Hour and Ninth Hour, are expanded today, with three Scriptural readings and some liturgical poetry at each "Hour."[183] Usually we do all four of the Royal Hours together, either on Good Friday morning or early in the afternoon, before Vespers. Each "hour" takes about twenty minutes, so the whole set takes rather less than an hour and a half. The Psalms, the readings, and the Hymns all draw our attention to the Passion and Death of Our Lord.

Vespers of the Shroud

According to the Typikon, Vespers should begin at 4:00 PM. Many Ukrainian parishes have a custom of holding this service in the late morning, and I often wondered why. When I spent Holy Week in L'viv in 1991, I suddenly understood: the early time was set to allow people a few more hours to come to kiss the Shroud! At the large churches in L'viv, there were never-ending lines of the faithful, around the clock, from Good Friday morning until midnight Holy Saturday evening, people coming to kiss the Shroud. It was an amazing witness of faith.

The liturgical poetry of Good Friday takes delight in the paradox of God Immortal experiencing death as a human being, of the Creator of All being crucified. We consider the cosmic significance of the Crucifixion:

"All creation was changed by fear, when it beheld You hanging on the Cross, O Christ. The sun was darkened and the foundations of the earth trembled. All creation suffered with the One Who created all things."[184]

After the Entrance at Vespers, we continue the readings from Exodus, Job, and Isaias, and then the Epistle: "to us who are being saved the message of the Cross is the power of God!"[185] The Gospel lesson again recounts the Passion and Death of the Lord.

At the Aposticha, we sing in honor of Joseph of Arimathea, the timorous disciple who found his courage and went to ask Pontius Pilate for the Body of Christ, and buried the Body in his own new tomb.[186] At the death and burial of Christ, the sun was darkened, the earth quaked, the curtain of the temple was ripped in half from top to bottom, Hell itself was frightened, and the graves opened in Jerusalem and many of the dead arose and came into the Holy City.

During the Aposticha the bishop or the senior priest[187] (in full vestments, as though for the Divine Liturgy) censes around the Holy Table of the Altar, where the Shroud[188] is waiting. The concelebrating clergy also fully vested, bring the Shroud from the Altar into the center of the church and process with all the faithful thrice around the building. The procession returns to the center of the nave, where the "tomb" is waiting, decorated with flowers, with candles, and with a canopy.[189] After the Lord's Prayer we sing:

"The Noble Joseph took down Your most pure Body from the Cross; anointing it with spices, he wrapped it in a pure linen shroud, and placed it in a new tomb."

And normally the priest will then give a sermon.[190] Following the Dismissal, we all come and venerate the Shroud; in Slav use there is another Hymn in praise of Saint Joseph of Arimathea.[191]

In Transcarpathia there is a custom of pious people to remain in church after the service and chant the Canon of the Lamentations of the Holy Mother of God.[192]

There is a particular temptation of which we must be wary on Good Friday. We may be tempted to feel self-righteous. It was "bad" people who killed Jesus Christ in Jerusalem two thousand years ago. We are tempted to think that we are not like them — after all, we put up beautiful Tombs in our churches, we deck the Holy Shroud with abundant flowers!

One answer, of course, is simply to look in the mirror and realize that we are *sinful* people, in need of God's forgiveness and mercy. And that is perfectly true. Spiritual pride has no place in the Christian life.

But there is a more important answer. The shocking reality is that it was not "bad" people who crucified Jesus Christ. *It was the very best people who did it!* It was not the pagan priests of Moloch, accustomed to burn children alive in Carthage, who schemed to put the Lord on the Cross; it was the High Priest of Israel, the servant of genuine monotheism, who said that "It is expedient that one man should die for the sake of the people."[193] It was not the Communists or the Nazis or some other group who made a mockery of law and justice who condemned Jesus Christ to death: it was the Roman Governor, the representative of the best legal system of the ancient world. It was the Roman Governor, who was bound to uphold the famous Twelve Tables of the Law -- and who washed his hands of the case, shrugged his shoulders, remarked cynically "What is Truth?"[194] and knowingly handed over an innocent Man to be crucified.

This is what had happened to the human race. The very best had gone "bad." The lesson here is, again, humility, and the realization that we *cannot* be "good" apart from Christ. Apart from Christ, everything deteriorates, everything goes "bad." Only in Christ is there eternal goodness and eternal life.

Jerusalem Matins

We return to church on Good Friday evening[195] for the "Jerusalem" Matins of Holy Saturday. This is one of the

most splendid services of the entire Byzantine tradition; nothing has been spared to make this service magnificent.

Again Matins begins as usual; we sing "The Lord is God" and "The Noble Joseph," but with the Resurrection Tropar of Tone 2:

"When You went down to death, O Life Immortal, You struck Hades dead with the blazing light of Your divinity. When You raised the dead from the nether world, all the powers of heaven cried out: O Giver of life, Christ our God, glory to You!"

It seems a paradox: we are looking at the image of the dead Christ, lying on the Shroud in front of us, but we are singing the triumph of the Resurrection. This paradox will continue.

The Triodion prescribes the recitation of Psalm 118 - - the longest Psalm in the Bible — with the addition of a verse of liturgical poetry after each verse of the Psalm. It is from this recitation of Psalm 118 that the service has taken the popular name of the "Funeral of Christ;" concomitantly, we associate Psalm 118 with services for the dead. That association is not entirely fortunate; the Psalm is a praise of God's law, God's life, and God's love. An attentive, prayerful and frequent reading is rewarding. The Church invites us to use Psalm 118 on Holy Saturday, because the Church considers the words of the Psalm to be as the words of Christ Himself, spoken to His Father during the Passion, Death, and Descent into Hell.

The Psalm itself is powerful, and because most of us read it so infrequently it can be quite effective when we give it our attention. However, in this service, the Psalm is overshadowed by the poetic verses following each Psalm verse. These express the stunned amazement of the Angels, the Blessed Mother of God, the Saints, the entire Church, and the whole of Creation at the incredible spectacle of Christ our God, lying dead in the tomb, and descended into Hell to seek and find us.

Gradually, through these three sets of verses, as we ponder this mystery from almost every conceivable view and yet confess that it is beyond us — for "can the tomb enclose the God of the universe whom the whole world cannot contain?"[196] The services of Lazarus Saturday repeatedly play on the two natures of Christ; the services of Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Pascha uncompromisingly teach the full Divinity of Christ, and marvel that God has experienced even death and Hell in the Unique Person of Jesus Christ.

"O Creator, with Your own hand You fashioned the human body from the earth; You took on our human nature to save it, and of Your own will You deigned to suffer on the Cross."[197]

And, gradually, a certain idea of the whole mystery of salvation begins to unfold. *The devil did not know what was happening.* "When it swallowed up the Rock, who is Christ our life, the insatiable Hell had to give up all its captives."[198] This theme will grow stronger and more triumphant in the hours ahead. Our liturgical celebration has moved beyond the visible events to the real cosmic struggle behind and within those events, the struggle for the human race, the struggle for the whole created universe. "You bring joy to those held captive in Hell ... when Your brightness dispels the darkness."[199] Any number of times during Jesus's public life and ministry, the devil had tried to find out exactly Who Jesus was, but the devil never quite succeeded. Expounding this theme, Saint Gregory the Great takes the words of the Lord to Job "Can you catch Leviathan with a hook?"[200] and teaches:

"By 'Leviathan' is meant the monster that devours the human race. He took away immortality while promising to add divinity to man. He had thrown the first man into alliance with the devil. He forced his descendants to the same crime without letup and increased their penalties. On a fish hook only the bait is exposed but the actual hook is hidden. The almighty Father then caught Leviathan on a hook, because He sent His incarnate Only-Begotten Son to His death. In Him the passible flesh was exposed, but the impassible divinity lay hidden. When, then, that serpent, by the hands of the persecutors, bit into the bait of His flesh, the serpent was hooked by the Godhead. Previously the serpent had recognized Him as God in His miracles, but the serpent lapsed from knowledge to doubt when the serpent saw that He was capable of suffering. The hook then held the jaws of the devourer while the bait of the flesh which the devourer sought was exposed on the hook. At the time of the passion, when He was put to death, the Godhead was hidden. The devourer was caught on the hook of His incarnation; the devourer sought the bait of His flesh, but was hooked by the Godhead. Humanity was there to lure the devourer on; the Godhead was also there to pierce the devourer. Infirmity was there to provoke the devourer; virtue was concealed, to pierce the jaws of the devourer. The devourer was caught on the hook, and perished from biting it. The devourer lost those whom the devourer had correctly thought were subject to death, because the devourer had dared to visit death on Him over Whom death had no dominion."[201]

In Western Ukrainian liturgical chant, these three stanzas of Jerusalem Matins have particularly beautiful music.[202] At each stanza we offer incense around the tomb. We gaze at the Shroud and sing "Arise, O compassionate God, and by Your Resurrection raise us from the abyss of Hades."[203] Rejoicing in the triumph of the Savior, we sing "Snared is now the Snarer; man ensnared is ransomed!" Toward the end of the Psalm and the poetic verses, we sing in praise of the Myrrh-Bearing Women, who came early in the morning to anoint the Body of Christ.

We then chant the Sunday hymns of the Resurrection with the refrain "Blessed are You, O Lord, teach me Your statutes," in praise of the Myrrh-Bearing Women. Again we find the paradox: we are gazing at the image of Christ lying dead in the tomb, but we are singing the joyful praise of the Resurrection.

The poetic Canon which follows continues the theme of

amazement and the divine condescension of Christ, who went down to death and Hell to set the captives free. Then we begin to hear a theme which will grow:

"Today You sanctify the seventh day which You formerly blessed by resting from Your work; by keeping the Sabbath, O God, our Creator and Savior, You renew all things and restore Your strength."[204]

And we sing the great Messianic prophecy of Isaias:

"The dead shall arise, and from their tombs they shall be raised up, all those born on earth shall awake and sing for joy!"[205]

Then in the Kondak we hear the Myrrh-Bearers proclaim that "This is the most blessed Sabbath, on which Christ sleeps, but on the third day He will rise again."[206]

At the Psalms of Praise[207] this theme of the Sabbath is further explained:

"The great Moses mystically foretold this day, when he said 'God blessed the seventh day.'[208] This is the blessed Sabbath; this is the day of rest, on which the only-begotten Son of God rested from all His works. Suffering death in accordance with the plan of salvation, He kept the Sabbath in the flesh. And on this day He returned again! Through His Resurrection He has granted us eternal life; for He is good, and He loves the human race."

This Doxasticon is a close paraphrase of the teaching of Saint Gregory of Nyssa:

"Behold the blessed Sabbath of the first creation of the world, and in that Sabbath, recognize this Sabbath, the day of the Repose, which God has blessed above the other days. For on this day the only-begotten Son of God truly rested from all His works, keeping Sabbath in the flesh by means of His death; and returning to what He was before through His Resurrection, He raised up with Himself all that lay prostrate, having become Life and Resurrection and East and Dawn and Day for those in darkness and the shadow of death."[209]

Before the Great Doxology the bishop or the senior priest vests completely, as for the Divine Liturgy.[210] During the Doxology he censes three times around the tomb, and then, during the Holy God, which we sing to a slow and solemn melody, the clergy take the Gospel book and make the Lesser Entrance as at Liturgy. Returning to the front of the tomb, they listen to the three readings from Scripture.[211]

The first is the lesson from Ezekiel[212] about the dry bones, lying in the open valley, seemingly proclaiming the triumph of death. But God tells the prophet to speak to the dry bones, and call them back to life, and the bones rejoined one another, and were clothed again in flesh and the people came back to life. And the Lord promised:

"Behold, I will open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people, and I will bring you home into the land of Israel. ... And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land."[213]

But how is this to happen? Who is to do it? *Who now is the Prophet* to call the dry bones back to life? The answer is in the second reading, which combines two short passages from Saint Paul:[214]

"Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be new!"...for Christ, our Paschal Lamb, has been sacrificed."[215]

There is the answer; *we* must bear witness. The Church is the Body of Christ; the Church must speak the word of life.

And in the Alleluia verses following the Epistle, the Church responds with the Psalm-verse which we shall hear again on Pascha: "Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered!"[216] But the Gospel[217] simply recounts the chief priests and Pharisees setting a watch at the tomb where Our Lord was buried. With that and the litanies, Matins ends. And we are waiting.

Saint Gregory of Nyssa teaches that Holy Saturday is:

"the true Sabbath rest, the Sabbath rest which has received God's blessing, in which the Lord has rested from His works on behalf of the world's salvation."[218]

Holy Saturday
The Blessed Sabbath

Vespers and Liturgy of St. Basil

In the early Church, Holy Saturday was the day when catechumens were baptized.[219] In the Byzantine tradition, this took place at the Vespers with Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil which we still have on Holy Saturday. This service is the original "Easter Vigil." In recent centuries it has been sadly neglected; some parishes rush through it. Other parishes abbreviate it in a poorly considered way. And many parishes do not hold it at all. But those who discover the Biblical and dogmatic wealth of this celebration treasure it, and look forward to it every year.

Holy Saturday is a day of strict fast and abstinence.[220] The service should begin in late afternoon, perhaps at four or five o'clock. The tomb and the Holy Shroud are still in the center of the church; the altar is still draped in dark cloths and the clergy put on dark vestments. Vespers begins with "Blessed is the Kingdom, and we chant "Come, let us worship" and Psalm 103, "Bless the Lord, O my soul..." After the Litany of Peace, we sing "Lord, I have cried," with four Resurrection prosomia in tone 1, and three special prosomia for today which express our joy at what happened when the Lord Jesus Christ descended into Hell:[221]

"Today Hell cries out groaning: 'I should not have accepted the Man born of Mary! He came and destroyed my power! He shattered the gates of brass, and as God He raised up the souls which I once held!'..."

"Today Hell cries out groaning: 'My power has been trampled down! The Shepherd was crucified, and has raised Adam from the dead! I have been deprived of those whom I had ruled! He Who was crucified has emptied the graves;

death has no power any more!'"

This teaching is also expressed in the Paschal Icon of the Byzantine tradition, showing Our Lord trampling underfoot the gates of Hades, breaking the chains and locks, and with His Hands pulling up Adam and Eve and all the others. Life has overcome death.

After the Entrance with the Gospel Book and the hymn sing "Oh Joyful Light," there are 15 lessons from the Old Testament (it takes about an hour to read them all). During these readings, in earlier centuries, the baptisms took place; the faithful remained in the church, listening to the readings, while the bishop took the catechumens to the baptistery where he baptized and chrismated them.

We begin with the account of creation.[222] We read how God commanded Moses and Aaron to have the children of Israel prepare and eat the Paschal Lamb.[223] Almost the whole book of Jonah tells us how the prophet was thrown into the sea, and spent three days and nights in the great fish, but by the power of the Lord his life was saved. The sixth reading[224] describes the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea, when God parted the waters so that the children of Israel could pass through, and then God brought back the waters and drowned all the chariots and soldiers of Pharaoh, fulfilling the promise of Moses that "the Egyptians you see today you shall never see again!"[225]

When the children of Israel had crossed the Red Sea in safety, and looked back and saw their pursuers drowned in the waves, they turned to God and sang a triumphant anthem: "I will sing to the Lord, for He is gloriously triumphant — horse and chariot He has thrown into the sea!" When the reader reaches this point in the account, we open the Royal Doors and sing the refrain of the anthem: "Let us sing to the Lord, for gloriously has He been glorified." We repeat this acclamation after each verse.

Thus we join the moment of the *first* Pascha, the miraculous deliverance of God's People by the crossing of the Red Sea. We have prepared for this by reading the Book of Exodus at Vespers every day during Holy Week. This event underlies the Christian Pascha, the Resurrection of Our Lord. We pass with Jesus Christ from death to life, by being baptized – and so passing through the waters without danger – into Christ's death, and being raised with Him into life.

After this song of Moses and the Children of Israel, we listen to the balance of the Old Testament lessons. We hear how the Lord answered the prayers of Saint Elias the Prophet and brought the dead son of a widow back to life.[226] We recall how Abraham was prepared to sacrifice his only son, Isaac.[227] The Lord announces good news for the poor, freedom for captives, joy instead of mourning, and a lasting covenant.[228] The Prophet Eliseus raises from the dead the young son of the Shunamite woman[229] Isaias calls to God with the plea: "Oh, that You would rend the heavens and come down!"[230] The Lord gives us a new covenant, written upon our hearts; we shall know Him; He will forgive us and He will remember our sins no more.[231]

The final Old Testament reading is the account of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, who tried to compel everyone to worship an idol, and threw the three young men into a burning, fiery furnace, because they would *not* worship the false god. God sent His Angel to protect the three young men, and kept them safe from all harm, even in the midst of the flames.[232]

This reading also ends in song; as the reader comes to the Song of the Three Youths, we open the Royal Doors and sing the refrain "Praise the Lord and exalt Him throughout the ages!" This canticle is a joyous blessing of God in His Creation; in singing this blessing of God we accept *the Eucharistic vocation* of men and women, to unite Creation to God by our voluntary offering of thanks. By the Resurrection of Christ all creation is changed and redeemed, so that we shall see "a new heaven and a new earth."[233]

Since Holy Saturday is the great day of Baptism, instead of the Trisagion we sing "As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Alleluia!" In earlier centuries, this was a processional hymn, as the faithful welcomed the bishop and all the newly-baptized coming into church from the baptistry. The Epistle lesson[234] teaches us that *we are baptized into Christ's death,* so that we may be united with Christ in His Resurrection.

After the Epistle, there comes a dramatic moment: the changing of the vestments from dark to bright.[235] On this one day of the year, we do not sing "Alleluia" before the Gospel. Instead, we chant Psalm 81, with the last verse for a refrain: "Arise, O God, and judge the earth, for all nations belong to You!" The clergy close the Royal Doors and remove their dark vestments, putting on bright vestments,[236] and also robe the Holy Table of the Altar in bright vestments. When they have finished, they open the Royal Doors and announce the Gospel of the Resurrection.[237]

It is a moment of Paschal joy. But notice: *the Shroud is still in the Tomb,* in the center of the church. We announce the Resurrection while the image of the dead Christ is still before our eyes! How can this be?

To strengthen the paradox, later on Holy Saturday the priest will carry the Shroud into the Altar and set it on the Holy Table,[238] so that for the forty days of Paschaltide, every Divine Liturgy is served on the Holy Shroud, with this image of Christ lying dead in the Tomb.

Still further: the same image is normally found on the Antimension, without which we never serve the Divine Liturgy. Yet every Divine Liturgy commemorates Christ's *Resurrection.* How are we to understand this seeming contradiction?

This is an expression of our Christian life. We keep before us the image of Christ's death, while we proclaim the triumph of Christ's Resurrection. And we live in this present age, this present world, while we proclaim the Resurrection, and the Second Coming which we await. Understood in the light of Holy Saturday, the tomb of Christ becomes the *life-giving Tomb.*[239]

Holy Saturday can be a very long day. We know that

Pascha is coming, in just a few hours, but those few hours pass so slowly! As eternity goes, the Lord Jesus Christ will come again in glory very soon — but that "very soon" seems so long delayed. We are not forbidden — quite the contrary! — to beg the Lord to make haste and come. We even believe that He hears that prayer particularly. But meanwhile, in this world, we must live by faith.

How often do we not see the Body of the Lord crucified? Every time the Church suffers, every time even one of the people for whom Christ died suffers, we behold again the humiliation of Christ. In Church, in Holy Week, it is not difficult to look upon the Cross and the Shroud, surrounded with flowers and incense, and recognize the Lord of Glory. But we must *learn* from Holy Week to recognize the Lord in the poor, in the lonely, in the sick, in the oppressed, in all those who are in need. This is what it means for our faith to sustain us from Pascha to Pascha, year by year.

This Vesperal Eucharist of Holy Saturday takes us from the Beginning to the End, from Creation to the Second Coming. This Liturgy teaches us the meaning of salvation. We rejoice with Moses at the crossing of the Red Sea, and we exult with the Hebrews at the drowning of the Egyptians, and God's promise that "the Egyptians whom you see today you shall never see again!"[240]

The Second Coming will be like that. Redeemed by the Lord, Who will come again to take us to the Father, we shall look back, one final time, to behold all of our sinfulness, all of our wrongdoing, drowning like the Egyptians in the Red Sea, and in eternal thanks we shall turn to Christ our King and sing again the Song of Moses: "for gloriously has He been glorified!"[241]

With that in mind, our immediate response is the Eucharist itself. It may be that because of the unparalleled solemnity of Holy Saturday, the Divine Liturgy of Saint James survived on this day in Byzantine usage. In any case, this is the one day of the year that we still sing "Let all mortal flesh keep silence" instead of the Cherubic Hymn.[242] The present Typikon prescribes the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great. In keeping with the "vigil" nature of this particular celebration, the Anaphora should be read aloud, without hurry.

At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, the Triodion prescribes the blessing of five loaves and some wine, using the same prayer that we use on the vigil of great feasts, but with no blessing of oil[243] or wheat. In principle, this is the only food we shall eat on Holy Saturday itself.

The Blessing of Baskets

In practice something else is taking place: the blessing of Paschal foods![244] In the Slav Churches the blessing is immensely popular. The origin and the basic significance of the blessing is clear: we have abstained from certain foods during Lent, and we receive the blessing of the Church to eat them on Pascha, to proclaim that all the goodness of Creation is renewed in Christ's Resurrection. These foods symbolize all of God's created gifts for us.

The liturgical books prescribe that the foods should be blessed on Pascha itself, *after* the Divine Liturgy.[245] And many clergy would prefer this practice. But in fact most of our parishioners bring baskets of the Paschal foods to the church at stated times on Holy Saturday for this blessing. I should remind everyone that we do *not* bring the baskets into the nave of the church; this blessing may be given out-of-doors, if the weather is appropriate, or in the parish hall. In the utmost necessity, the blessing may be given in the church vestibule. The reason for this rule is to stress that the genuine Paschal Lamb is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Even though the foods are often blessed on Holy Saturday, we do not eat the Paschal foods until after the Divine Liturgy and Holy Communion of Pascha itself.

The Resurrection

We come, at last, to the goal of our pilgrimage: the night of Pascha! Our Church is often poor, often humiliated in this world, often criticized . . . but on Pascha we are the envy of other Christians; our tradition sings out the glory of the Resurrection like no one else! Our paschal service is a great treasure, a great gift of the Holy Spirit, which we should enjoy and love, for which we should prepare with eager anticipation.

In the last half hour or so before the procession, we chant again the poetic canon of Holy Saturday, with the church in darkness, and the priest removes the Shroud from the Tomb. As I mentioned above, the Shroud will lie on the Holy Table throughout Paschaltide.

To begin the procession, the priest lights his candle[246] and begins to chant "Angels in Heaven, O Christ our Savior, sing of Your Resurrection. Enable us on earth to sing to You and glorify You with pure hearts!" Then we all light our candles[247] and the procession goes forth, around the exterior of the church, like the myrrh-bearing women coming to the tomb, to find that the Lord has risen.[248] The clergy and servers carry the Cross, the Gospel Book, and the Resurrection Icon. In this Icon of the "Descent into Hades,"[249] we see the Victorious Christ crushing the gates of Hell under His Feet, trampling on the bars, chains, and locks, and raising up Adam and Eve from their tombs. Thus we understand that in His Resurrection, Jesus Christ raises all God's People.

The priest blesses the closed doors of the church and begins the singing of the triumphant Paschal Tropar, which we will sing innumerable times "Christ is Risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and on those in the tombs bestowing life!" It is the greatest moment of the Christian year. In some countries there are fireworks and gun salutes.[250] Taking the wooden hand Cross, the priest knocks loudly on the church doors, and then greets us all with the words, "Christ is Risen!" And we answer with confident faith "Risen Indeed!" We enter the church, singing; all the lights have been put on, candles are blazing, the Icon of the Resurrection is surrounded with flowers. The

doors of the Iconostasis are open and will remain open throughout Bright Week, for the Resurrection of the Lord has opened the Kingdom of Heaven.

We sing the Paschal Canon, written by Saint John of Damascus.[251] In the original Greek, in Church-Slavonic, in Ukrainian, in English, and no doubt in every other language, Saint John's Paschal Canon is a triumph of Christian poetry.[252] Saint John weaves his eight-stanza poem from the Scriptures and the writings of the Holy Fathers in an outburst of joy.

"Yesterday I was buried with Christ; today I rise with Christ. Yesterday I was crucified with Christ; today I ask Christ to glorify me in His Kingdom."[253] It is not unusual to find pious people who know the Paschal Canon practically by heart, even in Church-Slavonic. Now that we are using vernacular Ukrainian or English, I hope that even more people will come to know and appreciate this wonderful Canon. Throughout the singing of the Canon[254] there is almost constant incensation.[255] In our tradition, the clergy usually sing the *Hirmos,* the first part of each Ode,[256] and the chanters lead the assembly in singing the rest. We should sing the Paschal Canon briskly and joyfully.[257]

Just after the Canon there comes a short piece, of only one verse, called the "Hymn of Light." Despite its brevity, this is one of the most popular pieces of Ukrainian liturgical chant,[258] and our faithful await it eagerly. It is sung three times; customarily the clergy chant the Hymn of Light the first time, the chanters and assembly chant it the second time, and the third time the clergy begin the Hymn and the chanters and assembly join in midway.

All year round, towards the end of Matins we have the Psalms of Praise, Psalm 148, 149, and 150; we even sing them on Pascha, with usual Sunday Resurrection prosomia in Tone 1. On Pascha, however, we continue with special Paschal Hymns, five verses in all, stressing the miraculous joy of Pascha and the need to forgive and embrace each other. In keeping with these words, the clergy invite us all to come forward, to kiss the Cross, the Gospel Book, the Resurrection Icon and perhaps other icons, and to kiss one another.[259]

Then, where the custom is practiced, the priest reads the Paschal Sermon of Saint John Chrysostom;[260] "we do not sit for this reading, but we all stand and listen."[261] This is the only patristic reading which the Byzantine tradition retains in parish usage during the liturgical year. To express our appreciation for this sermon, we respond by chanting the tropar to Saint John Chrysostom.

The service-books direct that Matins should conclude with the litanies and dismissal, and that there should be the Paschal Hours before the Divine Liturgy. However, we prefer that the Divine Liturgy should follow forthwith, and we encourage all the faithful to participate in the Divine Liturgy and receive Holy Communion on Pascha. With this in mind, we recommend commencing the Divine Liturgy following the stykhyry of Pascha or after the sermon and tropar of Saint John Chrysostom where this is practiced.

At the Liturgy, we again sing "All those who have been baptized into Christ ...." instead of the Trisagion. The Prokimen, "This is the day which the Lord has made . . ."[262] reminds us that Pascha is the Eschatological Day of the Lord – "the unending Day of His Kingdom" – as we chant in the Paschal Canon.[263] This is *the end* of "normal" life in this world, and *the beginning* of the new life of the Kingdom. In the words of the author of Hebrews:

"You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly[264] of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel. See that you do not refuse him who is speaking."[265] "Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire."[266]

The first lesson, from the Acts of the Apostles,[267] reminds us again of the unique importance of *Jerusalem* in God's plan for our salvation:

"While eating[268] with them He charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, He said, 'you heard from Me, for John baptized with water, but before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit ... and you shall be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.'"

Notice that the Lord says these words *while eating at table with the Apostles.* This happens *in Jerusalem,* during the Eucharistic Paschal feast. We must partake of that Paschal Eucharist in Jerusalem if we are to be Christ's witnesses in Jerusalem and throughout the earth. If we enter fully into the Paschal celebration, our strength and our enthusiasm are renewed; our liturgical experience of the Risen Lord *enables* us to preach Christ dynamically, to witness to Christ in our lives throughout the year.

We give expression to that command to witness to Christ "to the ends of the earth" when we read the Gospel lesson in many languages, as is our tradition at the Divine Liturgy on Pascha. The lesson is the Johannine Prologue,[269] which resembles a hymn or chant of praise. This wonderful text continues the theme of *light:* "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." This may well have been a description of the night of Pascha, when the light of Christ dispels the darkness of sin and death. The light of Christ, "the true light which enlightens everyone who comes into the world." When I was a young boy in a Catholic school, it was not customary to teach the children to memorize many Bible passages, but in sixth grade the Sisters taught us to memorize the Johannine Prologue. It was a good choice; that text has often brought joy to my heart, and never more so than at the Liturgy on Pascha.

The Divine Liturgy continues, joyfully and almost rapidly, to bring us to the Holy Communion in the Life-Giving Body and Precious Blood of our Risen Lord! We chant "Christ is Risen" many times in place of certain hymns used during the rest of the year. At the end of the Liturgy, the priest blesses a special loaf of bread, the *Artos*, prepared with an image of the Risen Lord on the top crust.[270] This *Artos* reminds us that the Risen Lord is the Bread of Life; we carry this loaf in procession throughout Bright Week[271] and on Bright Saturday,[272] after the Divine Liturgy, we bless the *Artos* once more before cutting it and eating it together.

After the Divine Liturgy on Pascha itself we enjoy the blessed foods, which remind us that the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ renews the whole of Creation; Jesus Christ is the new Adam. In the light of Christ's Resurrection God once again looks at His Creation and calls it "very good," as He did in the beginning. So on Pascha we eat and drink with the Risen Lord, as we shall eat and drink with Him in the glory of the Kingdom.

Pascha gives meaning to everything. Pascha is all-pervading in the Christian life; the Paschal Mystery is Christ Himself. Without Pascha, life would be quite worthless and empty, because life would be nothing but time spent waiting for death. But Christ is Risen, *trampling down death by death*! Death has no more sting, hell has no more victory! Pascha transfigures time: because of Pascha the year becomes the *Christian* year. We Christians are always living "after Pascha"; we Christians are always living "towards Pascha" — we Christians are always living in the Paschal Mystery, or else we are not living at all. May you always know the inexhaustible joy of Pascha, even in this world, and may we celebrate the Eternal Pascha together, the messianic banquet of the age to come!

Blessing of Baskets in Homes

Some of our faithful ask the priest to come to their homes on Holy Saturday, to bless the Paschal table. Normally I encourage our priests to visit the homes of the parishioners, and I am edified that our faithful wish the priest's blessing on this feast of feasts. But in the pastoral conditions of North America, I must request our faithful to understand that on Holy Saturday this is nearly impossible. The priest must conduct the services of Holy Week; not only is the priest often without an assistant priest or a deacon in his parish, but often enough one priest must even serve in more than one church. The priest must prepare the services, and be ready for Pascha itself. The priest must prepare his sermons for these celebrations. The priest must visit the sick, who are unable to come to church for the Holy Days. And the priest must have some time for private prayer and rest, or he will be in no condition to hold the divine services with joy and attention. So I do ask everyone's forgiveness and understanding, and I invite everyone to bring the basket of Paschal foods to the church for the blessing.

The Time of the Resurrection Service

Officially, the time is set by the *Archeparchial Statutes*, which provide that "The Easter Vigil Service should be celebrated during the night before Easter Sunday and terminate at dawn."[273] There are abundant references to the Holy Fathers documenting the universal practice of celebrating this service during the night, so that the Divine Liturgy should end before dawn.

Two pastoral complications can arise: in some places there is a local custom to *begin* the service at dawn. This can be quite beautiful, and if the parish priest confirms that the faithful truly want to maintain this practice, and express their desire by coming to church on time so that everyone takes part in the procession, there is no reason to change this local custom.

If, however, this custom is working a hardship, or if the pastor observes that a significant number of the faithful come late, it may be appropriate to consider introducing the practice set forth in the *Archeparchial Statutes*.

In some places, one priest must serve two parishes. Since the one priest cannot be in two places simultaneously, this will necessitate some special arrangements in the timing of services.

The Divine Liturgy: one occasionally notices the abuse of separating Resurrection Matins from the Divine Liturgy. In our pastoral situation, this inevitably means that many people will not attend the Eucharist on Pascha! Nothing more incongruous could be imagined. I ask all our clergy to ensure that the Paschal Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom follows Resurrection Matins at once, without any pause, and I ask all of our faithful to take part in the Divine Liturgy on Holy Pascha, and devoutly receive the Risen Lord in Holy Communion. ■

FOOTNOTES

[1] The word "Easter" refers to a Teutonic spring-festival honoring a minor pagan deity. The traditional word "Pascha" reminds us of the divine link between the Jewish Passover and the Paschal Mystery which culminates in Christ's Resurrection.

[2] *Passover* and *Pascha* are the same word.

[3] I Corinthians 15:14

[4] I Corinthians 15:20.

[5] Holy and Great Monday, Matins, first prosomion at the Praises; repeated Holy and Great Monday evening, Presanctified Liturgy, first prosomion at "Lord, I have cried." [Italics mine.]

[6] Apocalypse 21:2-4. [Italics mine.]

[7] Throughout Paschaltide we shall sing "Shine, shine forth with radiance, O New Jerusalem, for the glory of the Lord is risen upon you!" (Ninth Ode, Paschal Canon).

[8] although we do have faithful who live at considerable distances from the church, and make extraordinary efforts to come, especially for the solemn feast days. These sacrifices have also their reward!

[9] St. Athanasius of Alexandria, *Festal Letter* 6 (for 334), 13.

[10] Unfortunately, there is still no complete Ukrainian translation of the *Lenten Triodion*; some important excerpts appear in the Ukrainian *Molytvoslov*, (Basilian Press, Rome-Toronto 1990), and certain other texts from the *Lenten Triodion* appear in Ukrainian translation in vari-

ous pamphlets and booklets.

In 1879 the Holy See published a Catholic edition of the *Lenten Triodion* in the original Greek. It is long out of print but significant excerpts appear in the four-volume *Anthologion* also published by the Holy See.

The Basilian monks at Pochaiv published a Catholic edition of the *Lenten Triodion* in Church-Slavonic in 1786; the L'viv Stauropegion brotherhood continued to publish the *Lenten Triodion* in Church-Slavonic even in the twentieth century. However, all the Catholic editions in Church-Slavonic are now out of print.

[11] *Lenten Triodion*, Uniontown, Pennsylvania 1995. Passages from the Triodion in this article are cited or adapted from this edition.

[12] John Paul II, *Orientale Lumen*, May 2, 1995 [hereafter cited as OL], § 8 d & e.

[13] OL, § 21 b, reference to Vatican II, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* [hereafter cited as OE], § 24.

[14] OL § 1 e.

[15] OE § 6.

[16] Saint Athanasius, "Festal Letters," Letter VI, Nicene Fathers (first series) vol. 4; p.508.

[17] [This indicates that in the time of Saint Gregory Nazianzen, who died in 390, the forty-day Lent was well known.]

[18] the Holy Eucharist.

[19] the Holy Eucharist.

[20] literally "prayer-houses."

[21] a reference to the Eucharistic fast.

[22] Saint Gregory Nazianzen, *Sermon on Holy Baptism*, Patrologia Graeca 36, 359-425.

[23] and also from fish (although not from shellfish) on most days.

[24] and also from wine and [olive] oil on most days.

[25] *Similitudes*, V, iii, 7; English translation in J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, (edited and completed by J. R. Harmer), Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1974; cited passage on p. 205.

[26] the Typikon permits wine (as well as olive oil) on certain days, even during Lent. In our circumstances, however, I consider that wine and fasting do not go together.

[27] this derives from the traditional fasting from oil.

[28] physicians approve of this sort of regimen. Fasting is very good for our health, but no one who is ill, or whose health is poor, should undertake a fasting regimen without a doctor's advice and supervision.

[29] except Holy Saturday; cf. Canon 89 of the Council of Trullo.

[30] Saint John Chrysostom, "On the Statues," Nicene Fathers (first series), vol. 9, p. 359.

[31] Canon 719, *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*.

[32] Pastors do not permit unauthorized priests to hear confessions; so the faithful need not worry about the standing of priests who hear confessions in their parish churches.

[33] Artem Vedel', one of the great Ukrainian baroque composers, wrote a splendid setting of this piece which is often sung by choirs.

[34] This seems to have come about for an unfortunate polemical reason; certain other Eastern Churches have a fast during this week, and the Byzantines wished to emphasize their contempt for the non-Chalcedonian Churches! Cf. Isidore Dol'nyt'sky, *Typika Tserkve Rusko*-Katolicheskiia, Lviv, 1899, p. 362 [in Church-Slavonic]; Ukrainian translation: *Typyk Ukrainskoi Tserkve*, Edizioni dei Pp. Basiliani, Rome, 1992, p. 319.

[35] *The Poseidon Adventure* (1972).

[36] For these three Sundays, Ukrainian composers have written several splendid polyphonic settings of Psalm 136. The unison settings in our traditional books of chant in Church-Slavonic are still popular.

One of the most beautiful is in the 1904 *Irmologion*, Stauropegion, Lviv, pp. 513-516 (Arabic pagination). An abbreviated version in Ukrainian appears in the *Molytvoslov* (Basilian Press, Rome-Toronto 1990), pp. 439-441.

[37] OL § 8f.

[38] Because of the shortage of clergy, and for other pastoral reasons as well, in some parishes the special services for the dead are not celebrated on Saturday, but on Friday evening or Sunday evening.

[39] Besides these special days for the dead, our church has the custom of offering prayers and the Divine Liturgy for those who have fallen asleep in the Lord on the fortieth day after death, and every year on the anniversary of death. We should do our best to perpetuate this custom.

[40] Matthew 25:31-46.

[41] not even the Divine Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts is prescribed on these two days.

[42] An exception can be made in case of pastoral need.

[43] Cf. especially §9-10, 12-15.

[44] OL §9c.

[45] Cf. Message of the Ordinary General Synod of Bishops, VII: "Appeal to Religious of the Eastern Churches" (October 27, 1994): *L'Osservatore Romano*, October 29, 1995, p. 7.

[46] OL §27.

[47] The Roman Catholic and Protestant custom of eating pancakes on Shrove Tuesday – the day before Ash Wednesday, when the Western Church begins Lent – has the same origin.

[48] third prosomion, translation adapted.

[49] Psalm 68, The *Molytvoslov* (Basilian Press, Rome-Toronto, 1990), pp. 465-466, provides a musical setting in Ukrainian for the Prokimen.

[50] Aposticha, Vespers of the evening of Cheesfare Sunday.

[51] The Prayer of St. Ephraim is never used on Saturday, nor on Sunday until the end of Vespers on Sunday evening.

[52] John 15:11.

[53] Genesis 3:5

[54] James 3:2.

[55] The virtue of honesty and truthfulness is not a license to broadcast the failings of other people. Detraction, as this is called, is also a sin, unless there is very good reason. And, if there is such good reason, one should not gossip, but actually bring the matter to the attention of the proper authorities.

[56] this word is often translated "chastity" or "purity." Etymologically these translations are not incorrect, but in common English usage they are too frequently restricted to questions of *sexual* conduct.

[57] Matthew 24:22.

[58] Romans 14:4.

[59] Matthew 7:1-2a.

[60] Isidore Dol'nyt'skyj, *Typyka Tserkve Rusko*, (L'viv, 1899), p. 394 [in Church-Slavonic]; Ukrainian translation: *Typyk Ukrainskoi Katolytskoi Tserkvy*, (Edizioni dei Pp. Basiliani, Rome, 1992), pp. 348-349.

Dol'nyt'skyj remarks that in our churches we only bow and make the sign of the Cross *once* after each tropar of the Canon, even though the Triodion prescribes doing this three times.

[61] The Uniontown edition of the Triodion gives the Great Canon in a contemporary American rendering. Perhaps the sisters will make this translation available as a separate booklet.

[62] In practice this is done the evening before, on Wednesday.

[63] However, the Hirmos of each Ode of the Great Canon have elaborate melodies in our traditional manuals of chant, for unison singing, and also beautiful harmonized settings for choral singing, written by Dmytro Bortniansky and other eminent Ukrainian composers.

[64] As we find in the Triodion, there is a wealth of daily services for Lent, but the full cycle is usually kept only in monasteries.

[65] Not completely, of course; there were always at least a few places where it was retained. But it is safe to say that in many parishes it was unknown.

[66] Pastoral Guide, of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in the United States, Philadelphia, 1999. §299.1. Cf. also *Statutes of the Archeparchy of Philadelphia,* enacted and promulgated by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Constantine Bohachevsky, S.T.D., Archbishop of Philadelphia, 1959, Canon 296, §1 (p. 87).

[67] as it is usually, if incongruously, termed!

[68] Father (now Bishop) Lubomyr Husar prepared *A Lenten Anthologion, containing necessary excerpts from the various church books for the celebration of the Divine Service of Presanctified Gifts;* Saint Basil Seminary in Stamford published this book in 1962; the texts and music are in Church-Slavonic with the rubrics in English. This important resource did much to promote the celebration of the Presanctified Liturgy.

In 1976 the St. Joseph's Institute in Chicago published a similar anthology, but entirely in English, *Divine Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts.* With the increasing use of English in our services, this book, prepared by Father John Weisengoff and Father Joseph Shary, has been of great pastoral value.

Patriarch Joseph Cardinal Slipyj published the official Ukrainian text of the Presanctified Liturgy in Rome in January 1984, but various unofficial translations have been in Ukrainian Catholic use for a dozen years or more.

[69] *Leiturgiarion,* (Kievo-Pecherska Lavra, 1629), p. 227. This practice continued at the Monastery of the Caves until the Soviets expelled the monks in the 1920s.

[70] but not on Saturdays or Sundays, nor on the Feast of the Annunciation.

[71] *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches,* canon 715, § 2.

[72] on Cheese-Fare Sunday and Palm Sunday.

[73] on the First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Great Lent.

[74] Saint Cyprian of Carthage, Treatise IV, *On the Lord's Prayer,* 18.

[75] The Book of Psalms, from the Bible, is traditionally divided into twenty sections. Each section is called a "Kathisma."

[76] 119-133.

[77] Psalms 140, 141, 129 and 116.

[78] the book of the sanctoral cycle, in twelve volumes, available in Greek and in Church-Slavonic; some portions are available in English from Saint Gregory's Seminary, Newton, Massachusetts.

[79] On the first three days of Holy Week, on other days when there would be a Gospel lesson during the Presanctified Liturgy, and always if the bishop is the main celebrant, the Gospel Book is carried in the Little Entrance.

[80] *Svite Tykhii.*

[81] Saint Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit,* chapter 29, § 73.

[82] e.g. *The Book of Alternative Services,* Anglican Church of Canada, 1985, Evening Prayer, p. 61.

[83] John 1:9.

[84] Robert F. Taft, *The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West; The Origins of the Divine Office and Its Meaning for Today,* Liturgical Press, Collegeville, 1986, p. 286.

[85] As I shall mention below, other books are read during Holy Week.

[86] in Ukrainian usage this is often a small triple-candle, symbolic of the Holy Trinity. This usage of a triple-candle was at one time widespread among the Slavs. Cf. Rafael Turkoniak, *Liturhiia Prezhdeosvyashchenikh Dariv v Ukrainskij Tserkvi,* (Opera Universitatis Catholicæ Ucrainorum, Rome, 1990), Vol. 78, p.78.

[87] Theodoret of Cyrus, in the fifth century, wrote that when this psalm is chanted there is an incensation. J. Mateos, *Quelques anciens documents sur l'office du soir,* in *Orientalia Christiana Periodica,* vol. 35 (1969), pp. 371-372.

[88] Taft, *Liturgy of the Hours,* pp. 224 & 275.

[89] Very few service books mention it, but there is an increasingly popular custom to recite the Prayer of Saint Ephrem with these prostrations.

[90] on a few saints' days, such as the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste, after *Let My Prayer Arise* we read the appropriate Epistle and Gospel for the feast. On the first three days of Holy Week, there is a Gospel lesson, but no Epistle.

[91] Romans 7:5.

[92] first prayer of the faithful, translation from *Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts.* Diocese of Parma, 1987, p. 27.

[93] Psalm 23:7.

[94] second prayer of the faithful, translation from *Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts,* Diocese of Parma, 1987, p. 28.

[95] This is one of the relatively few moments when the Byzantine Liturgy calls for silence.

[96] In some places there is a custom to offer the Prayer of Saint Ephrem here. There is no great harm in this practice, but I consider that the prostrations in silence, as prescribed by the service-books, are more appropriate to this particular moment.

[97] John 6:56.

[98] 2 Timothy 4:7.

[99] the Second Council of Nicea.

[100] Pope John Paul II begins his decree of promulgation of the *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches* by reminding us that "The Fathers gathered in the seventh ecumenical council in 787 A.D. at Nicea. The legates sent by my predecessor, Hadrian I, presided." John Paul II, *Sacri Canones,* October 18, 1990.

[101] Kondak, feast of the Ascension.

[102] cf. OL, particularly § 6.

[103] OL § 9 c.

[104] *Anthologion,* [in Greek], volume II, Sacred Oriental Congregation, Rome, 1974, pp. 1607-1616.

[105] Jaroslav Pelikan, *Confessor Between East and West* (Eerdmans 1990), p. 228.

[106] *Lenten Triodion,* (Uniontown, Pennsylvania 1995), pp. 229.

[107] from the Prosomion "Having beheld the Resurrection of Christ," sung on all Sundays except Palm Sunday.

[108] attributed to Saint Theodore the Studite.

[109] Saint Hippolytus of Rome, *Paschal History,* PG. 59, 735-746; also in *Sources Chretiennes,* 27, 117-191.

[110] Galatians 6:14.

[111] In the Roman Catacombs Christian artists painted the Cross in the midst of flowers. In Greece and the Middle East, the Christians also adorn the Cross with fragrant herbs.

[112] Kondak, Third Sunday of Lent; translation mine.

[113] Saint John Chrysostom, *Sermon on Pascha,* PG. 46.

[114] in addition to the third week of Great Lent, there is also the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross on September 14, and the lesser Feast of the Holy Cross on August 1, nor on Sunday until the end of Vespers on Sunday evening

[115] OL § 9 f & g.

[116] in parish usage.

[117] Besides the *Lenten Triodion,* the text of the Great Canon is available in pamphlet form, both in English (although in an archaic translation) and in modern Ukrainian.

[118] in parish usage the Akathistos service itself takes place on Friday evening.

[119] for the full text of this service, which was offered in Church-Slavonic, Greek, and Arabic, cf. *Liturgie dell'Oriente Cristiano a Roma nell'Anno Mariano 1987-88,* Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1990, pp. 329-465; the Holy Father's homily for the service follows, pp. 466-469.

[120] many elements in our calendar and service-books come from the monastery of Saint Sabbas.

[121] OL § 9 e.

[122] Matthew 28:9 – text as in Hippolytus.

[123] Saint Hippolytus of Rome, *op. cit.*

[124] Sunday evening Vespers, third prosomion at *Lord, I have cried.*

[125] Jesus recounts the parable or history of Lazarus the beggar in Luke 16:19-31.

[126] Monday of Palm Week, Canon, Ode 9 (*Lenten Triodion* p. 462).

[127] Tuesday of Palm Week, Sessional Hymn 3 (*Lenten Triodion* p. 465).

[128] Tuesday of Palm Week, Vespers, third prosomion at *Lord, I have cried* (*Lenten Triodion* p. 471).

[129] Wednesday of Palm Week, Sessional Hymn 3 (*Lenten Triodion* p. 472).

[130] Wednesday of Palm Week, Canon Ode 3 (*Lenten Triodion* p. 473).

[131] Thursday of Palm Week, Canon Ode 8 (*Lenten Triodion* p. 482).

[132] Thursday of Palm Week, Canon Ode 9 (*Lenten Triodion* p. 483).

[133] Thursday of Palm Week, Vespers, second prosomion at *Lord, I have cried* (*Lenten Triodion* p. 485).

[134] Friday of Palm Week, Canon Ode 8 (*Lenten Triodion* p. 489).

[135] Friday of Palm Week, first prosomion at *Lord, I have cried.*

[136] during Holy Week itself, only the Feast of the Annunciation – should it occur then – may be celebrated; during Bright Week only Saint George the Victory-Bearer may be celebrated.

[137] priests will, of course, visit the sick, and there is a special order for the conduct of funerals during these two weeks. Anniversaries, however, are postponed until after Bright Week.

[138] we read the seventeenth kathisma (Psalm 118) and chant the Sunday hymns after it with the refrain *Blessed are You, O Lord, teach me Your statutes;* there is no Gospel lesson but we sing *Having beheld the Resurrection of Christ,* and we sing *Holy is the Lord* for the Hymn of Light. There is a Great Doxology.

[139] John 11:1-45.

[140] in many places it is customary to read the Gospel of the raising of Lazarus at funeral services, even at the graveside.

[141] Lazarus Saturday, Canon, Ode 1 (*Lenten Triodion,* p. 504).

[142] Lazarus Saturday, Sessional Hymn (*Lenten Triodion,* p. 506).

[143] Lazarus Saturday, Canon, Ode 9 (*Lenten Triodion,* p. 512).

[144] Matthew 9:18-26.

[145] Luke 7:11-17.

[146] Luke 8:40-42, 49-56.

[147] John 11:40. -

[148] John 11:15.

[149] John 11:42.

[150] Lazarus Saturday and Palm Sunday, Apolytikion – Tropar.

[151] John 11:39.

[152] John 11:35.

[153] cf. Kondak of Lazarus Saturday, *Lenten Triodion,* (translation of Kallistos Ware and Mother Mary, Faber) p. 483.

[154] so far as I am aware, Lazarus Saturday is the only occasion when the Slavonic Typikon specifically mentions the eating of caviar! S. V. Bulgakov, *Nastol'naya Knyha*, Kharkiv 1900, [reprinted Graz, Austria 1965] p.528.

[155] Genesis 49:10-11.

[156] Zephaniah 3:15-17.

[157] Zechariah 9:9.

[158] In Ukraine and some other Slavic countries it became customary to bless pussy-willow branches because palm branches were not available; most of our parishes in the emigration retain this custom. In Greece and the Middle East, actual palm branches are used.

[159] Palm Sunday evening Vespers, Aposticha.

[160] Matthew 21:18-43.

[161] Matthew 24: 3-35.

[162] Matthew 22:15-23:39.

[163] Matthew 24:36-26:2.

[164] John 12:17-50.

[165] John 12:43.

[166] Matthew 26:6-16.

[167] whom evidently Jesus had healed, or he could not have lived in a town.

[168] Luke 7:36-50.

[169] John 12:3-8.

[170] the "eighth hour" according to the Typikon.

[171] AD 418, canon XLVIII.

[172] AD 691, canon XXIX.

[173] 1988 edition, Basilian Press, Toronto, pp. 266-275.

[174] Isaias 50:4-11.

[175] I Corinthians 11:23-32.

[176] Matthew 26:2-20; John 13:3-17; Matthew 26:21-39; Luke 22:43-45; Matthew 26:40-27:2.

[177] *Egeria's Travels to the Holy Land,* John Wilkinson, editor, Warminster, England, Aris & Phillips, 1981.

[178] *Adv. hær.* IV, 20:5, PG. 7, 1035.

[179] from the practice of chanting "Alleluia" instead of "The Lord is God" at Matins on weekdays of Great Lent the rubrics of service-books developed the practice of writing "if there is Alleluia" to mean "if it is Lent."

[180] This is prescribed for Tone 8, but in practice special music is always used. There are some splendid composed settings for choirs. The *Molytvoslov,* Basilian Press, Rome-Toronto 1990, pp. 557-559 gives the Galician chant in Ukrainian translation.

[181] I shall not give the references for the Gospel lessons here; they are complex. There is an alternate system for parish use, which is not as lengthy and which provides a continuous account of the Passion.

[182] The only possible exception occurs when the Feast of the Annunciation falls on Good Friday.

[183] The same occurs on Christmas Eve and Theophany Eve. The Triodion attributes the Royal Hours of Good Friday to Saint Cyril of Alexandria.

[184] Vespers, first prosomion at *Lord, I have cried.*

[185] I Corinthians 1:18.

[186] We chant the Aposticha to a very popular "special melody," a variation of Tone 2. The final verse has a beautiful elaborate melody in the Irmologion, pp. 538-542.

[187] if there are sufficient priests, two or four priests will carry the Shroud and the senior priest or the bishop will carry the Gospel Book. In parishes, where there is normally only one priest, pious lay people carry the Shroud.

[188] Plaschanytsa.

[189] At this point there is a custom to have a procession around the outside of the church with the Shroud in some places, especially in churches where Jerusalem Matins is not celebrated.

[190] Isidore Dol'nyt'skyj, Typyka Tserkve Rusko-Katolicheskyja, L'viv, 1899, p. 421 §7 [in Church-Slavonic]; Ukrainian translation *Typyk Ukrainskoji Tserkvy,* Edizioni dei Pp. Basiliani, Rome, 1992, p. 372.

[191] There are many local variations in the bringing of the Shroud from the altar. Isidore Dol'nyt'skyj, Typyk, (1899) pp. 444-449; Typyk (1992), pp. 394-398 discusses several different practices. The above

description of the ceremony does not indicate any opposition to the customs of particular places.

[192] Father David M. Petras, *Typikon 1996*, Pittsburgh 1995.

[193] John, 18:14.

[194] John, 18:38.

[195] The Typikon suggests 1:00 AM, so that the Great Doxology will greet the dawn, but this is impractical in parishes, so the service takes place on Good Friday night.

[196] *Lenten Triodion*, p. 633.

[197] *ibid.* p. 638.

[198] *ibid.* p. 634.

[199] *ibid.* p. 637.

[200] Job 41:1.

[201] Saint Gregory the Great, Pope of Rome, homily on John 20:11-18, *Patrologia Latina*, 76, 1188-1196.

[202] The *Molytvoslov*, Basilian Press, Rome-Toronto 1990, pp. 602-616 gives a musical setting of several verses of this chant in modern Ukrainian.

[203] *Lenten Triodion*, p. 652.

[204] *ibid.* p. 656 (here and elsewhere I have corrected the translation).

[205] *ibid.* p. 656; Ode 5, Hirmos; Isaias 26:19.

[206] *ibid.* p. 658.

[207] Psalms 148, 149, and 150, always chanted at the end of Matins

[208] Genesis 2:3.

[209] St. Gregory of Nyssa, "On the Three-Day Interval between the Lord's Death and Resurrection" in *The Easter Sermons of Gregory of Nyssa*, trans. Andreas Spira and Cristoph Klock, Patristic Monograph Series, 9; Cambridge: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1981. St. Gregory here refers to John 11:25 and Luke 1:79.

[210] Dol'nyt'skyj, Typyk (1899), p. 451; (1992), p. 400.

[211] Dol'nyt'skyj, Typyk (1899), pp. 453; (1992), p. 402. Also, Petras, *Typikon 1996*, p. 29. In some places this procession does not go outside, but is done like the Little Entrance at the Divine Liturgy.

[212] Ezekiel 37:1-14.

[213] Ezekiel 37:12 & 14.

[214] I Corinthians 5:6-8, and Galatians 3:13-14.

[215] I Corinthians 5:6-8.

[216] Psalm 67:2.

[217] Matthew 27:62-66.

[218] Saint Gregory of Nyssa, Paschal sermon, *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 46, pp. 681-684.

[219] In cases of emergency it was always possible to baptize on any day, but the Church preferred to baptize on Holy Saturday, at this service.

[220] Holy Saturday is the *only* Saturday in the year when strict fasting and abstinence are permitted.

[221] Apostles' Creed

[222] Genesis 1:1-13.

[223] Exodus 12:1-11.

[224] Exodus 13:20-15:19.

[225] Exodus 14:13.

[226] III(I) Kings 17:8-24.

[227] Genesis 22:1-18.

[228] Isaias 61: 1-9.

[229] IV(II) Kings 4:8-37.

[230] Isaias 63: 19b.

[231] Jeremias 31:31-34.

[232] Daniel 3:1-57.

[233] Apocalypse 21:1.

[234] Romans 6:3-11

[235] Liturgikon (Ruthenian Recension), Rome 1942, pp. 622-623

[236] Dol'nyt'skyj, Typikon (1899), pp. 455; (1992), p. 404.

[237] Matthew 28:1-20.

[238] *Liturgicon* (Ruthenian Recension), Rome 1942, p. 141

[239] we adorn the Tomb with abundant flowers to signify that this Tomb is a place of life,

[240] Exodus 14:13.

[241] on this entire theme, cf. Louis Bouyer, *The Meaning of Sacred Scripture*, University of Notre Dame Press, 1958.

[242] In Church-Slavonic there are several settings for *Let all mortal flesh*, both for chant and for harmony. In English there is a nice metrical setting in many hymnals.

[243] while our faithful are accustomed to receiving a festal blessing at Easter, this is not necessarily accomplished by the traditional use of oil on this occasion. It is our practice for the faithful to come forward to kiss the hand cross, the Holy Gospel, holy icons, and the Artos, held by the priests.

[244] The prayers for the blessing of the Paschal foods are found in Ukrainian in the Malyj Trebnyk, Rome 1973, pp. 317-318, and in English in *The Small Trebnyk or Abbreviated Euchologion*, [Father Joseph Shary, editor], St. Joseph's Institute, Detroit, 1983, pp. 387-388.

[245] cf. *Molytvoslov*, Basilian Press, Rome-Toronto 1990, p. 660.

[246] as at the Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts, in some places the priest uses a triple-candle for this procession.

[247] The Roman edition of the Ruthenian Recension *Liturgikon*, 1942, pp. 141 & 143, assumes that all are carrying candles in this procession.

[248] Dol'nyt'sky, Typikon (1899), pp. 462; Typyk (1992), p. 410, mentions that this is practiced among the Greeks.

[249] The Cathedral of the Holy Wisdom (Saint Sophia) in Kyiv has an eleventh-century fresco of the Descent into Hades; there is a color illustration of this fresco in *Art of Kievan Rus'*, Kyiv, Mystetsvo 1989, plate 22. The fourteenth-century Kyiv Psalter has three color miniatures of the Descent into Hades, on pages 8a, *31 recto*, and *87 verso*. [A full color facsimile edition of the 1397 Kyivan Psalter was printed in 1978 by the Kossuth typography, Budapest.] A particularly fine fifteenth-century example of this Icon from Holy Protection Church, Poliana, L'viv region, Ukraine, is now in the collection of the Ukrainian National Museum, L'viv, and appears as plate XXXVIII, in color, in *Ukrainian Medieval Painting*, Lohvyn, Milyaeva, and Sventsitska, editors, Mystetsvo, Kyiv, 1976. Sviatoslav Hordynsky, *The Ukrainian Icon of the XIIth to XVIIIth Centuries*, Walter Dushnyck, translator, Providence Association, Philadelphia, gives a black-and-white illustration of such an Icon from the late sixteenth century, originally in Vizhomla, L'viv region, and now in the Ukrainian National Museum, L'viv (plate 86), and a second black-and-white illustration of another such Icon, also from the late sixteenth century, originally in Nakonechne near Yavoriv, collected by the Museum of the L'viv Theological Academy and now in the Ukrainian National Museum, L'viv (plate 149). A folk icon of the Descent into Hades from the seventeenth century appears in V. I. Sventsits'ka and V. P. Otkovych, *Ukrainian Folk Painting of the 13th-20th Centuries*, Kyiv, Mystetsvo, 1991, plate 69; this seems to have been painted in Polessia and is now in the Ukrainian National Museum, L'viv. A color illustration of a large fresco-icon of the same theme appears in *The Iconography of Saint Nicholas Church*, St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Parish, Toronto, Ontario, 1977, p. 35.

[250] In the Pennsylvania coal regions the Ukrainian Catholic faithful who worked in the mines used to set dynamite charges, so that the very

mountains boomed out the news of the Resurrection!

[251] the *Pentecostarion* attributes this Canon to Saint John of Damascus. *Pentecostarion*, Sisters of the Order of St. Basil the Great, Uniontown, Pennsylvania, 1986, p. 3.

[252] Much of this Paschal Canon of Saint John of Damascus appears in metrical versions in English hymnals of the various Western Christian Churches.

[253] Ode III, Paschal Canon. This tropar, like much of the Paschal Canon, is based on Saint Gregory Nazianzen, *First Oration on Pascha.*

[254] The music for the Paschal Canon is *not* found in the Irmologion, probably on the premise that everyone knew it by heart! The Galician chant for the Paschal Canon appears in Ioanne de Castro, *Methodus Cantus Ecclesiastici Graeco-Slavici*, Propaganda Fide, Rome, 1881, pp. 154-171; there is a setting of the music in modern Ukrainian in the *Molytvoslov*, Basilian Press, Rome-Toronto 1990, pp. 637-648. In Ukrainian practice, the tropars of each Ode of the Paschal Canon are to be sung, not read. The Irmologion (p. 549) does give a setting of the Refrain of the Ninth Ode.

[255] Liturgikon (Ruthenian Recension), Rome 1942, p. 147. The service-books prescribe a small synapte after each Ode of the Canon. We permit the omission of these small synaptes if the pastor so chooses.

[256] This Canon, like most Canons, is a poem of eight stanzas (number 1-9, with no second stanza). Each stanza, called an Ode, has an opening verse, called an *Heirmos*, and several verses, called tropars.

[257] Father Kenneth Olsen and Mr. Joseph Roll have published a pamphlet edition of Resurrection Matins in English with all the music according to Galician chant.

[258] the original Church-Slavonic setting appears in the Irmologion, pp. 549-550; a setting of the same melody in modern Ukrainian appears in the *Molytvoslov*, Basilian Press, Rome-Toronto 1990, p. 649.

[259] Dol'nyt'skyj *Typyk* (1899), pp. 465-467; (1992), pp. 412-414, notes that the practice of everyone exchanging the Paschal kiss is stated in the liturgical text and prescribed in the Pochaiv Pentecostarion (1786), but that this was not practiced in Dol'nyt'skyj's time. Michael Schudlo, C.Ss.R., *My Savior, Byzantine Ukrainian Sunday and Holy Day Missal*, Redeemer's Voice Press, Yorkton, Saskatchewan, Canada, 1960, p. 905, indicates that all the faithful kiss one another at this point in Resurrection Matins.

[260] a slightly abridged Ukrainian translation of this sermon appears in the *Molytvoslov*, Basilian Fathers Press, Rome-Toronto 1990, pp. 655-658. An English translation appears in *Byzantine Daily Worship*.

[261] *Liturgicon*, [Ruthenian Recension], Rome 1942, p. 153.

[262] Psalm 117, v. 24.

[263] Ode IX.

[264] The original Greek reads *ecclesia*, and this is considered a reference to a *eucharistic* assembly.

[265] Hebrews 12:22-25a.

[266] Hebrews 12:28-29.

[267] Acts 1:1-8.

[268] variant reading noted in Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition, Catholic Truth Society, London, 1965, p. 110 (New Testament); the Jerusalem Bible, Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1966, p. 200 (New Testament), gives "when He had been at table with them." Cf. also Nestle, Novum Testamentum Græce, editio octava, Stuttgart 1910, p. 297, and *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, (n.d.) p. 600. Our preferred reading is also supported by the Church-Slavonic version: *Apostol*, Stauropegion, L'viv 1906, p. 1 [Church-Slavonic pagination] and many other Church-Slavonic editions, and the Douay-Rheims Version, *The Holy Bible*, Douay Bible House, New York 1944, p. 118 (New Testament).

[269] John 1:1-17.

[270] this may either be a seal pressed into the loaf before it is baked, or a painted icon which rests over the loaf while it is in church.

[271] as we call the week of Holy Pascha.

[272] according to the service-books. In many parishes of the diaspora, we keep this second blessing and sharing of the *Artos*, for the following day, Saint Thomas Sunday, and we have a parish dinner after the Divine Liturgy.

[273] *Statutes of the Archeparchy of Philadelphia*, enacted and promulgated by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Constantine Bohachevsky, S.T.D., Archbishop of Philadelphia, Metropolitan Chancery, Philadelphia, Penna., 1959, Canon 469, p. 129 (English edition).

FOR FURTHER READING

1. *Lenten Triodion*, Uniontown, Pennsylvania 1995.

I mentioned this edition above. The translators are not named; this book contains virtually no explanatory material or rubrics, although the appendix gives an outline of Matins and the First, Third, Sixth and Ninth Hours. The translation is done in good, clear, modern American English, and reads easily; it seems to have been influenced by Father Denis Guillaume's French translation. In publishing this book the Sisters of Saint Basil the Great have done the Church a great service.

2. [Saint] Gregory Palamas, *The Triads*, edited with an introduction by John Meyendorff, translation by Nicholas Gendle, preface by Jaroslav Pelikan, Paulist Press, Mahwah, N.J., 1983.

The front cover shows an icon of Saint Gregory by Mother Maria of the Holy Spirit, Superior of the Holy Annunciation Byzantine Catholic Carmelite Monastery, Sugarloaf, Pennsylvania.

3. [Saint] John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, translation by Colm Luibheid and Norman Russell, introduction by Kallistos Ware, Paulist Press, New York, 1982.

4. *Easter in the Early Church — An Anthology of Jewish and Early Christian Texts*, selected, annotated, and introduced by Raniero Cantalamessa [English translation and editing by James M. Quigley, S.J., and Joseph T. Lienhard, S.J.], Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1993. This collection is a priceless treasure-trove of patristic quotes on the Paschal tradition.

SOME PRACTICAL GUIDELINES

1. As I mentioned, many priests would gladly have a fuller schedule of services during Great Lent if they were sure of support from the faithful. To express that support, we may do such things as this:

a) make a commitment to attend the services on specific dates and times. When the priest knows that he can rely on a certain number of faithful to be present, he feels strongly encouraged.

b) learn the services well, and prepare them in advance, so that the priest knows that he will not have to read and chant everything himself.

c) be responsive to the priest's leadership: Father knows

how much time is available for a given service and how the monastic form can be abbreviated for parish usage. There is considerable variety in these matters, so do not be surprised if different priests do things a little differently.

d) be generous in the matter of language. It is difficult enough to hold one set of Lenten services. Holding two sets, one exclusively in Ukrainian and the other exclusively in English, is a proposal that no priest would welcome! Our priests do their best to accommodate the needs of Ukrainian-speakers and the needs of English-speakers. If each contingent will appreciate that we *all* truly love the Church, it would make it easier to work together.

e) organize some special music. As I have written before, I am proud of the outstanding choirs in our diocese. I have mentioned above a few of the many beautiful pieces of choral music for the Triodion period, for Holy Week and Pascha. A good parish choir can do much for the Lenten services by learning to sing them. During Holy Week, this can be magnificent. It takes effort, but the effort will be abundantly rewarded by the results!

The same applies to our chanters: the special music for Lent, Holy Week, and Pascha requires careful preparation. If this liturgical chant is done well, the worship is significantly enhanced. If, however, the chanting is careless, the faithful will be seriously disedified.

2. Confessions: our faithful come to confession in impressive numbers during Great Lent. To accommodate the faithful, I ask the priests to make known the schedule for the hearing of confessions well ahead of time, so that people may plan accordingly. I encourage all the pastors to have a Lenten Mission, and invite one or more visiting priests, depending on the size of the parish, to hear the confessions of the faithful (and I ask all our priests to be as generous as possible in accepting invitations to visit neighboring parishes to hear confessions).

I also ask the faithful to be considerate of the priests. Especially during Lent, the priest has many responsibilities. If at all possible, try not to come to confession on Sunday mornings before the Divine Liturgy. Above all, try to come to confession by the middle of Lent. Some priests even announce that confessions cannot be heard during the final days of Holy Week. I regret this, but I must acknowledge that especially if a priest is serving more than one parish it is unreasonable to expect him to hear a number of confessions on what are already his busiest days of the year.

3. Services for the dead: as I have mentioned above, our faithful appreciate these traditional prayers for the dead. I ask all our priests to do their very best to hold these services, and to encourage the faithful to participate in them. I ask the faithful to prepare their lists of names for commemoration carefully and legibly. Usually each family submits a combined list of the paternal and maternal branches.

Christ Is Risen!

Truly He Is Risen!