

**T**HE PERIOD OF GREAT LENT is a special and important phase of the Church's Liturgical Cycle. It is a forty-day period set aside for reflection, repentance, prayer and fasting. It is an opportunity for each of us Christians to re-evaluate our relationship with God, our brothers and sisters, and ourselves.



This year, Great Lent begins on **Monday, February 24, 2020** (on the Gregorian calendar). The Church shares with us Sundays of preparation prior to its start. This is done in order for us not to be overwhelmed with the abrupt changes that will take place during the Lenten Season.

This introduction period into The Great Lent is known as "Triodion." The Triodion is a large book containing scripture readings and hymns from the period of four weeks before the beginning of Great Lent to the morning service of Holy Saturday. The scripture lessons the first three weeks of Triodion introduce to us various themes, ideas, and ways in which we can be active participants during the Fast, and experience the Resurrection of Christ with great faith and vigor.

This year, the **Feast of the Presentation of our Lord into the Temple** falls on the first Sunday of the Triodion, February 2. It is also the **Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee**; before we begin the season of self-denial, we recall that it is futile to boast of our abstinence. The Publican's model of humility and repentance be our aim.

The next Sunday, February 9, we will hear the story of the **Prodigal Son**, perhaps the most beloved parable. The icon of this scene shows the son in worn clothing, with his feet in rags; he cradles his sorry head in one hand, while stretching the other tentatively toward Jesus. There is nothing tentative about Jesus' response – he is running toward the son, his arms open to embrace, and a scroll tumbles from his hand: "For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." Here we are being called to be reconciled with God.

By the third Sunday, February 16, we have reached a watershed. The Gospel reading focuses on the Last Judgment and pulls no punches. Here we must examine our relationship with our brothers and sisters. How can we say we love God and despise our fellow human being? Our Lord is explicit when He tells us "What you have done (or not done) to the least of my brothers and sisters, you have done (or not done to me) visit the sick and imprisoned, clothe the naked, and feed the hungry." This day is also called "**Meat-fare Sunday**," the last day, in earlier times, when meat was consumed.

The last Sunday of the Triodion, February 23, is called "**Cheese-fare Sunday**," The tone of the day is centred around forgiveness. It is on this day we are reminded that if we want to experience the love and forgiveness of God, we must show that same spirit to our brothers and sisters. Also known as "Forgiveness Sunday", it asks us to look within ourselves, and to really examine, to see if we are exiled from God.

## Celebrating Our Deep Faith

Byzantine Catholic Worship: *Our Church, Its Customs and Rich Heritage*

### The Commandments and the Christian

**J**ESUS WAS BROUGHT UP on the Ten Commandments and knew them by heart. He insisted many times that His followers obey them (e.g. Matthew 19:16-19; Mark 10:17-19; Lk 18: 18-20, etc.). Obeying the commandments means gaining eternal life, as Jesus bluntly told the Jewish lawyer, but He saw them not simply as rigid rules to be kept out of fear, but as a step toward a totally new concept - **the law of love**: "If you love Me you will keep My commandments" (John 18:15). Love, therefore, should always prompt our obedience, a love that is always eager to fulfill not merely the commands but the wishes of the Lord. These we will find in all of the New Testament, especially in the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus taught the incomparable Beatitudes:

*"Blessed (happy) are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed (happy) are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.*

*Blessed (happy) are the meek, for they will inherit the land.*

*Blessed (happy) are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.*

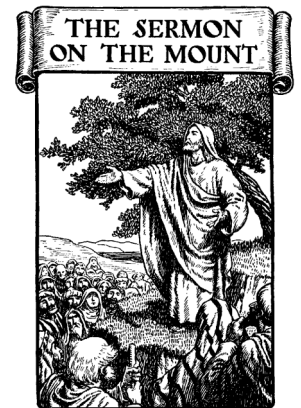
*Blessed (happy) are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.*

*Blessed (happy) are the pure of heart, for they will see God.*

*Blessed (happy) are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons (children) of God.*

*Blessed (happy) are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed (happy) are you when they insult you and persecute you, and utter every kind of evil word against you because of Me." (Matthew 5:3-11).*



Love, of course, prompts all the sublime dispositions which Jesus praises here. Love's only concerns are the many ways, great and small, which will strengthen and deepen our relationship, our participation in God's life. Love is proved by doing as much as we can for the Beloved. Jesus' whole life was spent for the sake of others, for us.

# DIVINE LITURGY 101:

## The Hymn of the Incarnation

**ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON AND IMMORTAL WORD OF GOD**, sometimes called Justinian's Hymn or The Hymn of the Incarnation, is sung after the first (and second) Antiphon at each Divine Liturgy in the Byzantine Catholic and Orthodox Church.



The holy right-believing sovereign Emperor Justinian I (527 to 565) devoted much attention and effort to the struggle with Origenists [see note 1] of his time, who then were reviving the Nestorian heresy [see note 2]. To counter their heretical speculations, the Church hymn "Only-Begotten Son and Immortal Word of God, Who for our salvation..." was composed. Emperor Justinian commanded that the hymn be sung in all the churches. This hymn is sung at the Divine Liturgy before the Little Entrance after the first (or second) Antiphon from that time to the present day.

The hymn is very theological, composed in honour of the incarnate Jesus Christ. The hymn also served to clearly respond to multiple heresies that plagued the Church such as the meaning of the incarnation, changelessness of God, resurrection, and Trinitarian theology. It sets forth the orthodox teaching on the Second Person of the Trinity. He being the Only-begotten (one in essence) Son and Word of God, being immortal, became man, without ceasing to be God, and accepted a human body from the Holy Theotokos (God-bearer) and ever-virgin Mary. By His crucifixion, He with His death conquered death, "trampling down death by death," as one of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity, and is glorified equally with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

The hymn praises the true God as He revealed Himself to be, and as He has offered salvation to mankind. Here it is in the modern Ukrainian language.

*Єдинородний Сину і Слове Божий, безсмертний Ти, і зволив Ти  
спасіння нашого ради воплотитися від святої Богородиці і  
приснодіви Марії, незмінно ставши чоловіком. І розп'ятий був Ти,  
Христе Боже, смертю смерть подолав. Ти один з Святої Тройці,  
рівнославимий з Отцем і Святим Духом, спаси нас.*

- 1) Origen of Alexandria<sup>[a]</sup> (c. 184 – c. 253), also known as Origen Adamantius, was an early Christian scholar, ascetic, and theologian who was born and spent the first half of his career in Alexandria. He was a prolific writer who wrote roughly 2,000 treatises in multiple branches of theology, including textual criticism, biblical exegesis and biblical hermeneutics, homiletics, and spirituality. He was one of the most influential figures in early Christian theology, apologetics, and asceticism. He has been described as "the greatest genius the early church ever produced".
- 2) Nestorian heresy opposes the concept of hypostatic union (one individual existence) and emphasizes that the two natures (human and divine) of Jesus Christ were joined by will rather than personhood.

## Christian Living in February

**THE GREAT AMERICAN STATESMAN**, Daniel Webster believed in the importance of the distribution and reading of Christian literature. The month of February (when you're snuggled up inside on a cold winter's night or weekend) is a good opportunity to call attention to the importance of good Christian literature and audio and video resources.

Because we are forgetful, we need reminders to do those things that are most beneficial to us. Sometimes reminders of good eating habits or good health practices are welcomed promptings of what we should be doing. When living in a dark world, it is easy — in the natural or carnal self — to allow ourselves to become accustomed to the darkness, but God calls Christians to shine the light of His truth upon our world. To accomplish this, we must see have the light before we are capable of sharing the light, and outstanding Christian reading materials help us to both see and share.

Here are twelve books that merit your attention...

- 1) **My Heart — Christ's Home** by Robert Boyd Munger
- 2) **In His Steps** by Charles Sheldon
- 3) **The Pursuit of God** by A.W. Tozer
- 4) **The Disciplined Life** by Robert Shelly Taylor
- 5) **Book of Martyrs** by John Foxe
- 6) **Mere Christianity** by C.S. Lewis
- 7) **Knowing God Intimately** by Joyce Meyer
- 8) **The Pilgrim's Progress** by John Bunyan
- 9) **Holy Living and Dying** by Jeremy Taylor
- 10) **A Plain Account of Christian Perfection** by John Wesley
- 11) **God's Plan of Salvation** by James Barr Walker
- 12) **Church History** translated by Dr. Paul L. Maier



The Catholic Pastoral Centre (R.C. Diocese of Thunder Bay), 1222 Reaume St. (behind the police station) has a large selection of materials as well. There you can shop at the 4 Seasons Gift Shop for some interesting items, too!

"If religious books are not widely circulated among the masses in this country, I do not know what is going to become of us as a nation. If truth be not diffused, then error will be. If God and His Word are not known and received, the devil and his works will gain the ascendancy. If the evangelical volume does not reach every hamlet, the pages of a corrupt and licentious literature will. If the power of the Gospel is not felt throughout the length and breadth of this land, anarchy and misrule, degradation and misery, corruption and darkness will reign without mitigation or end.

~ Daniel Webster