



St Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

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Week of March 30, 2025

Sunday, March 30

Fourth Sunday of Great Lent. **Tone 7.** St John Climacus.

8:30am - Sunday Matins

9:30am - Divine Liturgy

11:30am - Agape meal (coffee hour)

~~6:00pm - Lenten Vespers~~ *canceled*

This Sunday's Hymns and Readings

Tone 7 **Troparion** *(Resurrection)*

By Thy Cross Thou didst destroy death. To the thief Thou didst open Paradise. For the Myrrhbearers Thou didst change weeping into joy, and Thou didst command Thy disciples, O Christ God, to proclaim that Thou art risen, granting the world great mercy.

Tone 1 **Troparion** *(St. John Climacus)*

O dweller of the wilderness and angel in the body, thou wast a wonderworker, O our God-bearing Father John. Thou didst receive heavenly gifts through fasting, vigil, and prayer, healing the sick and the souls of those drawn to thee by faith. Glory to Him Who gave thee strength! Glory to Him Who granted thee a crown! Glory to Him Who grants healing to all!

Tone 7 **Kontakion** *(Resurrection)*

The dominion of death can no longer hold men captive, for Christ descended, shattering and destroying its powers. Hell is bound, while the Prophets rejoice and cry: "The Savior has come to those in faith; enter, you faithful, into the Resurrection!"

Tone 4 **Kontakion** *(St. John Climacus)*

The Lord truly set thee on the heights of abstinence, to be a guiding star, showing the way to the universe, O our father and teacher John.

Tone 7 **Prokeimena** *(Resurrection & St John Climacus)*

The Lord shall give strength to His people. The Lord shall bless His people with peace. *Offer to the Lord, O you sons of God! Offer young rams to the Lord!*
Let the saints exult in glory; let them sing for joy on their couches!

Epistles Hebrews 6:13-20 & Ephesians 5:9-19 *(St. John Climacus)*

Tones 7 & 4 **Alleluias**

It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to Thy Name, O Most High. To declare Thy mercy in the morning, and Thy truth by night. They that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.

Gospels Mark 9:17-31 & Matthew 4:25-5:12 *(St. John Climacus)*

This Week's Schedule

Monday, March 31. Repose of St. Innocent, Metropolitan of Moscow, Enlightener of the Aleuts, Apostle to the Americas. Appearance of the Iveron icon of the Mother of God.

Tuesday, April 1. Venerable Mary of Egypt. Venerable Barsanuphius of Optina.

- **9:30am - 11:30am Fr Silouan's office hours**

Wednesday, April 2. Venerable Titus the Wonderworker.

- **6:00pm - Matins with the Great Canon of St Andrew of Crete & the reading of the Life of St Mary of Egypt.**

Thursday, April 3. Venerable Niketas the Confessor, Abbot of Medikion. Holy Virgin Martyr Theodosia of Tyre.

- **9:30am - 11:30am Fr Silouan's office hours**

Friday, April 4. Venerable Joseph the Hymnographer. Venerable Zosimas of Palestine.

- **6:00pm - Matins with the Akathist Hymn to the Theotokos**

Saturday, April 5. 5th Saturday of Great Lent.

- **8:30am - Prospora baking at church**
- **5:00pm - 9th hour & Great Vespers**

Announcements

40th day Memorial

Sunday, March 30th, following the Divine Liturgy we will pray the Litya for the Departed for the 40-day memorial of the falling asleep of Reader Thomas Jeffrey.

This Sunday's Lenten Vespers cancelled

Fr Silouan is travelling to make his confession and will return late Monday afternoon. The last Sunday Vespers will be offered on April 6th.

Confession

If you would like to make confession during Great Lent, you may come to see Fr Silouan in his office during office hours (see the schedule) or come after Great Vespers on Saturday evening. **Note: the last opportunity for confession during Great Lent will be Friday evening, April 11 after Great Vespers for Lazarus Saturday.** Fr Silouan will resume hearing confessions the Tuesday after St Thomas Sunday, April 29. You have plenty of time to make confession before Holy Week, so please do not delay. Holy Week will be a very full time liturgically, and hearing confessions will be reserved for the catechumens to make their life confessions. **If you have any questions regarding confession and receiving holy Eucharist, please read the priest report from the annual parish meeting, which you can find on our website (stpauldenison.org) under the drop menu "Our Parish" then select "Annual Parish Meeting."**

Great Canon and reading the Life of Mary of Egypt

Wednesday April 2, we will pray the Matins service with the Canon of St Andrew and read the Life of Mary of Egypt. This service is very important in the season of Great Lent. The Life of Mary of Egypt is perhaps the example *par excellence* of repentance and transformation in Christ. It is a longer service, but you are still strongly encouraged to make the effort to come. Let's not waste the opportunities that

Great Lent affords us to come to a deeper knowledge of ourselves and of Christ and his love for mankind.

Prospora baking

Saturday, April 5, at 8:30am, Fr Silouan and Aaron Harms are going to meet in the activity center to bake the many needed loaves of prospora for the upcoming liturgies of Holy Week. Please come and put your hands to work, making this very special bread as an offering to God which He blesses and returns to us as His own body.

Orthodox Singles Event in DFW

Saints Constantine and Helen Antiochian Orthodox Church in Carrollton will soon host an Orthodox Singles Event. If you would like more details, please contact Shamassy (Deacon's wife) Vicki Mekhel at vicvic1994@gmail.com, or follow for updates and more information on their website at www.constantinehelen.com/calendar/#events

The end of Great Lent and beginning of Holy Week...

The Vespers service on Friday, April 11 marks the end of Great Lent. There will be many services and lots of particularities that maybe you all are not accustomed to yet, since this will be the first full Holy Week we have celebrated as a community.

I will email the entire parish a schedule of services with certain important notes so you will be aware of what to expect and prepare for on certain days. **Please make sure to read over it and even print it out and refer to it before each day, so you will be prepared.**

A Word from the Fathers

(Continuing from last week)

“...When the communion of the entire congregation at each Liturgy, as an act expressing their very participation in the Liturgy, ceased to be a self-evident norm and was replaced by the practice of a very infrequent, usually once-a-year communion, it became natural for the latter to be preceded by the Sacrament of Penance – i.e. confession and the reconciliation with the Church through the prayer of absolution.

This practice, and I repeat once more, a natural and self-evident one in the case of infrequent, once-a-year, communion, led to the appearance in the Church of a theory according to which the communion of laity, different in this from the communion of clergy, is *impossible* without the sacrament of penance, so that confession is an *obligatory condition* – always and in all cases – for communion. I dare to affirm that this theory (which spread mainly in the Russian Church) not only has no foundation in Tradition, but openly contradicts the Orthodox doctrine of the Church, of the Sacrament of Communion and of that of Penance.

To be convinced of that, one has to recall, be it very briefly, the essence of the Sacrament of Penance. From the very beginning this sacrament was, in the consciousness and teaching of the Church, the *sacrament of reconciliation with the Church of those excommunicated from her* and this means of those excluded from the eucharistic assembly. We know, that at first, the very strict ecclesiastical discipline allowed for only *one* such reconciliation in one's lifetime, but that later, especially after the entrance into the Church of the entire population, this discipline was somewhat relaxed. In its essence, the Sacrament of Penance, as the sacrament of reconciliation with the Church was for those only who were excommunicated from the Church for definite sins and acts clearly

defined in the canonical tradition of the Church. This is still clearly stated in the prayer of absolution: "reconcile him with Thy Holy Church in Christ Jesus Our Lord . . ." (This, incidentally, is *the* prayer of absolution, used universally. As to the second one, unknown to the Eastern Orthodox Churches – "I, unworthy priest, by the power given unto me, absolve . . ." – is of Latin origin and was adopted in our liturgical books at the time of the domination of Orthodox theology by Western theology.)

All this, however, does not mean that the "faithful," i.e. the "non-excommunicated," were considered by the Church to be *sinless*. In the first place, according to the Church's teaching, no human being is sinless, with the exception of the Most Holy Mother of God, the Theotokos. In the second place, a prayer for forgiveness and remission of sins is an integral part of the Liturgy itself (*cf.* the Prayer of the Trisagion and the two prayers "of the faithful"). Finally, the Church always considered Holy Communion itself as given "for the remission of sins." Therefore the issue here is not *sinlessness*, which no absolution can achieve, but the distinction always made by the Church between, on the one hand, the sins excommunicating a man from the Church's life of grace and, on the other hand, the "sinfulness" which is the inescapable fate of every man "living in the world and wearing flesh." The latter is, so to speak, "dissolved" in the Church's liturgy and it is this sinfulness that the Church confesses in the "prayers of the faithful" before the offering of the Holy Gifts. Before the Holy Chalice itself, at the moment of receiving the Mysteries, we ask for forgiveness of "sins voluntary and involuntary, those in word and in deed, committed knowingly or unknowingly," and we believe that, in the measure of our repentance, we receive this forgiveness.

All this means, of course, and no one really denies it, that the only real condition for partaking of the Divine Mysteries is *membership in the Church* and conversely, that membership in the Church is

fulfilled in the partaking of the sacrament of the Church. Communion is given "*for the remission of sins,*" "*for the healing of the soul and body,*" and it implies, therefore, *repentance,* the awareness of our total unworthiness, and the understanding of communion as a heavenly gift which never can be "deserved" by an earthly being. The whole meaning of preparation for communion, as established by the Church ("The Rule for Holy Communion") is not, of course, in making man feel "worthy" but, on the contrary, in revealing to him the abyss of God's mercy and love ("I am not worthy, Master and Lord . . . yet since Thou in Thy love . . . dost wish to dwell in me, in boldness I come. Thou commandest, open the gates . . . and Thou wilt come in love . . . and enlighten my darkened reasoning. *I believe that Thou wilt do this . . .*"). Before the Lord's table the only "worthiness" of the communicant is that he has been and realized his bottomless "unworthiness." This, indeed, is the beginning of salvation.

-Very Rev. Alexander Schmemmann, *Confession and Communion: A Report to the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America.*