

*Welcome to St. Olympia Orthodox Church,  
a young and, God willing, growing community of worshipers.*

*Fr. Nikolay Khalimonov, Priest-in-Charge, 323-851-7989, nkhalimonov@yahoo.com  
Fr. Alexy Karlgut, Dean/Administrator, 607-759-1833*

*Please join us for prayer and fellowship.*

**Upcoming Services:**  
**Saturday, Feb 25, Mar 4**  
**Great Vespers: 5pm**

**Sunday, Feb 26, Mar 5**  
**Divine Liturgy: 10am**

**Coffee and fellowship will  
follow the service**

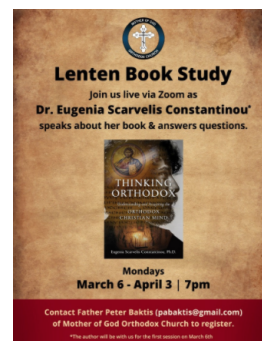
*The above services are at St.  
Olympia Church  
34 North Main Street  
Norwood, NY, 13668*

*Mailing Address  
St. Olympia Orthodox Church  
PO Box 122 Canton, NY13617*

## **Sunday of the Expulsion of Adam from Paradise February 26**



**Divine Liturgy  
with the service of Forgiveness immediately following!**



### **Recommended by our Dean, Father Alexey!**

As we begin our Lenten journey, let us keep the fast by also enriching our souls. Please join us by Zoom for this Lenten Book Study on **Thinking Orthodox** by Eugenia Constantinou. The study will happen on Mondays, March 6-April 3 at 7 pm. Although there is no charge, you must register to participate by e-mailing Fr. Peter Baktis at [pabaktis@gmail.com](mailto:pabaktis@gmail.com). Those of you who have heard the author's podcasts on Ancient Faith Radio know how knowledgeable and insightful she is. She will join the study for the first session with the remaining sessions being led by Fr. Baktis. We hope to see you there!

## Beginning of Great Lent

In the Orthodox Church, the last Sunday before Great Lent—the day on which, at Vespers, Lent is liturgically announced and inaugurated—is called Forgiveness Sunday. On the morning of that Sunday, at the Divine Liturgy, we hear the words of Christ:

**“If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses...”** (Mark 6:14-15).

Then after Vespers—after hearing the announcement of Lent in the Great Prokeimenon: “Turn not away Thy face from Thy child, for I am afflicted! Hear me speedily! Draw near unto my soul and deliver it!”, after making our entrance into Lenten worship, with its special melodies, with the prayer of Saint Ephraim the Syrian, with its prostrations—we ask forgiveness from each other, we perform the rite of forgiveness and reconciliation. And as we approach each other with words of reconciliation, the choir intones the Paschal hymns, filling the church with the anticipation of Paschal joy.

What is the meaning of this rite? Why is it that the Church wants us to begin the Lenten season with forgiveness and reconciliation? These questions are in order because for too many people Lent means primarily, and almost exclusively, a change of diet, the compliance with ecclesiastical regulations concerning fasting. They understand fasting as an end in itself, as a “good deed” required by God and carrying in itself its merit and its reward. But the Church spares no effort in revealing to us that fasting is but a means, one among many, towards a higher goal: the spiritual renewal of man, his return to God, true repentance and, therefore, true reconciliation. The Church spares no effort in warning us against a hypocritical and pharisaic fasting, against the reduction of religion to mere external obligations. As a Lenten hymn says:

*“In vain do you rejoice in not eating, O soul!  
For you abstain from food,  
But from passions you are not purified.  
If you persevere in sin, you will perform a useless fast!”*

Now, forgiveness stands at the very center of Christian faith and of Christian life because Christianity itself is, above all, the religion of forgiveness. God forgives us, and His forgiveness is in Christ, His Son, whom He sends to us so that by sharing in His humanity we may share in His love and be truly reconciled with God. Indeed, Christianity has no other content but love. And it is primarily the renewal of that love, a growth in it, that we seek in Great Lent, in fasting and prayer, in the entire spirit and the entire effort of that season. Thus, truly forgiveness is both the beginning of, and the proper condition for, the Lenten season.

One may ask, however: Why should I perform this rite when I have no “enemies?” Why should I ask forgiveness from people who have done nothing to me, and whom I hardly know? To ask these questions is to misunderstand the Orthodox teaching concerning forgiveness. It is true that open enmity, personal hatred, real animosity may be absent from our life, though if we experience them, it may be easier for us to repent, for these feelings openly contradict Divine commandments. But the Church reveals to us that there are much subtler ways of offending Divine Love. These are indifference, selfishness, lack of interest in other people, of any real concern for them—in short, that wall which we usually erect around ourselves, thinking that by being “polite” and “friendly” we fulfill God’s commandments. The rite of forgiveness is so important precisely because it makes us realize—be it only for one minute—that our entire relationship to other men is wrong, makes us experience that encounter of one child of God with another, of one person created by God with another, makes us feel that mutual “recognition” which is so terribly lacking in our cold and dehumanized world.

On that unique evening, listening to the joyful Paschal hymns we are called to make a spiritual discovery: to taste of another mode of life and relationship with people, of life whose essence is love. We can discover that always and everywhere Christ, the Divine Love Himself, stands in the midst of us, transforming our mutual alienation into brotherhood. As I advance towards the other, as the other comes to me—we begin to realize that it is Christ who brings us together by His love for both of us.

And because we make this discovery—and because this discovery is that of the Kingdom of God itself: the Kingdom of Peace and Love, of reconciliation with God and, in Him, with all that exists—we hear the hymns of that Feast, which once a year “opens to us the doors of Paradise.” We know why we shall fast and pray, what we shall seek during the long Lenten pilgrimage.

Forgiveness Sunday: the day on which we acquire the power to make our fasting—true fasting; our effort—true effort; our reconciliation with God—true reconciliation.

—Father Alexander Schmemmann

## **1st Saturday of Great Lent: The Miracle of the Boiled Wheat** **March 4**

Today we remember the miracle of Saint Theodore the Recruit and the boiled wheat. Fifty years after Saint Theodore's martyrdom, Emperor Julian the Apostate (361-363), devised a plan to corrupt the Christians during the first week of Great Lent. He knew that Christians purify themselves through fasting, especially during this week (which is why it is known as Clean Week). Therefore, he ordered the Polemarch (military leader) of Constantinople to go secretly and sprinkle all the food in the marketplace with the blood of animals which had been offered in sacrifice to idols. Saint Theodore appeared to Archbishop Eudoxios in a dream, telling him to assemble all the Christians on Monday morning and tell them that they must not buy any food from the marketplace; instead they were to boil some kollyva and to eat it with some honey during that week. The hierarch asked Saint Theodore what he meant by kollyva. He replied, "Kollyva is what we call boiled wheat in Euchaita." Thus the scheme of the idol-worshipping emperor was thwarted and the pious people were preserved undefiled during Clean Week.

Ever since the middle of the fifth century, the Orthodox Church has honored the holy Great Martyr Theodore the Recruit on the first Saturday of Great Lent. On Friday evening, at the Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts following the prayer at the Ambo, the Canon to the holy Great Martyr Theodore, composed by Saint John of Damascus, is sung. Afterward, kollyva is blessed and distributed to the faithful. The commemoration of the Great Martyr Theodore on the first Saturday of Great Lent was established by Patriarch Nektarios of Constantinople (381-397).

The Troparion to Saint Theodore is quite similar to the Troparion for the Prophet Daniel and the Three Holy Youths (*December 17 and Sunday Before the Nativity*).<sup>1</sup> The Kontakion for Saint Theodore, who suffered martyrdom by fire, reminds us that he also had faith as his breastplate (see 1 Thessalonians 5:8). [The term "breastplate" is an exact translation from the Greek. It is not a "shield," or any other thing.]

Saint Theodore the Recruit is also commemorated on February 17.

### **Great Martyr Theodore the Recruit**

**1st Saturday of Great Lent**

**February 17**

*Great are the accomplishments of faith,  
the Holy Martyr Theodore rejoiced in the flames  
as though at the water of rest,  
for having been made a whole-burnt offering in the fire,  
offered to the Trinity as a sweet loaf.*

*By his prayers, O Christ God, save our souls!*

**Troparion**



## **1st Sunday of Great Lent: Sunday of Orthodoxy**

**March 5**

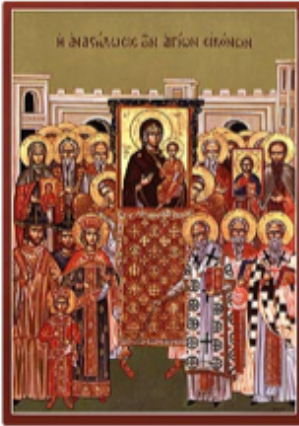
The first Sunday of Great Lent is called the Sunday of Orthodoxy because it commemorates the restoration of the Holy Icons and the triumph of the Orthodox Faith against the terrible heresy of the Iconoclasts, i.e. those heretics who refused to honor the Holy Icons. For more than a hundred years the Church was disturbed by the evil doctrine of iconoclasm.

The first Emperor to persecute the Church was Leo the Isaurian, and the last was Theophilos, the spouse of Saint Theodora (February 11), who reigned after her husband's death and re-established Orthodoxy in the time of Patriarch Methodios (June 14). Empress Theodora proclaimed publicly that we do not kiss the Icons as a sign of worship, nor do we honor them as "gods," but as images of their prototypes.

In the year 843, on the first Sunday of the Fast, Saint Theodora and her son, Emperor Michael, venerated the Holy Icons together with the clergy and the people. Since that time this event has been commemorated every

year, because it was definitively determined that we do not worship the Icons, but we honor and glorify all the Saints who are depicted on them. We worship only the Triune God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and no one else, neither a Saint, nor an Angel.

Originally, the Holy Prophets Moses, Aaron, and Samuel were commemorated on this Sunday. The Alleluia verses appointed for today's Liturgy reflect this older usage.



### Sunday of Orthodoxy

*We venerate Your most pure image, O Good One,  
and ask forgiveness of our transgressions, O Christ God.  
Of Your own will You were pleased to ascend the Cross in the flesh  
to deliver Your creatures from bondage to the enemy.  
Therefore with thanksgiving we cry aloud to You:  
You have filled all with joy, O our Savior,  
by coming to save the world.*

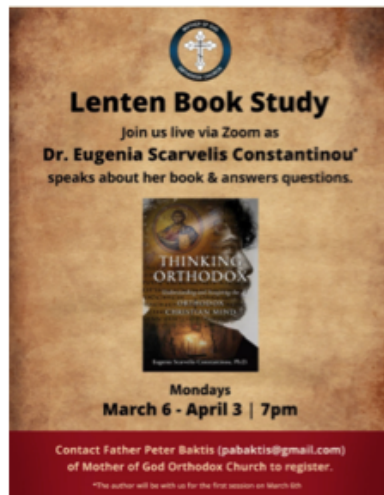
Troparion

### UPCOMING DIOCESAN EVENTS

**ARCHBISHOP MICHAEL'S NEXT VISIT TO OUR PARISH –  
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 29 FOR PRESANCTIFIED LITURGY**

### LENTEN STUDY POSSIBILITIES

(check the Diocesan website for more information [www.nynjoca.org](http://www.nynjoca.org))



**Lenten Book Study**  
Join us live via Zoom as  
**Dr. Eugenia Scarvelis Constantinou\***  
speaks about her book & answers questions.

**THINKING  
ORTHODOX**  
A Lenten Study  
by Eugenia Scarvelis Constantinou, Ph.D.

**Mondays  
March 6 - April 3 | 7pm**

Contact Father Peter Baktis ([pabaktis@gmail.com](mailto:pabaktis@gmail.com))  
of Mother of God Orthodox Church to register.

\*The author will be with us for the first session on March 6th.



Orthodox Church in America's Diocese of New York and New Jersey  
13th Edition

**St. Andrew's  
Camp  
and Retreat Center**

First Annual  
**Lenten Women's Retreat**

**FRIDAY, MARCH 10 - SUNDAY MARCH 12, 2023**

Register at:  
[http://portal.comnetnetwork.com/register/register.php?camp\\_id=37767](http://portal.comnetnetwork.com/register/register.php?camp_id=37767)

\$125 for the Weekend  
(\$50 for Saturday only)

**Keynote Speaker: Cynthia Dominkas**  
Cynthia is a Certified Integrative Nutrition Health Coach  
specializing in Functional Medicine, Nutrition and Lifestyle  
Management. She is the author of The Holistic Christian  
Woman, host of the Holistic Christian Life podcast, and co-  
host of The Filled With Less Show on Ancient Faith Radio.

Also attending: Archbishop Michael

For more information:  
Call: 315-885-4138 or  
Email: [kathleenoc7@gmail.com](mailto:kathleenoc7@gmail.com)

### WEEKDAY VESPERS AT THE HERMITAGE OF ST OLYMPIA Weekdays at 4 PM

For information please contact Mother Sophronia at [mothersophronia@gmail.com](mailto:mothersophronia@gmail.com)  
or via Facebook: Nun Sophronia Hofstead