

Focus on the Faith

By Archpriest Basil Rhodes

Q. The Great 40-Day Fast, “Great Lent” is here. What is the purpose and meaning of fasting?

(i)
A. Fasting in the Orthodox Church is often misunderstood, but it is (ii)
an important part of our life in Christ. The Lord Himself declared (iii)
that His disciples would fast (Matt. 9:15). The Lord, Himself, fasted (iv)
(Matt. 4: 1-4). The holy apostles and the earliest Christians fasted (v)
(Acts 13: 2-3; 14: 23; 2Cor. 6:5; 11:27; etc.) Fasting is part of the
Christian “podvig,” i.e. spiritual struggle to “become partakers of the
Divine Nature” (2 Peter 1:4). Fasting, accompanied by prayer and
good works, is a spiritual aid which brings discipline to both body
and soul, enabling them to strive together to bring the whole person
closer to God. The rule or “canon” of fasting is regulated by the
Church, but it is not something by which we scrutinize and judge our
neighbor. Additionally, we do not fast so that others will look at us
and see that we are “good Christians.” In fact, if we believe that we
are “good Christians” simply because we follow the “rules,” then we
are no better than that Pharisee who boasted about his fasting (Luke
18: 10-14). The Lord teaches us not to reveal anything about our
fasting in order to avoid it becoming a mere outward show, or our
minds become filled with vainglory (Matt. 6: 16-18).

Fasting is something we each struggle with to the best of our ability.
This does not mean, however, that can “write our own prescription”
for fasting. This is where our spiritual father comes in. It is he who
should guide us to the best method of fasting to match our own
spiritual development and physical circumstances.

Orthopraxis

By Archpriest Basil Rhodes

Q. What are the rules of fasting during Great Lent?

A. In general, during the week, Monday to Friday, we abstain from:
meat
animal products (including milk, cheese, butter)
fish (i.e. fish with backbones)
oil (i.e. olive oil)
wine (or any alcoholic drink)

This rule is relaxed on Saturdays and Sundays, when wine and oil
are permitted. Also, on Annunciation and Palm Sunday fish is
allowed. The first day of the Great Fast (i.e. “clean Monday”) as
well as Great and Holy Friday are kept as days of total fasting.
These are the general rules, but you may receive the full text of
the guidelines by asking Fr. Basil for a copy.

Q. What about fasting by those who are sick or elderly?

A. The Church has always held that the rules of fasting can (and
and often MUST) be modified for those who are elderly, sick,
or suffering some other mitigating circumstance. “In cases of
uncertainty” says Bishop Kallistos, “each should seek the advise
of his or her spiritual father.” (Lenten Triodion)

Q. If I wish to open the “doors of repentance” what must I do?

A. The first thing to do is to examine your life, especially taking
into account all of your sins and transgressions. Next, think long
and hard about who you may have offended, hurt, cheated, lied to,
stolen from, etc. Seek from them forgiveness and make restitution.
and last, but far from least, make your Confession within the
context of the Holy Mystery (Sacrament) of Confession.

In preparation for all of the above, it might be wise to begin by reciting the “Canon of Repentance” from the Prayer Book, praying the Jesus Prayer, and taking out a pencil and a piece of paper, and write down your sins and offences as the Holy Spirit reveals them to you. Then when the time comes for confession, you will have your list and the devil will be unable to rob your Memory.

Lenten Teen Retreat

March 18-20

Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church, Belmont will sponsor a Lenten Teen Retreat
Redwood Glen in Loma Mar, CA

It is with much excitement and anticipation that we here at Holy Cross invite you and your teens (6th-12th grade) to Holy Cross’s Teen Lenten Retreat, March 18-20, at Redwood Glen in Loma Mar, CA. This Lenten Retreat is open to all the Bay Area Orthodox parishes! The Retreat Center is nestled in the foothills of the Santa Cruz Mountains, just about an hour south of Belmont. First and foremost, Redwood Glen will offer your teens the opportunity to experience the glory of God in His creation. The Retreat Center also has a basketball court, outdoor volleyball area, a large playing field, trails, ping-pong and foosball tables and a campfire for the evening.

The theme for our retreat will be “Mythbusters”. It is our goal to dismantle and shatter the myths that our teens believe about God, their Church and their society. Unfortunately, our teens are susceptible more than ever to certain myths, such as: “I can’t have fun and take my faith seriously at the same time”; “I have to

compromise my values to be accepted”; “happiness comes through doing whatever makes you feel good”; “the Church can’t help me in those areas I care most about, like school, friendships and relationships”; “fasting is impossible”. These are just some examples of the myths we hope to obliterate at our Lenten Retreat. By doing so, we hope to help our teens have a stronger relationship with Jesus Christ and His Church.

At this retreat, we also want our teens to form new friendships and strengthen existing ones with teens from other Bay Area Orthodox communities. The friendships formed at retreats like this one are not of the ordinary kind but are friendships that are forged and nurtured in Christ. We want our teens to have friends that build them up and help them become the person who God wants them to be. We want your teens to have friends that complement and support the values and morals of the Church.

For Info and Registration Forms, go to:

<http://www.goholycross.org/home/webpage%20welcome.htm> or see Fr Basil.