

Journey to Pascha Lenten Retreat 2023

How Lent is Structured

How to Participate in Lent

The Sundays of Preparation

Pre-lenten preparation includes four consecutive Sundays preceding Lent.

1. Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee (Luke 18:10-14)

Lenten Triodion begins.
Humility vs. pride.

2. Sunday of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32)

The return to the Father.
Repentance as the renewal of baptism.

3. Sunday of the Last Judgment / Meatfare Sunday (Matthew 25:31-46)

The criteria of the Last Judgment.
Preparation for fasting. What is fasting? Why fast?

4. Sunday of Forgiveness / Cheesefare (Matthew 6:14-21)

The expulsion of Adam from the Garden
Deeper fasting. We must: "appear not unto men to fast, but unto our Father who is in secret"
Forgiveness. "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you."

Forgiveness Vespers (following Divine Liturgy)

The Sundays of Lent

Each Sunday in Lent has a specific theme.

1. 1st Sunday — "Triumph of Orthodoxy" — commemorates the victory of the Church over the last great heresy – Iconoclasm (842).
2. 2nd Sunday — is dedicated to the memory of St. Gregory Palamas, a great Byzantine theologian, canonized in 1366.
3. 3rd Sunday — "of the Veneration of the Holy Cross" This ceremony announces the approaching of the Holy Week and the commemoration of Christ's passion. At the end of each service takes place a special veneration of the Cross.

4. 4th Sunday — St. John the Ladder, one of the greatest Ascetics, who in his "Spiritual Ladder" described the basic principles of Christian spirituality.
5. 5th Sunday — St. Mary of Egypt, an example of repentance.

The Weekdays of Lent

Lent consists of six weeks or forty days. It begins on Monday after the Cheese Fare Sunday and ends on Friday evening before Psalm Sunday.

1. Weekly structure

First week: Compline, Presanctified Liturgy, Akathist Hymn, Canon of St. Andrew
Following weeks: Compline, Presanctified Liturgy, Akathist Hymn

2. Individual Services and Elements

- The Canon of St. Andrew of Crete

This canon is entirely devoted to repentance and constitutes, so to say, the "inauguration of Lent."

- The Prayer of St. Ephrem

“O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of sloth, despair, lust of power, and idle talk. But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to Thy servant. Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own transgressions, and not to judge my brother, for blessed art Thou, unto ages of ages. Amen.”

- Presanctified Liturgy

On weekdays of Lent (Monday through Friday) the celebration of the Divine Liturgy is strictly forbidden. They are non-liturgical days, with one exception – the Feast of Annunciation. The reason for this rule is that the Eucharist is by its very nature a festal celebration, the joyful commemoration of Christ’s Resurrection and presence among His disciples. But twice a week, on Wednesdays and Fridays, the Church prescribes the celebration after Vespers, i.e., in the evening of the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

- Akathist Hymn

The Akathist is the annual commemoration of the deliverance of Constantinople in 620.
“The incarnation from the point of view of Mary.”
Sung on Fridays

- Prostrations / Lenten color purple