The first week of Great Lent has been known since times of old as the “dawn of abstinence,” or “clean week.” During that week, the Church persuades her children to come out of that sinful state into which all of mankind fell because our forefathers did not abstain, because they lost the blessings of heaven, the state of sin which each of us increases by his personal sins. It coaxes them into coming forth by way of faith, prayer, humility and fasting, things, which are pleasing to God. This is the time for repentance, says the Church “Behold the day of salvation, the entrance to the Fast. O my soul, be watchful, close all the doors through which the passions enter, and look up towards the Lord.” (From the first canticle of the triodion canon at Matins on Monday of the first week of Great Lent).

The services of the first week are especially lengthy, and the podvig of physical abstinence during that week is considerably more rigorous than in the subsequent days of Great Lent. Over the course of the first four days of Great Lent, Great Compline is served, with the reading of the Great Penitential Canon of St. Andrew of Crete, which as it were sets the tone which is to resound throughout Great Lent. During the first week of Great Lent, the Canon is divided into four separate parts, one chanted at each Compline. On Thursday (actually Wednesday evening) of the fifth week of Great Lent, our attention is again directed to St. Andrew's marvelous composition, this time in its entirety, so that with the conclusion of Great Lent in sight, we might not become lackadaisical, careless, and negligent, so that we might not forget ourselves and stop strictly watching over ourselves in everything.

The refrain “Have mercy upon me O Lord, have mercy upon me” accompanies each verse of the Great Canon. Several troparia in honor of St. Andrew, composer of the canon, and to St. Mary of Egypt are also included. The Church of Jerusalem implemented this practice during St. Andrew's lifetime. When in the year 680 AD, St. Andrew traveled to Constantinople for the 6th Ecumenical Council, he brought with him and made public both his great composition and the life of St. Mary of Egypt, written by his compatriot and teacher, Sophronios, Patriarch of Jerusalem. The Life of St. Mary of Egypt is read together with the Great Canon at Matins on Wednesday of the fifth week of Great Lent.

The Great Canon is more astonishing than any other liturgical text encountered during Great Lent. It is a marvel of liturgical hymnography, with texts of amazing power and poetic beauty. The Church decided to call it the Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete.
Canon not so much for its length (250 troparia, or verses), as for the quality and power of its content. St. Andrew, Archbishop of Crete, who composed the Canon in the 7th Century, also composed many other canons used by the Church over the course of the liturgical year.

The Great Canon consists of a conversation between the penitent and his own soul. The conversation begins:

"Where shall I begin to weep for the actions of my wretched life? What first-fruit shall I offer O Christ in this my lamentation? But in Thy compassion grant me forgiveness of sins." – with what shall I begin to repent, for it is so difficult.

A marvelous troparion follows:

"Come wretched soul, with thy flesh to the Creator of all. Make confession to Him, and abstain henceforth from thy past brutishness; and offer to God tears of repentance."

The words are astonishing, containing both Christian anthropology and asceticism: our flesh, an inseparable part of human nature and being, must also participate in our repentance.

The apogee of this conversation with the soul, its constant unremitting call to repentance, comes in the kontakion sung following the 6th canticle of the Canon:

"My soul, O my soul, rise up! Why art thou sleeping? The end draws near and soon thou shalt be troubled. Watch, then, that Christ thy God may spare thee, for He is everywhere present and filleth all things."

The great luminary of the Church addresses these words to himself, to the one who could be described with the words he used to describe St. Mary of Egypt, who truly was an “angel in the flesh.” And yet, he so addressed himself, reproaching himself for his soul being in slumber. If he could see himself as such a one, how should we see ourselves? As immersed not only in spiritual sleep from which we cannot be roused, but also in some kind of necrosis.

When we heed the words of the canon of St. Andrew of Crete, we have to ask ourselves: What must I do? If one were to fulfill God's Law, as he ought, the contents of his life would be of quite a different composition. It is for this reason that the Church offers us this profound Great Lenten Penitential Canon, so full of feeling and conviction, so that we might look deeper into our souls and see what is there. And yet, the soul continues to sleep; in that is our sorrow and our misfortune.

In the wonderful prayer of St Ephraim the Syrian, which we repeat throughout Great Lent, we hear words to the following effect: “O Lord and King, grant unto me to see my transgressions! I do not see them; my soul has dozed off, has fallen asleep, and I cannot even see those sins, as I ought. How then will I be able to repent of them!” This is precisely why, in the days of Great Lent, each of us should focus all the more on himself/herself, must examine his life, and measure it against the standard set forth in the Gospels, and against no other.

A basic distinguishing feature of the Great Canon is its extremely broad use of images and subjects taken from Sacred Scripture, from both the Old and New Testaments.

The Bible is not merely a history of the people of Israel. It is also a great chronicle of the soul of mankind, of the souls which would repeatedly fall and stand up again before the face of God, which repeatedly fell into sin and repeatedly repented. If we were to examine the lives of those mentioned in the Bible, we would see that each of them is presented not so much as a historical figure, an individual that did such and such, but as an individual standing before the Living God. The person's historical or other accomplishments are accorded second place. What remains is what is most important: did that person remain faithful to God, or not. If we read the Bible and the Great Canon with that frame of reference, we will see that much of what is said about the righteous ones and sinners of antiquity is nothing less than a chronicle of our soul, of our repeated falling and rising, of our repeated sin and repentance.

Archpriest Victor Potapov
The March bulletin is sponsored anonymously.

**BULLETIN NEWS:** Deadline for the April bulletin Wednesday, March 19th. Thank you.

**2014 PLEDGE CARDS:** Have you returned your pledge card? Extras are available in the parish hall. Having a yearly card on file is one of the requirements for voting at annual meetings.

**BULLETINS BY E-MAIL:** If you are interested in receiving the monthly bulletin via e-mail, please send your request to the stsoc@comcast.net address. Verbal requests don’t count.

**GENERAL PANIKHIDA:** Don’t forget the monthly general Panikhida on the second Saturday of each month. Please submit names directly to Father Yuri.

**CONFERENCE CRUISE TO ALASKA:** A cruise and conference at sea will be held on September 6-13, 2014. Space is limited to 100 for this event and registrations will be accepted on a first-come, first-serve basis. Detailed information, including rates and agenda, may be found at www.orthodoxcruises.com.

**PROJECT MEXICO:** If cruising is not your thing, how about volunteering in Mexico. Hosted by the Diocese of the West, Orthodox Basic Training Week will be July 15-21, 2014. Over the week several sturdy, weatherproof homes for families without adequate shelter will be constructed. More information can be found at www.projectmexico.org.

**SCRIP:** It may not seem like it, but spring is just around the corner! That means time for our annual food drive AND time to your homes and gardens ready for warmer weather. I have ordered extra SCRIP from Fred Meyers, Albertsons, Haggen and QFC to take care of your food bank purchases. I also have extra Lowes, Home Depot, Sears and Ace Hardware for those springtime projects. See me if you have questions and let me know if you need very large quantities of any SCRIP products and I can order all you want. Dorothy Nowik

**SUMMER CAMP:** The dates for Pacific Northwest Orthodox Youth Camp are, June 30th through July 3, 2014 at All Saints Retreat Center in Gig Harbor. All the information and registration forms can be found at www.pnwovc.org. If you have any questions, please contact camp director Father Barnabas Powell at 425-623-3653 or Lela Powell at 425-686-2127. Registration deadline is May 31st. Camp does require a sizable staff (clergy and laity) to operate in an effective and safe manner for the children (there are 2 counselors per cabin), so if you are interested please go to the website for details. All staff will have background checks performed by their parish priests.

**CONFESSION:** The last day for private confessions is Lazarus Saturday, April 12th. Please call for an appointment, especially if you plan to come before Presanctified Liturgy on a Wednesday.

**DIOCESAN LENT BOX PROJECT:** This year the Diocese of the West will collectively be supporting the Children’s Hospice in St. Petersburg, Russia. The specialized care needed for their young patients and the much needed support for their families is grossly underserved in Russia. This one of a kind endeavor is greatly in need of our love and financial support to continue this wonderful work and to expand their services for the many more in need. Lent boxes will be distributed March 2nd, with extras available at the candle stand. Be sure to write your name on the box. Checks should be made payable to St. Spiridon Cathedral. Once all the boxes have been turned in and tallied, one check will be forwarded on.

**HOLY SATURDAY READERS:** If you would like to read on Holy Saturday, please contact Kim King. Hopefully we will enough volunteers so no strong-arm pleading will be necessary.

**MYRRH BEARING GIRLS:** If your daughter would like to be in the Pascha night processional, please contact Kim King no later than Lazarus Saturday. We need an exact count for how many candles to decorate. No extras will be made.

**NEW COOKBOOK AVAILABLE:** If you’re looking for some new Lenten recipes or need help on what to put in your Pascha basket, St. Innocent Orthodox Church in Tarzana has the book for you. “Flavors of Our Faith” has 350 Lenten and non-Lenten recipes, cooking and nutritional tips and more. For more information call 818-881-1123 or email stinnocentcookboog@gmail.com.

**PLASCHENITZA FLOWERS:** Donations for plaschenitza flowers can be left at the candle stand.

**WEDNESDAY LENTEN MEAL:** Please join us
on Wednesdays during Lent for a light Lenten meal after Presanctified Liturgy.

**WOMEN’S LENTEN RETREAT:** Information on the Women’s Lenten Retreat March 14-16, 2014 to be held at The Greek Orthodox Monastery of St. John the Honorable Forerunner in Goldendale, Washington is available in the parish hall. Hurry if you are interested, space is limited and the registration deadline is **March 10th**. The Very Reverend Gregory Horton, pastor of Holy Myrrhbearing Women (Antiochian) Orthodox Mission in Bonners Ferry, Idaho will be the guest speaker.

**WOCA LENTEN VESPERS SCHEDULE:** Each year during Great Lent WOCA (Washington Orthodox Clergy Association) clergy and faithful gather at special Sunday afternoon Vespers (5:00pm) to pray, share a small homily and have refreshments. Please join us this Lent.

- **March 9**, Sunday of Orthodoxy: Greek Orthodox Church of the Assumption, 
  1804 – 13th Ave. Seattle, 98122
  Homilist: Ms Anastasia P. Barksdale
- **March 16**, St. Gregory Palamas: St. Paul Antiochian Orthodox Church, 
  21236 Poplar Way Brier, 98036
  Homilist: Fr. John Pierce
- **March 23**, Holy Cross: St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Cathedral, 
  1714 – 13th Ave. Seattle, 98122
  Homilist: Fr. Yuri Maev
- **March 20**, St. John Climacus: St. Katherine Orthodox Mission, 
  14216 – 132nd Ave. NE Kirkland, 98084
  Homilist: Fr. David Hovik
- **April 6**, St. Mary of Egypt: St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church, 
  2100 Boyer Ave. E., Seattle, 98112
  Homilist: Fr. Seraphim Majmudar

**The Guild of the Lord’s Friends**

**CHARITY NEWS:** Our February collection for Philanthropia House was $1,026.00. Thank you to everyone for your generosity. Our **March 2nd** collection will benefit Heifer International. Our donation will help buy chickens, goats, sheep, heifers, honeybees and more for less fortunate families around the world. They are provided with proper feed for the animals, education on good environmental farm practices and the tools necessary to bring about positive transformations. So as we “give up” for Lent, we can “give back”. Over 20.7 million families have been helped by Heifer, but nearly 870 million people around the world don’t have enough to eat.

**FOOD DRIVE:** And on the subject of food, our annual Lenten food drive begins on **March 2nd**. Our goal is always 1,000 pounds for local food banks. So please remember to pick up extra food items when you are at the store or Costco. Baby food is always in great demand. And we don’t want to forget the furry companions of the many seniors who use area food banks. Small bags of dog and cat food are welcomed, as well as small cans of wet food.

**COFFEE HOUR:** “Grateful thanks to many of you who help out during our fellowship meals: we now nearly always have a good assortment of foods to nourish parishioners and visitors, many of you help bus dirty dishes and wash tables, and our dish washing crew has more participants than before. Especially when you are unable to contribute a dish to the meal, please make a donation in the basket provided. Thanks go also to those who have volunteered to go downstairs after communion and complete the meal set-up and serve: Tatyana S., Harold and Kim L., Cathy O., Matushka Helen and Dena, and Nonna C. More thanks to those who have hosted a meal. If you are interested in hosting a coffee hour, the sign-up sheet is posted in the parish hall. If you need suggestions of what to bring for potluck, have questions about hosting, please talk with Judy Greene or Matushka Helen. Soon we’ll have some guidelines for hosting and volunteering so everyone knows what’s involved. We’re looking forward to the creative cookery of the Lent!”

**NEW VISITATION PLAN:** As a way to add a more personal touch and to help cut down flower delivery expenses, we are looking for individuals who are willing to visit and help deliver flowers to those ill and perhaps in hospital. We would like to organize it so you could do this in or around your own area, and not have to travel great distances, so the more people who volunteer, the better. Please contact Cathy Jankovich directly or at MJankov629@aol.com.
KULICH ORDER FORM

Name: ________________________________________          Phone number: _________________________

Number of one pound kulich: __________ x $7.00 per pound = ________________________________

 Regular: _______ OR Gluten-free: __________

Please make checks payable to: The Guild of the Lord’s Friends

Orders can be mailed to the office or give directly to Matushka Helen.

**DEADLINE FOR ORDERS: Sunday, April 6th**

**AVAILABLE FOR PICK UP: Sunday, April 13th**