

PARISH OF THE HOLY TRINITY



COMMUNITY BULLETIN

5 MARCH 2022

No. 55

*Weekly Worship, Events & Announcements —
Submissions Welcome!*

Upcoming Week

- ❖ Please pray for the newly departed *Rachel* and [Reader James](#), and the sick *Monica* and *Peter*.
 - ❖ Saints' days in [Greek](#) and [English](#)
 - ❖ Bilingual texts and music for [all services by date](#)
 - ❖ Archdiocesan Sunday [Bulletin](#) and [Services](#) (Holy Wisdom Cathedral, London)
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Events & Announcements

Sunday 6 March, Forgiveness Vespers service will be held at 6pm, and evening services will continue daily from Clean Monday as we begin Lent. **Wednesday 9 March** the service will be a Presanctified Liturgy, with Akathistos offered on **Friday 11 March**. (See parish [website](#) for the most up-to-date schedule.)

His Eminence Archbishop Nikitas on Ukraine

At a time when humanity still faces many challenges from the unprecedented global phenomenon of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are now confronted by another global crisis. As Exarch of the Ecumenical Patriarch in the United Kingdom, my diverse flock includes devout Christians from both Ukraine and Russia. The heartbreak we feel for them and their loved ones abroad during this tragic time cannot be put into words. The events of the past few days bring deep pain and sadness to all our hearts. The Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain embraces a common expression of Orthodox Christian unity that transcends any ethnic, linguistic, and cultural divisions. Thus, together with our collective call for an immediate ceasefire, we beseech all the Christians in the United Kingdom to come together in unity and increase their prayers and special supplications for the God-loving Ukrainian faithful, as well as for all people around the world who are experiencing the scourge of armed conflict. May the black clouds of despair, violence, and hatred soon dissipate in order for the heavenly Light from above to shine brightly down on the pious faithful in Ukraine. [Source](#)

Encyclical for the Beginning of Holy & Great Lent

In just a few days, we will begin the Lenten journey to Pascha. The Church once again, invites us to walk the sacred path of liturgical and personal preparation, as She has done for centuries. She sounds the trumpet of the Lord and summons all the faithful to put on the armour of salvation, so as to reach our destination victorious over the passions. The journey is not an easy one, especially as the ways and temptations of the world present themselves to us, trying to pull us away from our path and into sin. Yet, the Church does not neglect to provide us with an array of tools and weapons to cleanse and fortify ourselves at every opportunity, and, when need arises, the means to gently wipe our eyes dampened by tears of repentance and to soothe our troubled brow.

If one were to sit and read the hymnology of the Church, he or she would notice that the desert ascetics of old and the spiritual hoplites that lived in our own day and time universally embraced three important disciplines that allowed them to be delivered from the sin, evil, and temptations of this life. The *good fight* comprises of fasting, vigilance and prayer; these are the weapons and shield that protect the Christian people from the darts of the evil one. Please allow me to offer a few thoughts about each of these virtues, so that you can be strengthened in your Lenten journey and in life.

Fasting — When we, as Orthodox Christians, speak about fasting and the fast, our mind usually goes to dietary restrictions and abstaining from things. In reality, though, the word ‘fast’ means to not eat at all. But, Christ Himself and the Fathers of the Church never understood the fast in this limited and restrictive manner. The Church, which preserves and correctly teaches what is true, reminds us that the fast encompasses our whole life and, therefore, includes uprooting sin from every aspect of our lives, in addition to voluntarily abstaining from certain foods and activities of life. The great hymnographers of the Church teach us by recounting how Moses cleansed his eyes through fasting and was able to look upon and converse with God. True fasting is likened to the role of a sword in our spiritual panoply, but this is a blade that can also be used on ourselves as a surgical scalpel, delicately cutting away every evil from our heart. The hymnographers remind us that the suitable time for repentance is at hand, and that through the virtue and discipline of fasting we achieve victory over the demons. In the hymns, we read that fasting is the mother of prudence, the accuser of sin, the companion of repentance, the polity of the angels, and the salvation of people. It is for this reason that the ecclesiastical authors tell us to keep the fast that is pleasing to the Lord: reigning in the tongue, distancing ourselves from anger, separating ourselves from earthly desires, and so much more. Charity and almsgiving are also often mentioned hand-in-hand with fasting. We are told that these are the elements of a true and acceptable fast in the eyes of the Lord. It is interesting to note the inclusion of these other deeper aspects of fasting in the above descriptions and the lack of a focus on food.

Vigilance — In the Old Testament book Song of Songs, the author writes ‘though I sleep, my heart is vigilant’ (and awake). In order for one to fight against sin and to converse with God through prayer, one must be vigilant, attentive, awake, and careful not to be led astray by distractions and far from one's real purpose and mission. Vigilance is being spiritually prepared to receive the Bridegroom, who comes in the

middle of the night. Thus, we fulfil the words of Scripture, which tell us 'Keep your heart with all vigilance ... let your eyes look directly forward and let your gaze be straight before you.' When one abstains from the heavy, fatty, sumptuous foods that so often fill our plates, we feel lighter, and more peaceful. He who is vigilant and awake does not fall into the slumber of sin. We are more attentive and pay closer attention to what we do and say. We cultivate in our hearts the virtue of vigilance, silently waiting for the unwaning light that comes forth from the empty tomb. In his First Epistle, St. Peter reminds us to be sober and watchful. Let us, then, be watchful and vigilant so that we may cross the turbulent seas of life and safely reach the harbour of the Resurrection.

Prayer — The scriptural readings that lead us into Lent tell us how we should pray. The directives are simple and clear. We must not be like the hypocrites; rather, we should go into a private space and avoid heaping up empty phrases. Our prayer should be sincere, simple, and filled with words of compunction and truth. St. John of the Ladder reminds of these important matters when he writes his divinely inspired work. He tells us that the short, honest, appealing words of the thief on the cross gave him entrance into paradise. We need to change the direction of our thoughts and, perhaps, how we pray. Too often we worry about the quantity and not the quality involved in prayer. Having understood the spirit in which we should pray, it is then up to us to cultivate and discover our own relationship to prayer, to work in order to really make prayer our own, personal expression before God. Then, we will learn the comforting power of prayer and what is meant when the hymns refer to prayer as our breastplate. Lent affords us this opportunity.

If we cleanse our bodies and minds through fasting, if we become more alert to our sins and sensitive to the love of God, and if we reach out to Him in prayer, then we will live the Lenten period as is meant.

May God grant us the courage, strength, discernment, and above all the love, to faithfully embark on this sacred journey so that we may arrive together at the beauty, glory and light of the Resurrection of Christ at Pascha.

With paternal love and blessings,
✠ Archbishop Nikitas of Thyateira and Great Britain



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Holy Trinity Parish
in your prayers...**

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BROTHERLY LOVE

*One cannot see one another face to face;
the back of each is stuck to the back of the other.*

In this frightening depiction of Hell, taken from the *Gerontikon* [collected sayings of Holy Elders], punishment is symbolized as lack of communication, the inability to enjoy the sight of another's face. The quotation powerfully conveys the demands God makes of mankind. 'Do not forget,' He calls out to us, 'that in seeing your neighbour, whether familiar or foreign, whether friend or (still more) foe, you are meeting Me.' The Judgement parable summarizes the whole teaching of Christ on interpersonal relationships, grounded in Love as basis, touchstone and guiding rule. God Himself, Love personified, is our reference point for the structuring of such relationships, characterised by a sense of responsibility, animation, warmth, genuine rapprochement, generous self-sacrifice, and conscientious willingness. If I feel towards others as towards myself, if I place my needs on a lower footing than those of my brother, if I can transcend the Devil-inspired selfishness which erects barriers cutting me off from my fellow-creatures, that is the natural expression, the *modus vivendi* of my existence.

Moreover, it is the true meaning of *agape*, Love. I imitate Christ in caring for the common good and in not focusing on myself. Love means rejecting my self-love, my impulse to close my door against others and to withdraw into the solitary hell of my own image. Our era, with its constant crises and the tragic consequences of political and economic inequalities, which seeks the absolute subservience of the person to new-fangled schemes for tyrannical robotisation, has studiously erased humanity in favour of imposed rules for survival which lead to the withering of human values. The challenge is to distinguish between superficial pity, charity and emotions culminating in formal regret, and *real* love which transports us to the true central dimension of our mission as Christians in this world, that is, to put ourselves in the place of the afflicted.

When we seek to discover God, before resorting to elaborate prescriptions for spiritual retreats and quests, often meaningless and baseless, let us turn to the mystery of our brother. That way, true love is brought into action; we savour his co-existence as a gift from God; we curtail the fiery passions which divide us from him; we respect each other's boundaries, and proceed to the maximization of our mutual understanding and interdependence; we cease to abuse our neighbour – because we have learnt that the Gospel model represents the immensity of brotherly love. We spurn the rottenness of worldly impressions and filter the freedom of genuine communication through the example of the crucified Christ.

Finally, we shun alienation, spiritual decline and forgetfulness, and rebel against whatever may suppress our sympathy, our smile and our service. Let us be realistic and recognise that in the Church there is no 'I' but only 'we.' That realisation, simultaneously with our participation in the Body of the living God, constitutes the starting-point of repentance. It also serves as a reminder that the darkness of sin which shadows our painful lives is opposed by the light and hope of the mercy of the Risen One, who bestows one opportunity after another for our inclusion among those standing at His right hand on Judgement Day.