

Great Lent 2001

GREAT LENT AND STEWARDSHIP



The Steward

Dear FOS Brothers and Sisters,

The season of Great Lent is truly a gift from God. It is a tithe of the year in which we may offer back to God the fruits of a life lived joyfully in the Spirit. It is a time when we can re-discover the one thing needful—the *Kingdom of God and His Righteousness*. (Mt. 6:33)

As stewards of God, part of our stewardship is to keep the season of Great Lent free from things that would clutter our effort to orient us back toward the Kingdom and God's Righteousness. The words of the services of the First Week of Great Lent point us again and again back to that personal relationship that God first intended for us in Paradise. A relationship, based on trust and love, that produces joy in the sure knowledge that all of life is a gift from God, to be shared with others and thus lived abundantly:

Come, O ye people, and today let us accept the grace of the Fast as a gift from God and as a time for repentance, in which we may find mercy with the Savior.

Showing joyfulness of soul in the Fast, let us not be of sad countenance; for the change in our way of life during these blessed days will help us to gain holiness.

While fasting with the body, brethren, let us also fast in spirit. Let us loose every bond of iniquity; let us undo the knots of every contract made by violence; let us tear up all unjust agreements; let us give bread to the hungry and welcome to our house the poor who have no roof to cover them, that we may receive great mercy from Christ our God.

The above hymns sung during the first three days of the Lenten Spring testify that Great Lent is not to be limited to only 40 days but rather to be a springboard for the rest of our life. Great Lent is a call to renewal and repentance to be *lived* as our normal life in Christ. Sadly, Great Lent is all too often experienced only as an "exceptional" time when we "give things up" or try to act differ-

ently by praying and fasting more! However, the deeper message of these hymns reveal that Great Lent is not "exceptional" time but rather *normal* time—the sanctified time that God always intended for us—time and life as communion with Him. Great Lent unveils for us that the time of our life in this world can be spent in the *joyful challenge* of always returning to God, moving closer to Him, making His life and will ours too!

Being good stewards of Great Lent will reap eternal rewards far beyond just the finite days of Lent. By opening our hearts to the rhythm of Great Lent we will discover how close God always is to us and His great love God for us. As we walk with the Lord during the days of Great Lent, we will again be invited to participate in His saving Passion and Resurrection and have the chance to move our faith in God beyond mere "religion" towards a genuine "way of life."

As we journey through these sacred days of Great Lent, let us do so mindful of the great love our Lord has for us. Let us share that love with others. Let us freely offer to God and others those things that bring glory and honor to Christ and His Church. Let us practice our faith as *good stewards of God's varied grace*. (1 Pt. 4:10) Let us return the gift of life and its many blessings

to God in grateful thanksgiving. Let us thank God for all things.

On behalf of His Beatitude, Metropolitan THEODOSIUS, thank you again for your continued loving FOS support. May your Lenten journey bear much spiritual fruit for the Glory of the God and His Kingdom!

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Joseph

Archpriest Joseph Fester, FOS Executive Director



Pastors To Pastors Newsletter

The OCA Pastoral Life and Ministry Unit publishes a quarterly publication for all active and retired clergy of the Orthodox Church in America. The *Pastors To Pastors* newsletter is offered free of charge from funding provided by The Fellowship of Orthodox Stewards.

One of the goals of *Pastors To Pastors* is to “bridge the gap” and bring our clergy closer together. Because we are a Church that spans the North American continent it is not unusual for clergy in distant locations to feel somewhat isolated at times.

Each issue of *Pastors To Pastors* features a lead article on some aspect of pastoral life. Another regular feature is an interview with a senior priest of the Church. The most current issue features an interview with Father Daniel Resetar, pastor of Christ the Savior Church in Harrisburg, PA.

The OCA Pastoral Life and Ministries Unit is headed by His Beatitude, Metropolitan THEODOSIUS. His Eminence, Archbishop NATHANIEL serves as the Episcopal Moderator for the Unit. Archpriest Alexander Garklavs serves as the *Pastors To Pastors* editor along with Archpriests Robert Arida, Daniel Kovalak and Priest John Garvey as members of the Editorial Committee.

The Fellowship of Orthodox Stewards is grateful for the opportunity to support the work of the OCA Pastoral Life and Ministries Unit and in particular the publication of the *Pastors to Pastors* newsletter.

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Church Growth Boot Camps

The OCA Office of Church Growth and Evangelism has one of the toughest tasks in modern day church life; moving parishes from decline to growth. There are no easy answers or solutions in this most important undertaking. The good news is that the Orthodox Church in America is committed to helping parishes discover their growth potential.

As mentioned above, this is tough work. Hence a serious response has been mounted with the implementation of the OCA Church Growth and Evangelism Boot Camps. Headed by Archpriest John Reeves, the OCA Boot Camps are held at least twice annually at different locations in North America. Recent Boot Camps were held in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, and at the OCA Romanian Episcopate headquarters in Grass Lake, Michigan.

St. Vladimir’s Seminary will host the OCA Boot Camps later this year for parishes in the northeastern part of the U.S. In addition, Father Reeves lectures annually at St. Vladimir’s and offers to seminary students his insights on evangelism and church growth.

St. Tikhon’s Seminary has had a regular course on missionary studies for several years. The course is taught by Father Daniel Kovalak.

The entire budget of the OCA Office of Church Growth and Evangelism is funded by gifts to the Fellowship of Orthodox Stewards. Partial funding for the OCA Boot Camps also comes from FOS support.

For more information on the OCA Office of Church Growth and Evangelism, contact Fr. John Reeves toll free at 1-888-539-GROW

NEW LOOK OCA WEBSITE

The Orthodox Church in America website located at www.oca.org has a brand new look. The OCA website is an important outreach tool that literally spans the globe. It is one of the exciting ways that the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Orthodox Faith can be shared with others.

Your FOS gifts fund the work of the OCA Witness and Communications Ministries Unit and the OCA website. If you haven’t visited the OCA website recently, we encourage you to do so. God bless and thanks again for your support!

