



March 7, 2022
Protocol 03/001

**Archpastoral Message of His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon
Beginning of Great Lent
March 7, 2022**

To the Clergy, Monastics, and Faithful of the Orthodox Church in America,

Dear Beloved Children in the Lord,

As we stand at this moment, the threshold of Great Lent, with all turmoil and violence unfolding in the world, the Lenten fast comes like a spring breeze to refresh our souls. It is a time during which we take stock of our hearts, discard the unnecessary things of this world, refocus our spiritual vision, and bring our pains and griefs before God's healing presence.

Even in the midst of everything we endure; a pandemic, social unrest, economic uncertainty, and now war in Ukraine, we must remember to always attend to doing good and becoming ever-brighter beacons of Christ's light in this darkening world.

We hear this through the Prophet Isaiah, where the Lord tells us what distinguishes our true fast:

“Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of wickedness,
to undo the cords of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?” (Is 58:6)

In this turbulent moment, the Fast is a call to freedom as children of God through our spiritual discipline. In our time, there are many “bonds of wickedness” and “cords of the yoke” which Lent urges us to loose—but above all, the sins which bind our souls.

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We also remember that Lent calls us to control not just our stomachs but our eyes, hands, feet, and mind. We avoid gluttony of food, but likewise we ought to avoid gluttony of all sorts: in recreation, media, or conversation with others. As the Scriptures tell us, “Every athlete exercises self-control in all things” (1 Cor 9:25).

This Lent, be especially on guard with social media, which too easily inflames our passions, devours our time, and devolves into the “foolish controversies” which St. Paul warns us to avoid, “for they are unprofitable and futile” and only disturb our brothers and sisters in Christ (cf. Titus 3:9).

We are assured in the Letter to the Galatians that “For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery” (Gal 5:1). With these words we fast with cheerful hearts, because it is in our self-denial that we find freedom in the Resurrection.

So as we take up the spiritual disciplines given to us by our Lord, I pray that it is with a spirit of renewed commitment and not with a spirit of gloominess. Nor should we, as Christ warns, “look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men” (Mt 6:16). Great Lent is our much needed time of refreshment of the heart and cleansing of the soul, so that we may more clearly perceive the light of Christ on Great and Holy Pascha.

When we each ask God to “open to me the gates of repentance” this Lent, remember that we do not fast to earn God’s love or to impress others around us. Over the next forty days we break the chains of sin and evil by controlling the things which control us—and so become free people. Let us run towards this freedom in the coming weeks.

Beloved children in the Lord, I conclude by directing you to keep in prayer those suffering in the calamity of war: the wounded, the grieving, and the displaced. Please also be of service to them in your charity and almsgiving this Lent. Remember also those who have been killed in this war. May God keep their memory eternal.

I humbly ask your forgiveness. May you have all the blessings of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ in your Lenten journey.

I remain sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a cross symbol followed by a stylized, cursive name that appears to be 'Tikhon'.

+TIKHON
Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada

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