

THE TRIODION PERIOD OF THE YEAR

The **TRIODION PERIOD** marks the beginning of a **time of preparation for the spiritual journey of Lent**, a time for Orthodox Christians to **draw closer to God through worship, prayer, fasting, and acts of charity**. The purpose of the Triodion intended by the Holy Fathers on the feasts of the Publican and the Pharisee, the Prodigal Son, and the Second Coming is a kind of **preparatory lesson and stimulation to prepare ourselves for the spiritual labors of Lent**.

It is also on this day that the Triodion is introduced, a liturgical book that contains the services from this Sunday, the tenth before Pascha (Easter), to Great and Holy Saturday so it is the period of time in our Orthodox Liturgical year that encompasses 3 segments of time; that of the Pre-Lenten cycle, of Great Lent itself, and of Holy Week.

The word “Triodion” literally means “3 odes” referring to a series of hymns that are sung, but also applying to the 3 segments of time and the associated observances in each of these time segments.

The Triodion Period begins on the 4th Sunday before Great Lent, usually in February or early March. **In 2021 it begins Sunday February 21st** (with vespers the evening before).

During this period, the following occurs:

- 1) A book, called “The Triodion” is used in the church services. These are **special hymns and readings assigned to the services**. This book is used throughout the Pre-Lenten period, through all of Lent, and through Holy Week, up to Holy Saturday night.
- 2) There is a special service known as “**The Saturday of Souls**” (**Memorial Saturdays**) that are **observed in which we commemorate and remember our departed relatives**. Two of these services are held during the Pre-Lenten period, and one more is celebrated on the first Saturday of Lent.
In 2021 the dates are the Saturdays of March 6th, March 13th, March 20th (Church services begin with Orthros at 8:30am).
- 3) Each of the four Sundays of the Pre-Lenten Period has **special themes and Bible Readings**. **Each Sunday initiates the week. Certain observances occur on certain weeks.**

These Sundays are:

- A. **PUBLICAN AND PHARISEE** (February 21st).

Sunday Readings are: 2nd Timothy 3:10-15 and Luke 18:9-14

Theme is: *Humility and the correct observance of the teachings of God, observing without pride, and without looking down upon others. We are called to see ourselves as we truly are and compare ourselves to Christ's teachings.*

Observance of the week:

- a. No fasting during this week (not even on Wednesday or Friday), in preparation for the more strict 40-day fast period.

(For more information see <https://www.goarch.org/publicanpharisee>)

B. **PRODIGAL SON** (February 28th).

Sunday Readings are: 1st Corinthians 6:12-20 and Luke 15:11-32

Theme is: *Return and forgiveness to someone who has done wrong; we should not “rub it in” to someone who is trying to correct their mistakes. We are called to come to “ourselves” as did the prodigal son to see if we may also be “far” from the Father’s house and if so, make movement to return.*

Observance of the week:

- a. Wednesday and Friday are a fast day
- b. Saturday is the first memorial Saturday
- c. Traditional “Apokreas Parties” (Apokreatiko Glendi) are held.

(For more information see <https://www.goarch.org/prodigalson>)

C. **MEATFARE SUNDAY** (March 7th).

Sunday Readings are: 1st Corinthians 8:8 - 9:2 and Matthew 25: 31-46

Theme is: *The Last Judgment of Christ when He returns to the earth again; what will happen to mankind and what is expected of mankind. We are called to see Christ in every human being and serve those in need by doing for them, not simply intending to do, but actually doing, to bring Christ’s embrace to them.*

Observance of the week:

- a. Saturday is the second memorial Saturday.
- b. This is the last day that meat can be eaten before the Lenten fast. Dairy products are allowed on each day of this week, even Wednesday and Friday.

(For more information see <https://www.goarch.org/meatfare>)

D. **CHEESEFARE SUNDAY** (March 14th).

Sunday Readings are: Romans 13:11-14:4 and Matthew 6:14-21

Theme is: *The Sunday of Forgiveness, the last of the preparatory Sundays before Great Lent, has two themes: it commemorates Adam’s expulsion from Paradise, and it accentuates our need for forgiveness. The second theme, that of forgiveness, is emphasized in the Gospel reading for this Sunday (Matthew 6:14-21) and in the special ceremony of mutual forgiveness at the end of the Vespers on Sunday evening. Before we enter the Lenten fast, we are reminded that there can be no true fast, no genuine repentance, no reconciliation with God, unless we are at the same time reconciled with one another.*

Observance on this Sunday:

- a. This is the last Sunday prior to the commencement of Great Lent the next day.
- b. Asking forgiveness of those whom we have offended and done wrong. In some parishes “Forgiveness Vespers” is offered in the evening on Cheesefare Sunday. This is the first time that the Lenten prayer of St. Ephraim accompanied by prostrations is read.
- c. This Sunday is the last day of eating dairy and cheese products to prepare for eating of “pure foods” the next day on Kathara Theftera.

(For more information see <https://www.goarch.org/cheesefare>)

The Next Day is Kathara Theftera – Pure Monday or Clean Monday (in 2021 – March 15th), the first day of Great Lent, which begins the full fast.

Special Lenten services begin and continue throughout Lent. The 1st Saturday of Lent is the 3rd Memorial Saturday, also known as “The Miracle of Saint Theodore with the Wheat”. Food fasting is strict; no meat, fish, or dairy products – oil and wine are permitted on Saturday and Sunday. The same pattern is followed overall through Great Lent with certain exceptions based on calendar of observances of particular major feasts.

A QUICK REVIEW:

The Triodion Period begins as a three-week Period of Preparation for Lent (having 4 specific Sunday observances), that continues on through Great Lent with its own new series of Sunday observances and then includes as well Holy Week, that recounts the last days of Christ’s life. The Triodion is also a book used during the period of preparation and also during Great Lent and Holy Week.

During the three weeks of this first portion of the Triodion Period:

- 1) **Various themes are presented to prepare us for the renewal, to get us thinking.**
- 2) **We give special remembrance to those who have died.**
- 3) **We prepare our bodies and stomachs to fast by gradually beginning to fast more thoroughly from various foods during various weeks.**
- 4) **We hear our Lord’s teachings about the topic of forgiveness, fasting, and treasures.**

(Matthew 6:14-21)

¹⁴“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

¹⁶Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their rewards. ¹⁷But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, ¹⁸so that you do not appear to men to be fasting but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.”

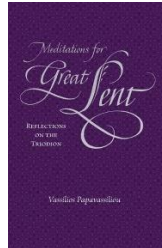
¹⁹Do not lay up for yourselves treasure on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys and thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

*(Adapted from Rev. Andrew George, Annunciation Church, Cranston, RI
and*

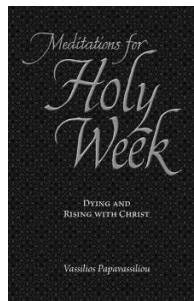
<http://orthognosia.blogspot.com/2015/01/the-triodion.html?m=1>)

For further reading by Archimandrite Vassilios Papavassiliou:

[Meditations for Great Lent: Reflections on the Triodion](#)



[Meditations for Holy Week: Dying and Rising with Christ](#)



[Meditations for Pascha: Reflections on the Pentecostarion](#)

