Preparing for Christmas – the Forgotten Pillar of the Spiritual Life

By Father Timothy Cook

This month we will begin one of the four great fasting periods of the Church year, the forty-day Nativity Fast leading up to Christmas. When we think of any fasting period, be it the regular Wednesday and Friday fasts, or the greater fasts of Lent, Nativity, Dormition, and the Apostles, the first thing we think of is, of course, the fasting! It’s right there, in the name.

Fasting is important – it is one of the three pillars of the Orthodox spiritual life. Fasting is not, however, the only pillar of the spiritual life. Prayer is the second pillar, and the goal of our fasting. (Fasting without prayer is not fasting, it’s just a diet). Prayer and fasting are the first two pillars of the spiritual life, and these we remember – but there is a third that is just as necessary, and often forgotten. That pillar is the spiritual discipline of almsgiving.

“Alms” is one of those words that only gets used in Church. We often speak of “almsgiving” as charity, but it’s good for us to remember what “alms” and “charity” actually mean. “Alms” actually comes from the Greek “ἔλεος,” via Old English, Germanic, and Latin, and simply means “mercy.” Charity also comes from the Greek “χάρις,” meaning grace, referring to the loving grace of God. Whether we’re talking about almsgiving or charity, then, what we’re really talking about is showing our neighbor the same love, grace, and mercy that God shows us. Almsgiving and charity can take any form, far beyond some kind of donation – a kind word, a smile, a few moments of conversation, or a helping hand – however we can show love, mercy, and grace.

Almsgiving can be harder for us, because we don’t necessarily think of this as a spiritual discipline, just a “good thing to do.” The giving of “alms,” however, is as necessary a component of our spiritual lives as is prayer and fasting, and whenever we fast and pray, we are commanded to give alms as well. Why? Because we fast to conquer our own pride and vanity, so that we can pray and enter into communion with God and His Church, and we give alms (literally, mercy) to our neighbor to enter communion with them and to remind us of the mercy we have, ourselves, received from God.

Each fast, we struggle with the fasting, and we have set times aside for additional prayer. How can we prepare for the almsgiving part of the upcoming fast?

1. Be intentional. Set aside money and other things specifically for this. Set aside and carry cash specifically for almsgiving, so you’re ready for the Salvation Army buckets or someone in need.
2. Be regular – almsgiving is a spiritual discipline, and so it helps less if it’s practiced only once or irregularly.

Father’s message continued page 2….
Father’s Message….

3. Do it together. We do extra outreach as a community during these seasons because, like fasting and prayer, this is a discipline that not only needs community, but is intended to increase communion. As a family, or as a parish, we grow in Christ together.

4. Give quietly, in secret, if possible. The point is to practice mercy and love for our neighbor, not to show off our generosity or our means, or to receive praise. “When you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” (Matt. 6:3-4)

5. Remember: Giving alms is not about leftovers, but about mercy and love for our neighbor. Don’t just use the leftovers from your holiday budgets and closets.

The nature of the cultural observation of Christmas means that we’ll have innumerable opportunities to practice almsgiving this year. Having so many opportunities can also result in “donor fatigue,” when we become overwhelmed by the requests and stop responding to any of them. One reason we become overwhelmed, though, is because we treat each opportunity as a separate decision. If we decide, in advance, that we will respond to every opportunity, and set aside the resources so that we are able to respond to each and every one – even if only in a small way – we will have a much better fast. Remember, almsgiving is not just about money and coats, but about sharing the love, mercy, and grace of God with our neighbors, especially those in need.

God bless you all, and good strength for the coming fast!
In Christ,
+Fr. Timothy

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Prosforon & Fellowship Schedule

Nov 3  P: Taylor Blohm  
F: Judy Blebea - GENERAL ASSEMBLY w/pizza

Nov 10 P: Olga Anagnost  
F: Thanksgiving Potluck

Nov 17 P: Haroula Reitz  
F: George & Fran Rouman

Nov 24 P: Gust Triantifillou  
F: Eleni Morris

Many thanks to all the women who prepare the Prosforon each week. It is truly an important offering for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. If you are unable to prepare Prosforon for your scheduled Sunday, please contact the church office promptly.

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ALTAR VIGIL CANDLES

10/6-12 - Better Health for Russ Ahejew by Petro & Sandra Ahejew

10/6 - In Memory of John Nikolakakos by Sophia Bernhart & Family. May His Memory Be Eternal


10/20 - In Memory of Stella Anagonstopoulos by Sophia Bernhart & Family. May Her Memory Be Eternal

10/20 - In Memory of Elizabeth Zoiopoulos by Sophia Bernhart. May Her Memory Be Eternal

10/20 - For Dimitra Kondogiani, Happy Name Day, by Marge Paron & Family

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PHILOPTOCHOS CORNER

October was been a very busy month for the Philoptochos!
We prepared 54 pans of spanakopita and 52 pans of tiropita.
We had a potluck dinner for the St Demetrios vespers and hosted 50+ guests from St. John’s church.
Thanks to all, we are a very hard working group that always comes together and gets the job done.
Our bake sale is well underway and please get the word out to your friends.

Thanks to all!!
Joni Porchia
President
FALL GENERAL ASSEMBLY – AGENDA (1 HOUR, 17 MINUTES)

NOVEMBER 3RD, 2019

1. Opening Prayer, Election of Assembly Chair & Secretary (2 min)
2. Minutes of Spring General Assembly (5 min)
3. Father’s opening address (Fr. Timothy) (5 min)
4. Old Business
   a. Appoint Election Committee (5 min)
   b. Church Sign (David Nichols) (10 min)
5. Festival Report
   a. Greek Festival (2019) (David Nichols) (15 min)
   b. Motion to Approve (2020) (5 min)
6. Treasurer’s Report (Corey Ferris)
   a. Proposed 2020 Budget (10 min)
7. 2020 Stewardship Campaign (David Nichols) (5 min)
   a. Select Audit Committee (2019) (5 min)
9. Other Business (5 min)
   a. Questions on Written Reports
10. Closing Prayer

CONFESSIO WORKSHOP

WHAT IS CONFESSION?  HOW DO WE DO CONFESSION?

WEDNESDAY
OCT. 30TH
6:00 PM

SATURDAY
NOV. 2ND
1:00 PM

WEDNESDAY
NOV. 6TH
6:00 PM

SATURDAY
NOV. 9TH
1:00 PM

WITH PRESBYTERA CATHERINE

This workshop is designed specifically to help our children begin to learn how to receive this vital sacrament of the Church, but it is open to everyone over age 7. We especially encourage our children in the upper two Sunday School classes to participate.

All children MUST be accompanied by at least one parent, and each session will be offered twice (on Wednesday evening and Saturday afternoon) so that everyone has an opportunity to attend.

The workshop will conclude with a special session on November 16th, with all participants receiving the Sacrament of Confession.

We strongly encourage parents to participate alongside their children.

CONFESION DAY - NOVEMBER 16TH
WITH FR. TIMOTHY & FR. PETER
Thanksgiving

Come Join Us for Dinner!

November 10th after Liturgy in the Hellenic Center
Bring a dish to share!

The Church will provide the turkey.

Celebrate with your church family, and clean out your fridge as we begin to prepare for the Nativity Fast!

St. Demetrios Christmas Card!

We're getting ready to place our order for the parish Christmas card. To be included in this year's card, please fill out this form and drop it off at the pangari desk after the service or send it to the Church Office along with a check for $10 made out to St. Demetrios.

Mail to: St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church
        4970 Mackinaw Road
        Saginaw, MI 48603

Your name:______________________________________________

How you would like to be listed in the card:__________________________

Christmas card forms will also be available at the Pangari. Simply fill one out when you come to the church. Your $10 donation helps defray the cost of the card.
St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church
2020 Stewardship Commitment Form
“Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”
Psalm 90:12

A TIME FOR EVERY PURPOSE UNDER HEAVEN

Please bring this form to the Church or mail it to the Church Office at 4970 Mackinaw Rd., Saginaw, MI 48603

Name: ________________________________________________
Street Address: ___________________________ City: _______________ State: ___ Zip Code: _____________

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In gratitude for God’s blessings, I/we pledge to contribute for Christ’s work at St. Demetrios Church for 2020.
$ _______ weekly $ _______ monthly $ _______ quarterly $ _______ semi-annually $ _______ annually

Our goal as a parish is to raise our stewardship by $20/month for the 2020 calendar year. However, stewardship is a spiritual discipline that should be discussed with your spiritual father.

Please indicate areas of expertise or interest where you would like to serve:
(Individuals should provide a check mark and families provide "H" for husband, "W" for wife and "C" for children)

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I/we would like to receive notifications from St. Demetrios by: ___ email ___ paper mail

You can also submit your stewardship card and your contributions online at www.stdemetrios.mi.goarch.org/stewardship

CONFIDENTIAL: For Authorized Parish Personnel Only
November 10th
DEAD LINE FOR ORDERING

Best Deal
$45
1 dozen of each

Combo

Torpita

Spinach Pie

Baklava

Walnut Dessert

Spanakopita

$28 (2 dozen)

$16 (1 dozen)

$32 (2 dozen)

$20 (1 dozen)

$57 (1 dozen)

Make checks payable to: Philoptochos Society
4970 Mackinaw Rd, Saginaw, MI 48603
Saint Demetrios Greek Church
Friday, November 22th, Noon to 6 PM
Pickup Orders

Please call:
Helen Morris: 989-781-6624
Joan Porchias: 989-791-2125
For more information please call:
Saginaw, MI 48603
4970 Autumn Ridge
Philoptochos Holiday Bake Sale
Please Mail Pre-Paid Orders To:

HOLIDAY BAKE SALE

Authentic Home Made Greek Delicacies

Ladies Philoptochos Society
Saint Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church
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**Note:** The document includes a calendar with events and activities for the week of November 2019.
Share your time and talents! Join the Parish Council. Sign up form located on the bulletin board. For more details just ask any council member.

As part of our outreach effort this season, our Parish will be making food baskets and delivering them to needy families. Join us as we celebrate our Lord’s Nativity by sharing the love He came to show the world.

(1) If you would like to help support this ministry, please fill out the form below.
(2) Take an tag from the Giving Tree in the Narthex and follow the instructions. We will deliver the gifts at the same time as we deliver the baskets.
(3) Sign up at the pangari or contact Andrea to help:(1) assemble the baskets on Friday, December 20th at 10:00 am, and (2) deliver the baskets on Saturday the 21st at 8:00 am.

*If you have questions, please speak to Andrea Ferris.*

Name: ________________________________  Cash ☐

Amount: ________________________________  Check ☐

*Please make checks out to St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church, with "Food Baskets" in the memo line.*

"Feeding the hungry is a greater work than raising the dead.." - St. John Chrysostom