



WESTERN PRELACY

OF THE ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH OF AMERICA

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Great Lent

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The seven weeks preceding Easter is called Great Lent. During the days and weeks of Great Lent, we prepare ourselves spiritually to commemorate the greatest event in the history of mankind, the victory of Christ over death. Great Lent is a time to repent, to change our lives and turn to God in faith, prayer, fasting, and deeds of love and mercy. Limiting our intake of food and/or eliminating certain foods and worldly pleasures altogether reminds us to focus on our spiritual nourishment.

The Sundays of Lent take us through the entire history of humankind, from creation to the glorious second coming. The hymns and Scripture lessons of each day support the meaning of the Lenten Journey: that through prayer, repentance, fasting and Christian witness, we can draw near to God once again.

The heart of Lent is inner penitence and reconciliation with God.

Lent gives us the opportunity to:

- Renew our commitment to God
- Reflect on our lives and let our path be directed by God
- Respond to Jesus' call for love and mercy toward all of God's children

Prayer, fasting and almsgiving, like three legs of a tripod, make up the traditional practices of Lent. Prayer nourishes our spirits. Fasting disciplines our bodies, helps us seek the Lord with greater intensity and puts us in solidarity with those who suffer. And works of charity enlarge our hearts as we commit ourselves to the good of others.

1. Prayer and Reflection: Prayer means speaking with God in spiritual communion. Reflection means examining your life seriously and thoughtfully. Prayer and Reflection help you to receive spiritual strength and growth, and studying the Bible will increase your understanding of God's Word and strengthen your faith and hope.

2. Fasting: During Lent, Christians should try to observe some form of fasting. Lenten fasting has a special meaning; it recalls the time Christ suffered and died to redeem humanity. Fasting can be a way to cleanse body and mind; it imposes self-discipline, encourages meditation and reflection and helps give meaning and direction to life.

These consist of self-sacrifice to serve and benefit others. Christ and His apostles spent their lives serving others. Christ instructed His followers to do good for spiritual rewards, not for human recognition. These practices help to strengthen Christian living, encourage compassion and charity in your daily life, and ease the burdens of those in need.

FIRST SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT

The first Sunday of Great Lent is called the SUNDAY OF EXPULSION, the Sunday of exile from the Garden of Eden. The Gospel readings of the day teach us about the law and t Christian conduct. This Sunday reminds us that when we sin by ignoring God's will or breaking His commandments, we suffer, just as Adam and Eve suffered when they disobeyed Him in the Garden of Eden. All around us, there are constant temptations to put ourselves and our wishes ahead of what God wants. When we do, we sin. We separate ourselves from God, just as Adam and Eve did. Like them, we may even try to hide from God. But we only hurt ourselves when we do so. With each sin we move further and further away from Him. It is we who expel ourselves from God's presence by our actions and are thus closed off from God's grace.

SECOND SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT

The second Sunday of Great Lent is called the SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON. The Gospel readings of the day teach and declare Jesus' concern for the lost, and God's love for the repentant sinner. The Scriptures indicate that when we decide to repent and return to our loving Father's love and grace, He will receive us and forgive us. If all sinners had the courage to ponder on their mistakes and wrongdoings and repent, then they will become worthy of our Heavenly Father's compassionate mercy.

THIRD SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT

The third Sunday of Great Fast is called the SUNDAY OF THE UNJUST STEWARD. The Gospel readings of the day recount Jesus' parables that teach us the prudent use of material goods. Man was appointed by God as a steward in this world. People should therefore perform the duties entrusted to them conscientiously and faithfully. In the Parable, the rich man represents God himself. We, as His managers in this world, sooner or later will have to give account of our stewardship. One day we will all be called to give account of our life and will be judged accordingly.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT

The fourth Sunday of Great Lent is known as the SUNDAY OF THE UNRIGHTEOUS JUDGE. The Gospel readings of the day remind us to be persistent in prayer as well as recognize our sinfulness and complete dependence on God's love and grace. Here the great lesson we learn

hope nor forget the coming Judgment Day, and we must never lose hope. The Scriptures also proclaim the coming kingdom of God and of Jesus Christ as the righteous Judge.

FIFTH SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT

The fifth Sunday of Great Lent is known as the SUNDAY OF THE SECOND COMING. The Scripture lessons of the day teach and inform us that our resurrected Lord and Savior Jesus Christ surely will come to judge the living and the dead. We are shown that just as everything begins with Almighty God, everything will one day end with Him. As Christians and followers of our Lord Jesus Christ, on this Sunday we should be looking forward to the Second Coming of Christ. We are shown that He stands as the complete Lord and Sovereign of the past, the present, and the future. We are called to always be ready.