

RAISING SAINTS



CHILDREN + FAMILY MINISTRY // WEEKLY GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

SECOND SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT - SUNDAY OF EXPULSION LEVEL 1: AGES 5 - 8

Last Sunday at Church we celebrated Great Barekandan, the day before Lent began on Monday. You probably noticed that the curtain on the altar was closed. Did your parish have a special celebration of joyful activities, good food like mantee, shish kebab, and pakhlavah? If you did, I hope you enjoyed it well!

During the next six weeks of Lent we shall be paying special attention to three things that will help us to be good friends of Jesus, our Lord. Jesus loves all of us, and in a very special way he loves children. He knows how difficult it is sometimes for children to be good listeners, follow directions well, to play well with classmates, to be kind to all people, to tell the truth, to share what they have with those who do not have enough to eat or clothing to wear. Jesus teaches us that if we want to behave in a way that would make God happy, we must do three things.

1. Pray often, just like Jesus did by spending time alone and talking with God.
2. Give alms or do kind acts.
3. Fast, or try to stay away from desserts and eat simple foods. It also means not to watch TV or video games.

On the notebook page below write how you plan to follow Jesus' suggestion to pray, give alms, and fast during the six weeks of Lent.

1. How and when do you pray?

2. How do you show kindness to people at home and at school?

3. Which one of your favorite foods or TV shows will you give up?

Here are some prayers you can learn. Pray them during Lent and every day of the year.

A MORNING PRAYER

Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. (Psalm 51:15)

PRAYER FOR WISDOM

Jesus, wisdom of the Father, give me the wisdom to think, to speak and to do what is good;

keep me away from evil thoughts, words and deeds.

Have mercy on your creatures and specially on me, a great sinner.

St. Nersess the Graceful

LEVEL 2: AGES 9 - 12

Last Sunday, February 19 we celebrated Great Baregandan. Perhaps in your Church School you did something that was fun, and ate good food. Have you ever wondered why we have these joyful events on that day?

It has something to do with the meaning of the word 'baregandan.' In Armenian Baregandan means 'day of good living.' On this Sunday before Lent we are reminded of a story in the Bible about the creation of the world.

In the Book of Genesis we read how God created everything that is in the world including human beings. We learn about the happy life Adam and Eve had in Paradise, where they could live carefree and happily in God's presence. Those were the happy days, until Adam and Eve lost that privilege

because of their disobedience to God's one commandment and could not live in God's presence any more. Since then, all humans have lost that joyful, carefree life in the garden of Eden because of Adam and Eve's first sin of disobedience.

But God is a loving God and has continually called us to come back to him by sending his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ to show us the way. Therefore, the Church offers us the opportunity during Lent to examine ourselves, and correct whatever behavior or attitude separates us from God. Three words describe that effort: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

Look at the words and phrases listed and draw a line to the word which it best describes. You may find more than one for each word.

PRAYER	•avoid eating rich foods
FASTING	•conversation
MEDIA	•give money to the needy
ALMSGIVING	•relationship
	•shelter the homeless
	•reduce time spent on social
	•spend time with a friend
	•be a friend to one who is alone
	•make more time for charitable works

Attitude is extremely important as we engage in prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. In the Gospel of Matthew 6:1-18, Jesus identifies the attitudes acceptable to God as we **pray, fast, and give alms**. In your Bible read the verses indicated next to each word. Identify the wrong and correct attitudes, then write them next to each word under the proper heading.

WRONG

CORRECT

PRAYER Mt. 6:1-4	_____	_____
FASTING Mt. 6:5-15	_____	_____
ALMSGIVING Mt. 6:16-18	_____	_____

As you walk the Lenten journey reflect and identify what you need to do to enhance your prayer life, what are somethings which you may need to change in your daily routine so that you can "make room" for God's loving presence in your heart. Pray this verse from St. Nersess the Graceful's *Personal Prayer of Every Christian Believer* every day.

*Jesus, wisdom of the Father, give me the wisdom to think, to speak and to do what is good;
keep me away from evil thoughts, words and deeds.
Have mercy on your creatures and specially on me, a great sinner.*

LEVEL 3: AGES 13 - 17

Great Baregandan is considered the first Sunday of Great Lent and points to a biblical theme presented to us in the story of creation, specifically pointing to the happy life of Adam and Eve in Paradise. The Jashou Hymn sung on Great Baregandan summarizes that.

*The Word, of the same essence of the Father
and coexistent with the Holy Spirit, joined
his divine image with our human nature,
he adorned it with glory and placed it
in the Garden of Eden.*

*In Eden did man exult in joy without pain, for
he could see God always present in the garden
and the imprint of the divine light was ever on his soul.*

The Holy Table on the altar signifies life with God, since the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ is enthroned there. It is reminiscent of humanity's joyful, pain free life in the presence of God in Eden. When the curtain is closed, visually we are reminded of our loss of being with God. In the Synaxis Hymn of this day, we are reminded of the effort we need to make by repenting of our sins through fasting, prayer, and almsgiving.

*The law of fasting in holiness
you established first in paradise,
the first creatures broke the law and with the tasting
of the fruit tasted the bitter fruit of sin and death;
O Lord, grant us now to taste the sweetness of your
commandments.*

Usually, people in our communities think of Lenten fasting as a "giving up" of a favorite food. Fasting is actually "taking on" an attitude of thanksgiving, sharing, and developing self-discipline. Such a stance enables one to become less dependent on habits of food and activities which often divert our attention from what is truly important in life.

- Think of somethings which you consider you could not do without, such as TV, social media, social activities. During Lent make the effort to free yourself from these. This might just enable you to have more time to pray and to do works of charity-another word for almsgiving, and praying. After all, prayer is simply taking time to be and speak with God, just like you would with a dear friend.

The Gospel reading for this Sunday is Matthew 5:17-48 where Jesus gives us the true meaning of the Ten Commandments. Verses 43-48 speaks poignantly about current events worldwide which have touched our lives. We know that right after the earthquake that shook Turkey and Syria, Armenia's government sent rescuers and humanitarian aid to Turkey and Syria. In the context of the long and painful history between Armenians and Turks this is a moment of grace for fulfilling Jesus' commandment, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons and daughters of your Father who is in heaven;"

You are invited to pray for the peace of the world. An important part of that prayer is for each one of us to contribute to mend broken hearts, forgiving each other's sins so that we can become true disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ. Make this verse from St. Nersess the Graceful's *Personal Prayer of Every Christian Believer* your prayer during this Lenten period.

*Heavenly king, give me your kingdom which
you promised to those who love you; give me
also the strength of heart that I may be able to
hate sin and to love you only and to do your will.
Have mercy on your creatures and especially on me,
a great sinner.*

