

Great Lent and Holy Week Calendar (Weeks 1 & 2)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>Forgiveness Sunday This day has two themes: remembering Adam and Eve’s expulsion from Eden, and our own need for forgiveness.</p> <p>As a family, talk about Forgiveness Vespers, practicing what to do ahead of time. Then, attend and participate!</p>	<p>Clean Monday Talk about the garden of Eden. What was it like?</p> <p>Read together “Adam and Eve Disobey God”.</p> <p>Why did Adam and Eve have to leave the garden? How does that relate to us on Clean Monday?</p>	<p>Object lesson time! Follow this short lesson that illustrates forgiveness through dissolving paper in a memorable way. (You will need dissolvable paper cut into small strips, warm water, a large bowl, and pens.)</p>	<p>Work together to make a “Forgive” poster to hang in your home. It could be a collage of pictures of people that look like they are forgiving each other; a fancy rendition of the word “forgive”; or an acrostic or other poem.</p>	<p>Take time as a family to continue to seek forgiveness. Write a note or letter (or draw a picture) for someone who you did not yet get to ask for forgiveness. Be sure to deliver/send them out!</p>	<p>Think of someone whom your family has needed to forgive. Anonymously do something kind for that person: pray for them, send them a note, bake them cookies, etc. Modeling this kind of forgiveness in action is important for our children.</p>	<p>Family members have many opportunities to sin against each other. Within the family is an excellent place to practice forgiving. Begin a regular tradition of asking forgiveness of each other. This can be done weekly (for example, before Divine Liturgy) or daily (perhaps at bedtime).</p>
<p>Sunday of Orthodoxy Today we celebrate the Orthodox Faith being preserved for us. This is also the Sunday when we get to speak loudly in church! Before the service, discuss this day with the aid of this article.</p> <p>Talk about and practice the statement that we will loudly proclaim.</p>	<p>Talk about icons. What are they for? Why do we have them in our home? Make a wish list of icons that each family member would like to have in your home someday. (Pascha gift idea?!?)</p>	<p>Host a parade of icons in your home. Have each family member carry his/her favorite icon as you walk through the house singing “O Lord, Save Thy People and Bless Thine Inheritance...” Then circle up and each tell why you chose that icon.</p>	<p>Make “stained glass” icons to hang in the windows of your home during Great Lent. Print icons, color them with crayon, and then apply vegetable oil with a cotton swab until the whole icon is oiled. Hang and enjoy! (Over 150 printable line art icons available here.)</p>	<p>Many churches participate in pan-Orthodox services on the Sunday of Orthodoxy. Did yours? Regardless, this is a great time to talk about Orthodox Christians from other jurisdictions and how we are brothers and sisters. If possible, attend another Orthodox church’s service during this Lent.</p>	<p>Practice saying “Lord, have mercy” in other languages. Learn some new ones if you can! Start with Greek, Arabic, Slavonic, Korean, Spanish, French, Swahili, Albanian, and Coptic.</p>	<p>Take pan-Orthodoxy to a personal level. Contact the priest of a nearby church in another jurisdiction and ask if any of his parishioners have children the age of yours who would be willing to be penpals and/or gather for playdates. Help your children make other Orthodox friends in this way.</p>

Great Lent and Holy Week Activity Calendar (Weeks 3 & 4)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas St. Gregory Palamas is celebrated today because he “upheld the Orthodox doctrine that humans can know God not only through the intellect but also through experience of His uncreated energies.” After reading this article about St. Gregory Palamas together, talk about times when you have experienced God.</p>	<p>Study together the life of St. Gregory Palamas. St. Gregory loved God even when he was young. His parents passed “the pearl of great price” (the Faith) to him. Talk about the value of serving God all of your life, not just during Lent. Make an “oyster” with a “pearl” by utilizing an egg carton and a few art supplies.</p>	<p>St. Gregory was young, wealthy, and smart. But instead of taking a good-paying job he sought after “that good part, which will not be taken away” (Luke 10:42). What are the “good parts” that we should spend our lives doing, especially during Great Lent? Glue a magnet to the back of your oyster and use the “oyster magnet” to hold a list of “good parts” to the fridge.</p>	<p>St. Gregory, as a young monk, became very attached to the “Jesus Prayer”. Talk about the “Jesus Prayer”: What is it? When should we pray this prayer? Hang a copy of it in your prayer corner. Practice praying it together.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.</i></p>	<p>We are supposed to pray more during Lent. To help you do so, make a prayer rope by following along with this instructional video or through a pictorial tutorial.</p> <p>Or make a simplified one with kids: string 32 pony beads and one cross bead on an elastic thread. Tie the ends into a bracelet for prayer.</p>	<p>St. Gregory Palamas spent most of the week in prayer. Talk together as a family about ways to pray more often, beginning during this Lenten season. Add a family prayer time in the morning or evening if you do not already have one. Think of “prayer reminders” (for example, say a prayer every time you hear an emergency vehicle pass by) that will help you stop and pray more often.</p>	<p>It was said that St. Gregory Palamas’ love and respect for people made even his captors admire him. Can that be said of us? What kind of “trail” do we leave behind? Illustrate this with a tray of flour: “walk” a rock, a plastic animal with a tail, and a small doll through the flour. Look at the trails. Talk about how everywhere we go, we leave an impact on others by how well we love them.</p>
<p>Sunday of the Holy Cross Before leaving for Liturgy today, practice singing the apolytikion, “<i>O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance, granting to Thy people victory over all their enemies; and by the power of Thy Cross, protect Thy community!</i>”</p>	<p>Become more aware of the Cross’ presence in your life. Go on a cross hunt in your home! Talk about the Holy Cross and why it is so important to Christians. Ask your children how we venerate the cross. Then go from room to room, looking for crosses and venerating them.</p>	<p>Work together to “uphold the Cross” in your home. Select one of your family’s crosses (or purchase one at a craft store if you don’t have one yet) to use as a focal point of a display. Make a centerpiece in your prayer corner or on the kitchen table that holds up the cross for all to see.</p>	<p>The Cross reminds us of Christ’s willingness to sacrifice His very life for us. Talk about fasting with your family: what are you “sacrificing” or giving up during Lent? How is it helping you or others? What else can you do to become more like Christ?</p>	<p>This Sunday’s Gospel reading was about taking up our cross and following Christ (Mark 8:34-9:1). Listen to the Gospel story or read it as a family. Answer the questions together.</p> <p>For March 25: Look together at the special details on this icon of the Annunciation.</p>	<p>Remind yourselves to take up your cross and follow Christ by making small, beaded crosses to carry with you. These crosses can become a necklace charm, a keychain, or a zipper pull. Let these crosses remind you to follow Christ!</p>	<p>Create some cross-themed art to either display in your home or give as Pascha gifts. Cross art tutorials on the Orthodox Christian Sunday Church School Teacher blog offer a variety of mediums (See posts in December of 2014 through February of 2015.)</p>

Great Lent and Holy Week Activity Calendar (Week 5)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>Sunday of St. John Climacus Study the life of St. John Climacus with your children. This simple version is a good option for all ages and includes quotes from the saint.</p>	<p>Use a ladder or stairs to talk together about climbing towards God. Study St. John Climacus' steps on the Ladder of Divine Ascent. Select a few of his steps to work on together as a family. Write these steps on masking tape and stick the tape to the ladder rungs (or steps). Place the ladder where you will see it and be reminded to "keep climbing"!</p>	<p>"Do not be surprised that you fall every day; do not give up, but stand your ground courageously... assuredly, the angel who guards you will honour your patience." -St. John Climacus</p> <p>Watch this short video and talk about how Olympic champions don't just quit when they fall down. Hang a copy of the Olympic flag on your fridge to remind your family to get back up again when you "fall off the ladder."</p>	<p>Step 25 of the <i>Ladder of Divine Ascent</i> is the step that causes us to think about humility. The step calls humility "most sublime" and "destroyer of passions." Talk together about humility and its power against the passions. Encourage each member of the family to draw their own version of humility, perhaps as a superhero destroying the passions in his/her own life. Place your drawings where you can see them and be reminded of the power of humility in helping to conquer our enemies, the passions.</p>	<p>Step 14 of the <i>Ladder of Divine Ascent</i> focuses on our stomach and our appetites. Ask your family: "How are we doing with fasting?" Remember this rung as you eat less and eat things you may not prefer. If you're struggling in this area, it's okay! Don't give up if you've fallen – get up and keep trying!</p>	<p>Step 16 of the ladder is "on the love of money, or avarice." Work on climbing this step during Great Lent by looking for opportunities to help those less fortunate in your neighborhood. Put together a few "Blessing Bags" (basic necessities packed in a plastic bag to have available for when you encounter a needy person.) Look for opportunities to share them with those in need.</p>	<p>Step 11 of the <i>Ladder of Divine Ascent</i> is the step that causes us to consider how much we talk vs. silence. Set aside time as a family to be silent. It may only be a few minutes, or longer, depending on how old your children are, but spend time in silence. (Consider providing art or writing materials for anyone who wishes to respond artistically to that silence.) After the silent period, talk together about the experience. What did you like about it? What is good about silence?</p>

Great Lent and Holy Week Activity Calendar (Week 6)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt Study the life of St. Mary today in a version that is appropriate to read to children. It also includes many icons of different parts of her story.</p>	<p>Talk together about desert life. Is it easy to live in the desert? Would it be fun to live alone? St. Mary of Egypt lived in the desert alone for most of her life. Depending on the age of your children, have them draw a picture or list what must have been hard for her while living in the desert. Draw or write with crayon on fine sandpaper.</p>	<p>St. Mary of Egypt was repenting of her sins during her time in the desert. What does it mean to repent? Illustrate repentance with a glass and some water. Pour some of the “good things God has for us” (water) on the upside-down glass. It will not hold any of it! Talk about how we miss out when we are not following God: like the upside down cup, we miss the good things He has for us. Then, turn the cup right side up: repentance is a complete change of direction in life! Pour the water and fill up the “repentant” cup!</p>	<p>St. Mary of Egypt confessed her sins to Christ in the presence of the Elder Zosimas. We also need to confess our sins! Prepare for confession together, and then partake of the sacrament of confession. Forgiveness is a great way to approach Holy Week!</p>	<p>God always sends us help when we need it! Father Zosimas did not know how he would bury St. Mary’s body in the desert, but God helped him! What kind of helper did God send?</p> <p>We will not always expect God to act in the ways that He does. But we can be sure that He is at work in our lives! Make lion finger puppets to remind you of this. Use the finger puppets to help retell the story of St. Mary of Egypt.</p>	<p>St. Mary of Egypt turned her life around with God’s help. We need to turn our lives around, too. With repentance and confession, God helps us to do just that. Take one more look at her life and how she cooperated with God to change it in this discussion/activity about “metanoia” (repentance).</p>	<p>Lazarus Saturday Divide your family into two or more teams and have a Lazarus-Wrapping-and-Unwrapping Race.</p>

Great Lent and Holy Week Activity Calendar (Holy Week & Pascha)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>Palm Sunday Before Liturgy today, talk about what you will say and hear during the service. Talk about the words/phrases and what they mean. (For example, “Hosanna” and “Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.”) Prepare for Holy Week by reading printable guides that explain in simple terms what happens at each service this week.</p>	<p>Holy Monday Revisit the parable of the ten virgins (Matt. 25:1-13) in this way: Give a flashlight (some with good batteries, and some with dead/no batteries) to each family member and tell them that when you return, you will all go into the dark basement (or another dark space in your home) to find a hidden treat. Go and hide a special treat in your basement and turn out the lights there. Return to the family and go into the basement to hunt. Those without batteries who did not notice ahead of time will miss out as they look for batteries. Talk about the parable, how this relates, and why we need to prepare our hearts for Christ.</p>	<p>Holy Tuesday Compare the kindness of the harlot who anointed Christ’s feet with the sweet smelling ointment to the greed of Judas who wanted the money for the ointment instead of using it for Christ. Talk together: Which one of these people really loved Christ more than anything? Which one was thinking only of themselves? Who should we try to be more like and why? As a family, practice showing love for one another by giving each other foot massages with lotion.</p>	<p>Holy Wednesday Prepare for the Holy Unction service by talking about it together as a family. Why do we have this service? How can it help us to be better Christians? To help young children pay attention during the service, make a page containing seven “candles” and seven “flames” for each child. During the Holy Unction service, have the child draw a wick on a candle for each Epistle reading, color a candle for each Gospel reading, and color a flame for each prayer for healing.</p>	<p>Holy Thursday Discuss the 12 Gospels service before attending and participating in it. Encourage your children to pay close attention to each Gospel reading. Since the readings are from all four Gospels, each tells a different part of the story. “Mark” the number of the Gospel reading by tying a knot in a narrow ribbon after each reading. Or, make a half-sheet sized sketchbook for each child by folding three sheets of paper in half and stapling them together into a booklet. There is one page for every Gospel reading, so your child can draw or write something from that reading on the page.</p>	<p>Holy Friday What does it mean to lament? Talk about that word with your children, and why we call tonight’s service the “Lamentations Service.” Practice singing a verse of each stasis before the service, so you can all sing together when that part of the service arrives.</p> <p>Warn your children that this service contains “spoiler alerts”: we are so excited about Christ’s resurrection that we begin to talk about it even while lamenting His death! Count the spoilers in tonight’s service.</p>	<p>Holy Saturday In this morning’s service, you will hear the story of Jonah. Read it together as a family. Act out this story with a toy person and a grocery bag “big fish.” How does Jonah’s story compare to Jesus? What did Jonah do in his three days in the big fish? What did Christ do during His three days in the tomb?</p> <p>*Note: today would be a great day to nap in preparation for the Paschal service! If it will help your child nap, build a “big fish” or “tomb” tent over his/her bed. He or she can rest in there today!</p>
<p>Great and Holy Pascha!! “Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!” Learn how to say this greeting in a language other than your own, and joyfully proclaim the Resurrection!</p>						