

The Great Lent Challenge.

Christ is in our midst

Have you Do you want to grow closer to Christ, but you're *not sure where to start?*

Have you been going to Church for a while and feel like *you're not progressing in your spiritual life?*

Does church seem "same old, same old?" all of a sudden?

Let me tell you, you're not alone.

All of us sometimes feel like this. May you feel like you've hit a plateau.

Or maybe you feel like **you've never even started on your road to Christ.**

The truth is...

Seeking Christ when you live in the world is hard.

You're bombarded daily with so many things that make you forget about Him.

But you know that meeting Him once a week in church for an hour is just not enough...

Your soul wants and needs more.

But what can you do to draw closer to Him today?

Where do you even start?

The answer is easy. And our Church has been offering it to her children for millennia.

It's Great Lent.

Because this fast is:

- based on Christ's own 40-day fast in the desert
- designed to cleanse your soul
- meant to make you worthy to meet Christ
- intended for you to attain such closeness with God that you become *one* with Him

I know that often it feels like doing Lent is just too hard.

- It's hard to make time for church when you're overwhelmed with work and home life...
- It's tough to balance fasting and health during Lent...
- It's hard to make room in your busy schedule for one more thing...

Believe me, I get it.

But I am also asking you to believe me when I say that **the rewards of Lent are incredible**. Millions of people - many of them your ancestors - knew and cherished the great benefits of Lent.

They knew that the greatest good that comes from doing Lent properly is becoming closer with Christ and “glorifying Him with pure hearts” on Pascha.

That’s why so many Orthodox Christians have been saying for hundreds of years: “You can’t have Pascha without Lent.”

Just experiencing that other-worldly joy that comes on Pascha is enough to undertake Lent and all its difficulties gladly.

The joy of the Resurrection is life changing. It gives you a tiny glimpse of what it’s going to be like in the Kingdom of Heaven. Believe me: you will never forget it. And you will yearn for it – year after year.

If you decide to go on this life changing journey of finding the joy in Christ....

I will be there to help you – every step of the way.

Are you ready? Let’s dive in.

Since I know just how hard life can hit you during Lent, I’m offering you to join a Great-Lenten challenge.

This challenge is based on the 2000-year old wisdom of our Holy Church. Millions of people all over the world have used this method to get out of a spiritual rut, improve their relationship with God, and become stronger, spiritually fitter Christians.

And most of all – to experience the indescribable joy of the Resurrection of Christ that you will never forget.

If you want to become closer to Christ by this coming Pascha, I'm inviting you to accept this challenge.

This challenge is not for the faint-hearted.

It's not for those who are afraid of being uncomfortable. It's not for those who are afraid to work on themselves and grow.

I want to warn you that the holy fathers tell us that moving toward Christ means *encountering yourself*. You will meet your true self. Which could be painful and uncomfortable. But that's the only way forward.

So, if you're ready for this, here's what you need to do:

- **Fast to the best of your ability**

Clean your body so you can receive Christ within you. Talk to me if you need to modify the strict vegan diet our Church prescribes for this period. It's ok to take it slow.

- **Say morning and evening prayers**

Talk to Christ multiple times daily. You can't improve a relationship with someone without a lot of talking.

- **Come to church services as often as possible to be with Christ**

Especially for weekday services. Only during weekday services can you experience what Lent truly is. Because liturgically, Saturday and Sunday are “outside of Lent” and celebratory in nature.

Meet Christ in Church, hear the ancient poetry written by our Church fathers to help you on in your journey, leave the world behind to concentrate on your end goal.

- **Come to confession**

Experience the lightness that comes from unburdening your soul in this holy mystery. Heal your wounds (sins), and prepare for the most important and most rewarding step:

- **Take Holy Communion every Sunday until Pascha.**

Learn what it’s like to become ONE with Christ. What it’s like to let Him into your heart and to have Him burn away your sins. Experience the joy of being His child.

“This is all great,” you might say. “But we’ve never taken Communion so often this before.”

Maybe you haven’t. But the Church has. Millions of Orthodox Christians communed daily, and weekly for centuries. Because they knew how important union with Christ is.

“We are what we eat...”

If we *eat* Christ, we become one with Him. He comes to live in our hearts when we commune. And transforms us into the people He wants us to be.

That’s why our Church has recommended frequent Communion for centuries. And that’s why even though the Church respects those who do not want to be one with Christ, She recognizes that this choice automatically removes them from the flock.

Because in the Orthodox experience, it is impossible to attain oneness with God without Communion. “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.” (John 6:53)

To put it in very simplified lay terms, taking Holy Communion every Sunday is like drinking a gallon of fresh water every day. Think how good it is for you.

Then compare it with drinking an occasional cup of water once every few months or so, and filling up at other times with soda, coffee, juice, etc. Not healthy at all.

Think about it: our hearts are not meant to be empty. You either fill it God, or you fill it with other things.

Which will you choose?

Our Church says: “Taste and see that the Lord is good” (Ps.33:9). Our Church invites each one of us to follow Her guidelines to become closer to Christ. To try it out for ourselves, to “taste and see.”

Try it out. And see what the Church means when She says that “the Lord is good...”

You only have to wait until Pascha.

Fr. Radomir