



The St. Nicholas Navigator

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Pastoral Epistle: I Love Lent!

“Showing joyfulness of soul in the Fast, let us not be of a sad countenance; for the change in our way of life during these blessed days will help us to gain holiness.”

~ Clean Tuesday Orthros Canon

I love Lent. Of course, I love the whole Liturgical year, with all the festal and fasting seasons, each with its own unique character, and each with its wonderful, mysterious revelation. Still, there is something especially dynamic about the Lenten season.

Part of it, of course, is that it sets our face “to go to Jerusalem,” following our Lord to and through Holy Week, the Crucifixion and Pascha. We all love Holy Week and especially Pascha, which is the very center and summit of our Liturgical year. We motivate ourselves to keep the fast and keep struggling our way through Lent — even when we’re weary — by reminding ourselves that we can look forward to the Resurrection (and the end of the fast!). The 40-day fast developed, historically, from a recognition of the need for Christians to prepare themselves with sincere repentance that they might celebrate the glorious Pascha of our Lord with pure and fitting joy.



While it is true that Lent is a journey to a particular destination, and that the destination is Pascha, it’s also true that our whole life is a Lenten journey to the everlasting Pascha of the Kingdom. And until we step through the doorway of our physical death, and attain (we pray, by God’s abundant mercy, through the intercessions of the Saints) entrance into the eternal Banquet, we continue in this life-long Lent of our earthly sojourn.

What this means is that Lent is a season of the Church’s year that closely mirrors the reality of our lives in this world. I don’t know about you, but I’ve often felt a sense of loss moving from the “bright sadness” of Lent into the overwhelming blaze of the Paschal celebration. This, I’m sure, is not from any deficiency or defect in the splendor of that Feast, nor in the reality of the Lord’s victory over death. Christ truly has trampled down “death by death,” and left “not one dead...in the grave.” In His self-sacrifice on the Cross, He conquered evil “on behalf of all and for all.”

So why does Lent still feel more natural to me than any other season of the year? It isn’t that Christ hasn’t conquered, but rather that I haven’t yet perfectly received the mystery of His victory into myself. My heart must still be opened further — much further — to Christ, that His light might completely illumine it. This opening of the heart is what repentance, and

Lent, are all about. I love Lent because it takes a crow bar to the tightly shut, sin-chained doors of my heart, and forces them to swing open, creaking on their rusty hinges.

Thus, Lent is gift to us from the Lord, through the Church, our Mother. She calls us to embrace, enthusiastically and joyfully, this holy season that will “help us to gain holiness.” In the gently purifying light of the Fast, we grow gradually more accustomed to the radiance of the Resurrection. By the grace of the all-Holy Spirit and with our active cooperation through repentance, mercy, fasting and prayer, we can be made worthy to celebrate the everlasting Pascha with unspeakable joy. Nothing is more wonderful than that possibility! Thank God for Lent!

With love in Christ,
Fr. Daniel



Saving Doubt

By: Dr. John (Thomas) Goddard

“Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.” John 20:25

I trace my name “Thomas,” in part, to an admiration for my countryman, Thomas Jefferson.

Known most widely for his authoring of the Declaration of Independence, he also founded the University of Virginia, which I attended as an undergraduate student and medical student.

So at a very foundational level, Thomas Jefferson has been instrumental in the direction of my life as a physician in the secular world.

A modern man of the Enlightenment, he advocated the jettisoning of long-held traditions and practices in society if they did not satisfy the requirements of rational inquiry and the scientific method. His religious belief developed from the Trinitarian background of his youth to a Unitarian/Deist outlook – a pattern reflected in the creation of “The Jefferson Bible” in which he clipped out of the New Testament all references to supernatural occurrences that could not be explained by the rational scientific method.

In short, his belief could not compass the Resurrection since neither personal experience nor rational thought could explain it. Doubt and skepticism remained.

Modernity primarily knows reality by measurement. In medicine, this is reflected in the categorization that occurs with each patient encounter. Information received from the patient verbally is denoted as subjective information in the medical note. The information collected by the physician’s observation, inspection (visual), auscultation (hearing), and palpation (touch) is listed in the

objective portion since it is deemed to be free from bias – a fact and therefore true.

I think of this reliance on physical measurement to confirm truth when the Apostle Thomas, grieving like the rest of the disciples - perhaps more ashamed or annoyed that he had not been in the room when Jesus first visited them after the Resurrection – blurts out, “Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.”

And then He is there. And experience of the Truth overwhelms the paltry reliance on a rational, scientific method to comprehend Him.

The words of Thomas that condition belief are the paradigm upon which Enlightenment rationalists like Thomas Jefferson pursue truth in the world.

The story of Thomas, of course, does not end with doubt.

A tidal wave of reality appears to him – Jesus Christ in the flesh. The Great Captain, fresh off his onslaught in conquering Death and setting the captives free in Hades, stands in front of Thomas and commands him.

“Reach your finger here, and look at My hands and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.”

The rational mind is overwhelmed by the experience of He that is Truth.

And Thomas drops to his knees. Humbled, he acknowledges the divinity of the God-man.

“My Lord and my God!”

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Perhaps the most scientifically studied artifact in history is the Shroud of Turin – the linen cloth in which Jesus was purportedly buried

and, on which, the image of a crucified man is present.

The image itself garnered much modern attention in 1898 after Secondo Pia, photographer of the Shroud at an exhibition, discovered that the negative of his photograph displayed profoundly distinct features not seen by directly viewing the image on the cloth.

Eighty years later, a scientific research team conducted a variety of scientific tests on the Shroud to ascertain the method in which the image was made.

For the last forty years, a mountain of scientific inquiry has accumulated yet no mechanism of making the image known to man’s current and past capabilities has been shown to satisfy all of the characteristics of the image.

Perhaps, the Shroud of Turin represents the encounter of science and religion, doubt with faith.

On Saturday, March 17, 2018, a member of the original scientific research team, Barrie Schwartz, will be speaking on the Shroud of Turin at St. John Berchman’s Cathedral Parish Hall (939 Jordan Avenue, Shreveport LA) at 9:30 – 11:30 AM. Tickets \$10 Adults / \$5 Students.



**From *My Life in Christ*
By: St. John of Kronstadt**

We must love our neighbor still more when he sins against God, or against ourselves, because then he is sick, because then he is in spiritual misfortune, in danger; then, especially, we must have compassion upon him, pray for him, and apply to his heart a healing plaster – a word of kindness, instruction, reprisal, consolation, forgiveness, love. “Forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Eph. 4:32).

All sins and passions, quarrels and disputes, are truly spiritual diseases; that is how we must look upon them. Or, all passions are a fire of the soul, a great fire, raging inwardly; a fire proceeding from the abyss of hell. It must be extinguished by the water of love, which is strong enough to extinguish every infernal flame of malice and of other passions.

But woe and misfortune to us, to our self-love, if we increase this flame by a fresh infernal flame, by our own malice and irritability, and thus make ourselves the assistants of the spirits of evil, ever endeavoring to inflame the souls of men by means of many and various passions. If we do so, we ourselves shall deserve the fire of Gehenna; and if we do not repent, and do not become in the future wise unto good and simple unto evil, then we shall be condemned, together with the Devil and his angels, to torments in the lake of fire.

Therefore, do not let us be overcome of evil, but let us overcome evil with good. How accursed are we men! How is it that we have not yet learned to consider every sin as a great misfortune for our soul, and not to pity, heartily, sincerely, lovingly, those who fall into such a misfortune. Why do we linger in it? Why have we no pity upon ourselves, too, when we are subjected to any sin? Why do we not weep before the Lord, who created us? (trans. E. E. Goulaeff, pp. 211-212)



A portrait of St. John of Kronstadt



Parish News & Announcements

- **Lenten Retreat in the Works!** God willing, there will be a Lenten Retreat, with Fr. John Henderson from St. Peter in Madison, MS, hosted by St. Nicholas on Friday evening, March 23 and Saturday morning, March 24.
- **Lenten Book Study** under way. We are reading **Divine Energy: The Orthodox Path to Christian Victory** by **Fr. Jon Braun** for our Wednesday evening Lenten study. Please join us! Books are available in the bookstore.
- It's time to **order Holy Week books** for anyone who wishes to purchase one for this year. They are \$35 each. Contact Peter Filipek or Fr. Daniel if you wish to order one.
- **The Parish Life Conference**, hosted by Holy Trinity in **Santa Fe, New Mexico** is just around the corner. The Conference will run from **June 13-16**. To register and for more information, visit: **www.SantaFePLC.org**.
- **The St. Daniel (of Pereyaslavl) Burial Fund** has been established to provide a decent and holy burial for those who lack the means. To contribute to the fund, you can send a check, or drop it in the offering basket, with the earmark "Burial Fund."
- The Ladies of St. Nicholas are collecting **funds for flowers to decorate for Holy Week and Pascha**. Please give donations to Denise Busada or Dara Katsufrakis.
- Allen Lawrence offers **pro bono notary work** to members of our community. Contact Allen at: awl1957@outlook.com.

February Namedays

- Feb. 10 - Bobby Booras (St. Haralambos)
- Feb. 24 (1st Sat. of Lent) - Ted Casten (St. Theodore the Soldier)

February Birthdays

- Feb. 5 - Allen Lawrence
- Feb. 15 - Elton Stewart
- Feb. 19 - Abe Busada, Juanita Nicole Worthington
- Feb. 24 - John Hunter Berry, Warren Busada, Pete Katsufrakis
- Feb. 28 - John Goddard
- Feb. 29 - Youmna Moufarrej

Contact Us! Let us know what you'd like to see in the newsletter! Call, text, or email us at:

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