

Spiritual Fortification

while practicing self-quarantine and social distancing

Daily Readings – Let this be a time to re-commit to the practice of reading the appointed Scripture readings, the psalms of the kathisma, and the lives of the saints commemorated.

Holy Water - A faithful practice is to begin each day by taking a sip of holy water, and a small piece of dry antidoron. Similarly you may anoint yourself with holy oil. Holy water is sanctified and distributed at the feast of Theophany each year; ask your priest for a bottle if you do not have it. Simply add water to a small amount of holy water to replenish your supply.

Vigil Lamp – Keep an oil lamp lit in front of your icons. Wicks and floats are available at your parish bookstore or try easternchristiansupply.biz. Olive oil or alternative oils can be used. Light candles at prayer time.

Incense – Cense your home during morning or evening prayers or midday to remember God. Purchase charcoal and incense at your local bookstore or online.

Streaming Services – Orthodox Christian parishes are live streaming services, Bible studies, and discussion groups around the nation. We offer a listing on page 6.

Spiritual Reading – It's helpful to begin or end the day with a few minutes of spiritual reading. Read a homily or life of a saint for an injection of holy perspective and grace.

Lenten Practices – Many of our traditional practices take on new meaning during the present challenges:

- Fasting. We are all fasting from activities, normalcy, and connection that we are used to. In addition to the traditional fast from animal products, our menus are restricted by fewer trips to get groceries or the inability to find ingredients that we're used to having.
- Almsgiving. We can offer gentleness, kindness, patience, and warm smiles to everyone around us--everyone we see is in need. We can continue to tithe to our parishes, give to Intenational Orthodox Christian Charities (iocc.org), our parish benevolence fund, and organizations that are responding to immediate needs. We can pick up groceries, medications, or other small comforts for those who can't get out right now. We can set aside funds to help those whom will be feeling the brunt of this economic crisis in the coming months. We can donate blood to the Red Cross, which is experiencing a shortage.

- Prayer. Continue to incorporate the **Prayer of St. Ephraim** in morning and evening prayers. One version of the prayer reads this way:

O Lord and Master of my Life, a spirit of idleness, despondency, love of power, and vain talk give me not.

But rather a spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love, bestow upon me your servant.

Yes, Lord and King, help me to see my own faults and not to judge my brother, for you are holy, now and ever unto the ages of ages. Amen.

- Mark the days of Lent with the appointed hymns and readings, calendars, and Kyra Sarakosti, "Lady Lent" familyexperiencesblog.com/kyra-sarakosti
- Play Lenten hymns in the home. AncientFaith.com offers live streaming and other recordings are available online on CD or digitally.

Pray to St. Nikiphoros the Leper – Many people are committing to pray the paraklesis to St. Nikiphoros daily, and already people have received healing and visions of St. Nikiphoros in recent days. See page 13 for more about this saint.

Akathists and Paraklesis Services – We have many akathists and parakleses at the back of prayer books and countless services available online. Draw close to the Mother of God and the saints by reading these prayers.

Communal Prayer Time – The communities of Mt. Athos have invited the faithful to pray the Jesus Prayer daily together from 22:00-22:15 local time. You can also meet by Zoom, FaceTime, or mutual agreement to pray with family and friends.

Pascha Traditions – It's time to make Ukrainian pysanky, prepare to dye red eggs, and bake tsourekia (Easter bread). These traditions help us and our families keep the season. Pysanky supplies are available at ukrainiangiftshop.com. Collect red onion skins for dyeing red eggs naturally. Find a recipe, call a friend for advice, gather supplies, and begin.

Limit checking news – Consider making specific appointments to check for updates each day, in order to help you limit your media consumption throughout the day. Remove notifications about incoming email from your phone, watch, or computer.

Check the Psalms instead – Make similar appointments to read psalms or pray the hours.