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*Save me, O Lord my God: / Thou art the Salvation of all! /  
The storm of my passions troubles me; / the yoke of my sins  
weighs me down. / Stretch out Thy hand to help me;  
lead me to the light of repentance, // for Thou alone are the  
compassionate Lover of mankind!—"Lord I Call Upon Thee"*

*Stichera of Forgiveness Vespers in Tone 3.*

### **Olivia Ann's Baptism**

Brothers and Sisters, on Saturday, March 5 at 10:00 a.m., we will be baptizing and christening a brand-new Orthodox person: Olivia Ann Cooper. She is the daughter of our sister in Christ Elizabeth Cooper and her husband Ben, who is currently serving in the Armed Forces. A much-loved friend of many in our parish, Archpriest Basil Rhodes, will take part in the service.

### **The Feast of the Annunciation**

This year, we will have a Vespertal Liturgy at 6:00 p.m. on Friday March 25 for the great feast of the Annunciation of the Most-holy Theotokos. The Vespertal Liturgy begins as a Vespers but segues into the Liturgy at a certain point in both services. This is done because normal, daily Divine Liturgies are not in keeping with the Lenten spirit on weekdays in Great Lent.

However, on Thursday March 24, one night before our Vespertal Liturgy celebration, all who wish to attend are invited to a Great Vespers of the Annunciation at Fr. Jon Marguleas' parish, Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church, at 313 Tokay Avenue in Modesto. Fr. Jon and our present Metropolitan Jonah (who was then a Priestmonk) were instrumental in founding our mission.

### **Presanctified Liturgy**

On most Wednesdays during Great Lent, we will celebrate the Presanctified Liturgy at

6:00 p.m., followed by a Lenten soup dinner. The word "presanctified" means that the Eucharist is prepared and sanctified during the Liturgy of the preceding Sunday. The Presanctified Liturgy is an awesome, majestic service, and a spiritual aid for us during the Great Lenten Fast.

### **Repentance, Confession, and Absolution**

Great Lent is primarily a season of Repentance. Repentance helps us recall the basis of our salvation—turning away from the cloudy and shadowy distractions of a fallen world, and turning toward the life-giving light and understanding of Christ. Repentance is also the larger sacramental category that contains the sacraments of Confession and Absolution. We all repent daily when we decide against one action and do a better. Just so, in the Sacrament of Repentance, we are speaking of that same kind of "changing direction," in the context of our misguided actions, and our desire for relief from their negative spiritual resonance.

While church-goers of various denominations say that rather than partake of the Sacrament of Confession, they do their own "confessing to God," we Orthodox indeed "confess to God" in Confession, and the priest is there to help, with intercessory prayers, and the Keys to the Kingdom with which to absolve us of sins both large and small. Christ Himself said "Tell it to the

\*Corner of Jamestown Rd.  
& Robinwood Ln.  
(2 blocks north of  
Racetrack Rd.)

Church.” The Scriptures admonish us to “Confess to one another.” And—if we are not to confess and receive Absolution at the hand of a priest, why did Christ give His Apostles the ability to forgive sins, and why did they pass it on through Ordination?

Certainly, we know that God does nothing in an offhand, futile manner, or as a mere gesture signifying nothing. Confession and Absolution strengthen us. The Fathers say, “be ashamed of the sin, but never be ashamed of Repentance.”

### Confession as a Regular Practice

There are several ways in which to Confess—and all are acceptable in most parishes (certainly in ours). Generally, we prepare for Confession with a bit of spiritual self-searching (“self-examination”). Then, in Confession, we may choose to recall the sins we wish to confess by simple recollection; or, we may want to make a list of ways in which we have missed the mark, and read it at Confession. Then, too, we may ask the priest to read a list of sins (from a penitential service), so we can answer “yes” or “no” to each. Whatever the method, the point is to lighten our souls of useless baggage, and to rejoice in the freedom of God’s forgiveness.

The Church does not presume to tell us exactly when to confess, but that Confession should be a regular practice throughout the year—otherwise, Confession and Absolution become lost in the cloud of our own apprehension and doubt. Diocesan Bishops in the OCA generally hold that once every one to two months is desirable, and if we wish more frequent Confession, that can be arranged.

Those who set these guidelines also follow them. From His Grace Bishop Benjamin, to Metropolitan Jonah, to all Deacons, Priests, Bishops, Metropolitan and Patriarchs and faithful who wish to follow

the teachings of the Church—all confess regularly throughout the year.

The point is that we should not be shy. The following quote from the book, *Remember Thy First Love* by Archimandrite Zacharias Zacharou, was generously supplied in an e-mail by Fr. Luke Hartung, pastor of Dormition Orthodox Church in The Dalles, Oregon:

“...Elder Sophrony told me to encourage the people to confess precisely the things of which they are ashamed, for if they learn to do so, shame is transformed into strength against the passions, and they will overcome sin. This is precisely what occurred in the person of Zacchaeus. He bore shame voluntarily, and the Lord, Who was on His way to Jerusalem in order to suffer the Cross of shame, saw Zacchaeus bearing shame for His sake ... Christ has saved us through the Cross of shame, so when we suffer shame for His sake He considers this as gratitude, and in return He transmits to us His grace which regenerates our life.”

Many Orthodox Christians rightly consider Confession to be at the very center of our spiritual practice, and do not consider it demeaning, but as a positive sign of being on the right track—and so, become invaluable role models for fellow Orthodox Christians. Through all of this, God increases His grace within us, making us shine like lamps held high. Confession is a sign of clear-headedness and brings spiritual clarity. Again, we hear the Fathers: “Rejoice in Repentance.”

Great Lent encourages us to be spiritually bold. May we all have a “joyously sober” and edifying Lenten Season.

In Christ,  
Fr. Andrew

## MANY YEARS

### Birthdays:

Alisa Jacobs	March 14
Florence Craig	March 17
Natalie Teshin	March 17

### Anniversaries:

Dave & Jeanne Harmer	March 3
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### Namesdays:

Dave Harmer	March 1
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## St. Susanna Cleaning Team Schedule

*Blessed are those who love the beauty  
of God's house*

**Team 2—Mar. 19th; 9:00 a.m.**

*Thank you everyone for your help  
in beautifying our temple*

# Liturgical Schedule for March, 2011

—Confessions are heard after Vespers, before Divine Liturgy or by Appointment—

- Saturday, March 5** 10:00 a.m.—**Baptism** of the infant Olivia Ann Cooper and Churching of her mother, Elizabeth Cooper  
6:00 p.m.—Great Vespers for **Cheesefare/Forgiveness Sunday**
- Sunday, March 6** 9:00 a.m.—Divine Liturgy for **Cheesefare/Forgiveness Sunday**  
After Coffee Hour—**Forgiveness Vespers**  
Scripture Readings—Romans 13:11–14:4 and Matthew 6:14–21  
*Note: There will be a Parish Council Meeting following Divine Liturgy.*
- Monday, March 7** **THE GREAT LENTEN FAST BEGINS**
- Wed., March 9** 6:00 p.m.—**Presanctified Liturgy** followed by a Lenten soup dinner
- Saturday, March 12** 6:00 p.m.—Great Vespers
- Sunday, March 13** 9:00 a.m.—Divine Liturgy for **The Sunday of Orthodoxy**  
Scripture Readings—Hebrews 11:24–26,32–12:2 and John 1:43–51  
*Note: There will be a Lenten potluck following Divine Liturgy.*  
6:00 p.m.—**Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers**  
*It is the Orthodox custom to concelebrate the Vespers of The Sunday of Orthodoxy with Orthodox from other Orthodox jurisdictions—more on this as the time approaches.*
- Wed., March 16** 6:00 p.m.—**Presanctified Liturgy** followed by a Lenten soup dinner
- Saturday, March 19** 6:00 p.m.—Great Vespers for **Gregory Palamas Sunday**
- Sunday, March 20** 9:00 a.m.—Divine Liturgy for **Gregory Palamas Sunday**  
Scripture Readings—Hebrews 1:10–2:3 and Mark 2:1–12
- Wed., March 23** 6:00 p.m.—**Presanctified Liturgy** followed by a Lenten soup dinner
- Thursday, March 24** 6:00 p.m.—Visit to **Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Modesto** for their Parish Feast Day Vespers
- Friday, March 25** 6:00 p.m.—**Vesperal Divine Liturgy for the Annunciation of the Most-holy Theotokos**  
Scripture Readings—Hebrews 2:11–18 and Luke 1:24–38
- Saturday, March 26** **6:00 p.m.**—Great Vespers w/Litya for the **Veneration of the Precious Cross**
- Sunday, March 27** 9:00 a.m.—Divine Liturgy for the **Veneration of the Precious Cross**  
Scripture Readings—Hebrews 4:14–5:6 and Mark 8:34–9:1  
*Note: There will be a potluck following Divine Liturgy.*
- Wed., March 30** 6:00 p.m.—**Presanctified Liturgy** followed by a Lenten soup dinner

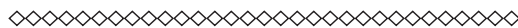
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*Liturgy Schedule continued*

**April**

- Saturday, April 2** 6:00 p.m.—Great Vespers for **St. John Climacus Sunday**
- Sunday, April 3** 9:00 a.m.—Divine Liturgy for **St. John Climacus Sunday**  
Scripture Readings—Hebrews 6:13–20 and Mark 9:17–31  
*Note: There will be a Parish Council Meeting following Divine Liturgy.*
- Wed., April 6** *No Presanctified Liturgy this evening*
- Thursday, April 7** 6:00 p.m.—**The Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete with the Reading of the Life of St. Mary of Egypt**
- Saturday, April 9** 6:00 p.m.—Great Vespers for **St. Mary of Egypt Sunday**
- Sunday, April 10** 9:00 a.m.—Divine Liturgy for **St. Mary of Egypt Sunday**  
Scripture Readings—Hebrews 9:11–14 and Mark 10:32–45  
*Note: There will be a Lenten potluck following Divine Liturgy.*
- Wed., April 13** 6:00 p.m.—**Presanctified Liturgy** followed by a Lenten soup dinner

*Note for the second half of April:*  
**April 16–24 is that period in which we celebrate Lazarus Saturday, Palm Sunday, Holy Week, and the Feast of Feasts, Holy PASCHA!**



**Prayer List** *(To ask us to pray for you, your family, or friends, please call Alex Teshin at 209-536-9999.)*

**PLEASE JOIN US IN GIVING THANKS TO GOD:**

- For the skill and devotion of those beautifying our temple and gardens.
- For the beauty of the Mother Lode, and for the privilege we have been given to live here.
- That the Holy Mother of Jesus continues to care for the unborn.
- That many of our petitions are being answered.
- That Kiah’s pacemaker surgery was successful and that she is doing well.

**PLEASE JOIN US IN PRAYING FOR GOD’S HELP:**

- “St. John, please intercede for us before God for the membership growth of St. Susanna.”
- That St. Susanna Mission may receive a Church Planting Grant.
- For repose of the souls of our service men and women who have given their lives for people of foreign lands.
- To safeguard all the troops who remain in heathen lands.
- To help us forgive heathen fanatics who continue to murder our soldiers and their own citizens and children.
- That many may come to Orthodoxy through our witness and example.
- To bless our monasteries and the men and women who dwell in them.
- For the healing of Matushka Anna.
- For health for Shay.
- For the healing of Bishop Nikolai.
- For health and strength for Athena.