



*Office of the Bishop*

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## **GREAT LENT 2016**

Protocol N. 8/2016

My beloved Faithful Clergy and Laity of our God-Protected Diocese:

As we begin Holy and Great Lent this year on March 14<sup>th</sup>, I want to share with you a few thoughts so that we may journey through this reflective period and arrive at the Great Feast of Feasts, Pascha to receive the Resurrected Christ.

We are reminded that there can be no true fast, no genuine repentance, no reconciliation with God, unless we at the same time reconcile with one another. In this holiest period of the ecclesiastical year, we should honestly examine our relationships with our families, our parish families, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and the Church in general.

After all, a fast without mutual love and forgiveness is “the fast of demons”. Part of our salvation in our daily lives is practicing love and forgiveness. Forgiveness is truly a glimpse of the Heavenly Kingdom in our sinful and fallen world. Only with God’s grace and a repentant heart can we truly return to unity, love, and harmony.

Great Lent involves hard work: on ourselves, our thoughts and feelings, our relationships with those around us. Our Lenten discipline of fasting, prayer, and charity is given to us not as a burden or hardship, but rather as an opportunity for restoring our relationship with God, our neighbors and ourselves. The Church invites us to transform our lives and to receive abundantly both peace and joy. Great Lent is an opportunity to renew our souls, minds, and bodies by entering more fully into a Christ-like life.

Therefore as we begin our Lenten journey together, I am asking you for your forgiveness as I forgive you for any offenses we may have caused each other. In addition let us pray for each other so that on that day of Pascha, we may sing with loud voices the beautiful Hymn of the Resurrection.

I pray that this Great Lenten Season is a spiritually uplifting experience for all.

Working in His Vineyard with much love,

+Bishop Gregory of Nyssa

*The American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese of the U.S.A.*

ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE OF CONSTANTINOPLE