

My beloved,

Winter is around the corner and Church feasts are becoming more frequent. We have more feasts in wintertime because the days are shorter, the weather is colder and the skies are greyer. But here come some great feast days to sprinkle color, brighten our lives and cheer us up.

Starting **November 7th**, we will celebrate Great Vespers for the Archangels Michael & Gabriel in the Church of Taxiarchae in Watertown, MA, and on the next day Divine Liturgy in our church. The Archangels are very popular, because they make people feel protected by their divine presence. Since they are patrolling the skies, they are also patron saints of the Greek Air Force.

November 13th we will visit St. Philip in Nashua to attend Great Vespers and the reception there. **November 16th** we will celebrate the feast of St. Matthew the Evangelist and **November 25th** and **30th** St. Catherine and St. Andrew respectively. Please join us on these occasions, and let's collectively pray for the intercessions of these saints for assistance in our lives. Finally, the Presentation of our Lady and Mother of God to the Temple will be celebrated **November 21st**. This is **one of the four (4) major annual feasts for the Virgin Mary**.

Please also remember **November 15th** the Advent Lent begins. The first month of this fasting period and up until **December 12th**, we can consume fish. But from the 12th until Christmas, most days except Saturdays and Sundays call for strict fasting. Feasts and fasts are followed by our Roman Catholic brethren, but they are almost completely unknown to our Protestant brothers. Yet, as Orthodox Christians we should uphold our sacred Holy Tradition and honor feasts and fasting.

How do we get started? By checking daily the wall calendar of our Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. If you do not have this free calendar, please call our Church Office (603-623-2045) and get one. In it, we can quickly be informed of the saints celebrated each day. There we can also find out which days we should be fasting and what is recommended to eat. Feasts and fasts are very important to our faith, as they are directly or indirectly celebrating Christ. In each year, our Holy Church has established **6 great feast days** for our Lord, **4 great feast days** for Theotokos (the Mother of God), **one great feast** day for the Holy Spirit and **one great feast day** for the Holy Cross (**12 major feast days in total**). In addition, each day of the calendar year is dedicated to one or more saints who imitated Christ and often gave their lives for Him. Without doubt then, honoring the Lord **on His feast days AND on Sundays**, honoring the Mother of God and honoring the saints by offering them a Divine Liturgy on their feast days is deeply engraved in our Orthodox faith. Furthermore, the feast day of a saint, is both his or her **memorial service** and **birthday party** all wrapped in one. It is a memorial because their feast is almost always on the anniversary of their passing. It is also their birthday party, because the day of their passing is their birth to eternal life. The Divine Liturgy on the feast day of a saint therefore, is a both a memorial service and a birthday party.

Finally, while fasting we eliminate certain food groups from our diet. Doing so, it allows us to gather abundant blessings. These blessings include that: we imitate Christ and His saints who also fasted; we chase away the devil who hates and advises against fasting; we subdue our passions; we spend less on food and free up money for charity; we temporarily get to feel what is like to be poor and hungry; we detox our body; we prepare for eternal life where food is not needed; but most and foremost..., we rise above our earthly self, and by becoming less depended on food, together with prayer, we try to approach God who is a spirit.

Happy Name Day for all celebrating their patron saint in November and a **Happy & Blessed Thanksgiving!**

Your Parish Priest,
Fr. Gregory