



# St. Herman of Alaska Eastern Orthodox Church

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"An Orthodox Presence in Northeastern Summit County"  
[www.sainthermanchurch.org](http://www.sainthermanchurch.org)



## Important This Week:

Wed 22Mar/Fri 24Mar—Presanctified Liturgy, 6PM  
Sat 25Mar—10AM Feast of Annunciation Liturgy, 6PM Vespers,  
Sun 26Mar—10AM Divine Liturgy

19Mar23

Sunday of the Cross/Tone 7

## The Midpoint of the Great Fast

People often confuse this Sunday with the Feast of 14Sep. After all, both have as a kind of 'focal point' a beautifully decorated Cross placed on the tetrapod before the ambo. Both consist of our singing, *Before Your Cross we bow down in worship, O Master...* as we make prostrations before the Cross.

But the Feast in September (one of the Twelve Great Feasts of the Church) is exactly that—it is the day on which we commemorate St. Helena discovering the true Cross of Christ in the year 326.

Today is NOT "one of the Twelve" major Feasts. Today, the Cross is given this place in the Church as a 'medicine', a salve to soothe us who have labored with the Fast. It is present to provide strength. It shows us by its presence, "Only a little while longer. You've made it this far. There's only this much more to go before our Lord will begin His walk to ascend the Cross. Take courage and endure just a little longer."

Today's Gospel speaks to us, beginning with three instructions from our Lord on living our lives in this world. He prefaces this

instructions with a kind of "test phrase" - *Whoever desires to come after Me.* The Greek word used is *opiso*. It does not mean one who comes later, but rather one who desires to be a follower. But now after this test phrase, Jesus continues with the instructions.

First—*Let him deny himself.* The Greek is *aparneomai*, and it means to utterly disown. Paraphrasing, to consider nothing of self.

Second — *Take up your cross.* The Greek is *airo*, that is to lift. One of the examples explaining the word puts it akin to saying, 'weigh anchor' so that you are ready to sail away. In this sense, lifting one's cross carries the meaning that, wherever the Lord is instructing me to go, my cross goes with me. So in a certain sense, taking up our cross is NOT so much our lifting a heavy load, but rather assuring that the *security* that is ours *through* the Cross remains with us—at all times, and in all places.

Third—*Follow Me.* The Greek here is *akoloutheo*, which means to accompany, like a disciple, to 'be in the same way with' the Lord. The root of this Greek word is *keleuthos*, and it means to 'be on

the road.'

Today, we approach the Cross with the same love and reverence we give it on that Feast day in September. But it returns to us much more that we give to it!

The Lord continues to teach us that those who seek to save their lives (translated as 'to make safe') will lose them (translated as 'destroy'). The only way to make your life 'safe' for eternity is to renounce the life you've been given in this world, and begin to live as one now living in and for the Kingdom of God.

Does standing before today's Cross and staring into its beauty speak these words to you? If yes, then the Fast has brought you great benefit. If no, there's still time before our Lord comes to ascend the Cross on Holy Thursday.

But as we say on Page 2 in the news section, the time indeed grows short. If you've benefited, don't stop. If you've not benefited yet from the Fast, begin now to seek the benefits that the Church has laid before us all in this season of the Fast.

**This Week's Prayer Requests**

**For Health—St. Herman's:** Met. Joseph, Pat Blazosky  
**Others:** Fr.Dn.Basil, Nikandra, Judy, Barry, Anne, Keith  
**For the Departed:** Patriarch Maxim, Metropolitans Theodosius and Maximos, Archpriest Stephan, Popadia

Marika, Matushka Illaria, Nun Theophania, Matushka Theodora, Stephen, Reader Charles, Betty Lou, Matthew

**Weekly Statistics**

|           |                  |       |             |          |
|-----------|------------------|-------|-------------|----------|
| Saturday  | Soul Sat Liturgy | 11Mar | 3 faithful  | 4 views  |
|           | Vespers          |       | 5 faithful  | 4 views  |
| Sunday    | Divine Liturgy   | 12Mar | 24 faithful | 13 views |
| Wednesday | PresanctLiturgy  | 15Mar | 9 faithful  | 5 views  |

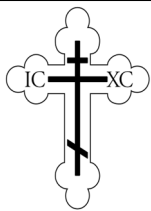
**In the News**

Videos of services can be found at:  
[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCfAOKICLMmH\\_FIDe8SoWOW](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCfAOKICLMmH_FIDe8SoWOW)

We have completed the third week of the Fast, and find ourselves face to face with the Cross. Have your spiritual preparations made you ready to stand at the foot of the Cross and to become a witness with the Myrrhbearers? St. Paul teaches, *“For He says, ‘In the time of My favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.’ I tell you, now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation.”* The time indeed grows short. Do your best to not wait until the 11th hour.

**The Spiritual Well**

Above all things: forget not the poor, but support them to the extent of your means.  
 Give to the orphan, protect the widow, and permit the mighty to destroy no man.  
 Take not the life of the just or the unjust, nor permit him to be killed.  
 Destroy no Christian soul, even though he be guilty of murder.  
 St. Vladimir of Kiev



*Just as the thought of fire does not warm the body, so faith without love does not actualize the light of spiritual knowledge in the soul.*

**(St. Maximos the Confessor)**

**Orthodox Pharisees (Abbot Tryphon)**

If your spiritual life is concentrated only on external practices and traditions, but does nothing to bring about real change, you have gained nothing. Too many people think as long as they keep the fasting rules, do their prayers, and attend the services, they are good Orthodox Christians. Yet if there is no love, no charity, and forgiveness of others, and your life is filled with gossip and judgement, your Orthodox Christian faith is worth nothing.

Christ condemned the Pharisees not because they kept the law and attended to the traditions of the Jewish faith, but because they did so while filled with pride and arrogance. With-

out sincere repentance and holiness of life, their encounter with God led to an emptiness of heart.

Because our Orthodox faith is one of tradition and liturgical structure, it is easy to fall into the trap of being nothing more than a Pharisee. Being strict in one's observance of Orthodox practices can easily lead to pride and arrogance. If you find yourself feeling better than others and proud of your piety, you have gained absolutely nothing. The external practice of the Orthodox Christian faith without heartfelt humility and repentance leads down the road of spiritual ruin.

The Church is the hospital of the soul, but healing

can only come if we put effort into it. If your doctor prescribes medication for your condition but you fail to follow your doctor's orders, you will not get well. The Church has all that you need for spiritual transformation, but healing only comes if you cooperate with the healing process.

The goal is holiness (wholeness) and is the direct result of our having submitted in all humility to a life of repentance. When you do this Christ changes you. If you simply go through the motions of your Orthodox faith, you are no better off than the Pharisees whom Christ condemned.

## The Faith of Turned-Off Gadgets (*Fr. Svyatoslav Shevchenko, orthodoxian.com*)

Christians who lived in the first centuries A.D. knew that man is a biological and social being, which means that asceticism is aimed primarily at pacifying the movements of the flesh and limiting social ties. In the early twenty-first century, our contemporaries suddenly realized that man is also an informational being. With the advent of the internet, a worldwide revolution has taken place in almost all areas of human activity. With the rapid development of digital technologies humanity really needed a break from the unrestrained flow of information that unceremoniously breaks into our lives. In the United States, this has resulted in a whole social movement promoting the voluntary refusal to go online. And a new term has appeared in English dictionaries—digital detox, digital detoxification.

As a result this popular initiative has grown into a memorable calendar date—the Day of Unplugging, which is celebrated annually on March 5. Providentially, the holiday falls precisely in Great Lent, and this year it fell on a Sunday, the day that every Orthodox Christian should dedicate to God. But a reasonable question arises: How can such a phenomenon be adopted by the Church? It's elementary. In fact, abstinence from entertainment that relaxes the soul is "sewn" into the ascetic logic of Great Lent. It remains for us to develop this question theologically and accept it conciliarly at the Church-wide level. But it takes time. What can we do right now?

Once, in the harsh and hungry 1990s, my grandmother made "cutlets" by grinding soybeans in a meatgrinder. Fortunately, this our region's crop. They would come out amazingly tasty and indistinguishable from the fishcakes she would make from pollock in times of prosperity. When I began to go to church, during the fasts I would recall how good they tasted and wished I could repeat my grandmother's recipe. Today, the food industry has learned how to create imitations of delicacies that differ little in taste from the originals. For example, a Canadian company recently presented the production of artificial salmon, which, in terms of composition, taste and nutritional content is indistinguishable from real fish. In short, now you can keep fasts without straining yourself.

But is this the meaning of the famous stichera in which the Church calls on the faithful to keep a pleasant fast? The interpretation of these lines will surprise many: it is not about pleasing ourselves, but about how God accepts our fasting—that is, it is a call to fasting that is pleasing to God. But can fasting be pleasing to the Lord when we have replaced some goodies with others—for example, cow's milk with soy, rice or oat milk? Obviously not, because one of the important objectives of fasting is to free a person from spiritual slavery to passions. What freedom can information addicts dream of if they eat fasting foods but cannot overcome internet addiction? It is just an illusion, and a very dangerous one.

In various interviews and documentaries, social media developers admit that their feeds are designed to hook users on the dopamine "needle" of diverse psychological reward traps. People become like Pavlov's dogs, which salivated when a signal light flashed. No wonder that in the 2020s, among IT specialists in Silicon Valley a reaction was born to this phenomenon—the dopamine diet came into fashion. Its essence is precisely in refraining from the use of electronic devices. But adherents of dopamine fasting are not concerned with lofty matters at all—they just want to rebuild the reward system for the brain. It is pure pragmatism for increasing their work efficiency so as not to be distracted, bypassing their own traps. After all, drug dealers do not use the drugs they distribute.

Why don't Orthodox Christians take on making the dopamine diet a religious practice? After all, Christianity did not shy away from adapting the terms of pagan philosophers for the development of its theology. In addition, the success of the spread of Christianity in Russia was largely due to the fact that the Church did not abolish the old Slavic traditions, but filled the former pagan forms with new, good content. Why not infuse Silicon Valley's information abstinence methods with religious motivation? For example, I really want to check news on social media, but I will give it up for a while in order to focus on the inner spiritual life for the sake of Christ.

To sum up the advice of experts in the sphere of a digital detox, we should find hours and even days in our schedules for information relief. Teach yourself to turn off smartphones and tablets for a certain period or put them on airplane mode. True, at first you will have to be very patient, as such a fast will have setbacks at every step, because the struggle lies ahead of you of the FOMO (fear of missing out) syndrome, which immerses one in the illusion that he controls the situation. If the addiction is really bad, there is a radical way out—buy a push-button cellphone and spend whole days with it. If someone needs you badly, he will call you. Allocate a strict time limit for yourself to check your emails and messages.

Spend your free time wisely. For God: pray, study the sacred texts and patristic works, participate in church services and the sacraments, and visit holy places. For people around you: help, listen, empathize, walk, play and travel. For important meaning: read good books, watch good films, study necessary subjects, improve your competencies and implement your projects. And then from a frantic conveyor of annoying news and clips, the world will suddenly transform into a quiet library, from which you will take only what you need at the moment. We were not made for the world; the world is made for us. Only then will we begin to build proper relationships and find meaning inside and outside of us. Observe a pleasant fast!

We welcome you to our humble church, and we pray that your experience here will be spiritually rewarding, calling you back to pray with us at our next scheduled service.

St. Herman of Alaska Eastern Orthodox Church is established with the blessing of His Eminence, Metropolitan JOSEPH of New York, and is one of approximately 30 parishes or missions that are all part of the Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox Diocese of the USA, Canada and Australia, Bulgarian Patriarchate.

Our worship is exclusively in English, and we use “contemporary” English translations of liturgical texts wherever possible. Singing is congregational. The Divine Liturgy is literally “the work of the people”, and as such your presence and participation in the service are essential parts of our worship. The worship of others here present is diminished when you are absent or unable to participate.

Participation in the Eucharist is important to us, and as such we ask you to recognize that it is limited to Orthodox Christians who have prepared for receiving the very Body and Blood of our Lord. Preparation includes fasting from the previous evening and recent confession. If you are not known to our priest, please let him know as you approach that you are Orthodox and prepared to receive! Please do not be offended if the priest so questions your approach—this is important, truly “our Life”!

**Troparion for the Day:** (Tone 7) *By Your Cross, You destroyed death. To the thief You opened Paradise. For the Myrrhbearers You changed weeping into joy, and You commanded Your disciples, O Christ God, to proclaim that You are risen, granting the world great mercy!*

**Troparion for the Day:** (Tone 1) *O Lord, save Your people, and bless Your inheritance. Grant victories to the Orthodox Christians over their adversaries; and by the virtue of Your Cross, preserve Your habitation!*

Glory to the Father....

**Troparion to Saint Herman:** *O blessed Father Herman of Alaska, / north-star of Christ's holy Church, / the light of your holy life and great deeds / guides those who follow the Orthodox way. / Together we lift high the Holy Cross / you planted firmly in America. / Let all behold and glorify Jesus Christ, / singing His holy Resurrection.*

Now and ever....

**Kontakion of the Day:** (Tone 7) *Now the flaming sword no longer guards the gates of Paradise; it has been mysteriously quenched by the Wood of the Cross. The sting of death and the victory of hell have been vanquished; for You, O my Savior, have come and cried to those in hell: 'Enter again into Paradise!'*

**Epistle:** Heb 4:14-5:6

**Gospel:** Mark 8:34-9:1

**Monthly Financial Tracker**

January Total Income \$ 8093  
 January Total Expenses \$ 3513  
 Month Net Income (Loss) \$ 4580

**Yearly Financial Tracker**

(based on year-to-date income/expenses)

Too early in year to populate this table

**Web Tracker**

StHerman Google Bus Site 437 views/28 days  
 Blog Site Views 14846 Total Views  
 Web Site Views 313 visits/30 days  
 Facebook Reach 551 people/28 days

**St. Herman of Alaska  
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**CURRENT WEEK  
 HIGHLIGHTED**

| March 2023   |   |   |   |  |  |   |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|---|---|---|--|--|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| Sunday   | Monday  | Tuesday   | Wednesday   | Thursday   | Friday   | Saturday  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Cheesefare 26<br>Sunday T4<br>Divine Liturgy 10AM<br>Rom 13:11-14:4<br>Mat 6:14-21       | Great Fast 27<br>Begins<br>Canon St Andrew 6PM<br>Isa 1:1-20; Gen 1:1-13; Prov 1:1-20 | 28<br>Canon St Andrew 6PM<br>Isa 1:19-2:4; Gn 1:14-23; Prov 1:20-33 | 1<br>PresanctLiturgy 6PM<br>Isa 2:3-11; Gn 1:24-2:3; Prov 2:1-22            | 2<br>Canon St Andrew 6PM<br>Isa 2:11-21; Gn 2:4-19<br>Prov 3:1-18                            | 3<br>NO Liturgy<br>PresanctLiturgy 6PM<br>Isa 3:1-14; Gn 2:20-3:20; Prov 3:19-34 | 4<br>Theodore Saturday<br>Vespers/Conf 6PM<br>Heb 1:1-12<br>Mark 2:23-3:5                     |  |  |  |  |  |
| Orthodoxy 5<br>Sunday T5<br>Divine Liturgy 10AM<br>Heb 11:24-26,32-12:2<br>John 1:43-51  | 6<br>Isa 4:2-5:7; Gen 3:1-4:7; Prov 3:34-4:22   | 7<br>Isa 5:7-16; Gn 4:8-15; Prov 5:1-15                             | 8<br>PresanctLiturgy 6PM<br>Isa 5:16-35; Gn 4:16-26; Prov 5:15-6:3          | 9<br>Isa 6:1-12; Gn 5:1-24<br>Prov 6:3-20  | 10<br>PresanctLiturgy 6PM<br>Isa 7:1-15; Gn 5:32-6:8; Prov 6:20-7:1              | 11<br>Soul Saturday<br>DivineLiturgy 10AM<br>Vespers/Conf 6PM<br>Heb 3:12-16<br>Mark 1:35-44  |  |  |  |  |  |
| St Gregory Palamas 12<br>Sunday T6<br>Divine Liturgy 10AM<br>Heb 1:10-2:3<br>Mark 2:1-12 | 13<br>Isa 8:13-9:7; Gen 6:9-22; Prov 8:1-21   | 14<br>Isa 9:9-10:4; Gen 7:1-5; Prov 8:32-9:11                       | 15<br>PresanctLiturgy 6PM<br>Isa 10:12-20; Gen 7:6-26; Prov 5:15-6:3        | 16<br>Isa 11:10-12:2; Gn 7:11-8:3; Prov 10:1-22  | 17<br>PresanctLiturgy 6PM<br>Isa 13:2-13; Gn 8:4-21<br>Prov 10:31-11:12          | 18<br>Soul Saturday<br>DivineLiturgy 10AM<br>Vespers/Conf 6PM<br>Heb 10:32-38<br>Mark 2:14-17 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Cross Veneratn 19<br>Sunday T7<br>Divine Liturgy 10AM<br>Heb 4:14-5:6<br>Mark 8:34-9:1   | 20<br>Isa 14:24-32; Gen 8:21-9:7; Prov 11:19-12:6                                     | 21<br>Isa 25:1-9; Gen 9:8-17<br>Prov 12:8-22                        | 22<br>PresanctLiturgy 6PM<br>Isa 26:21-27:9; Gen 9:18-10:1; Prov 12:23-13:9 | 23<br>Isa 28:14-22; Gen 10:32-11:9; Prov 13:19-14:6<br>1-7; Prov 14:15-26                    | 24<br>Akathist Theotokos 6PM<br>Isa 29:13-23; Gen 12:1-7; Prov 14:15-26          | 25<br>Feast of Annunciation 10AM<br>Vespers/Conf 6PM<br>Heb 2:11-18<br>Luke 1:24-38           |  |  |  |  |  |
| St John Climacus 26<br>Sunday T8<br>Divine Liturgy 10AM<br>Heb 6:13-20<br>Mark 9:17-31   | 27<br>Isa 37:33-38:6; Gn 13:12-18; Prov 14:27-15:4                                    | 28<br>Isa 40:18-31; Gen 17:1-9; Prov 15:20-16:9                     | 29<br>NO SERVICE THIS NIGHT<br>Isa 41:4-14; Gen 17:1-9<br>Prov 15:20-16:9   | 30<br>DIOCESAN CLERGY RETREAT AT ST. HERMAN<br>Isa 42:5-16; Gen 18:20-33<br>Prov 16:17-17:17 | 31<br>Isa 45:11-17; Gen 22:1-18; Prov 17:17-18:5                                 | 1<br>APRIL<br>DivineLiturgy 9AM<br>Vespers/Conf 6PM<br>Heb 9:24-28<br>Mark 8:27-31            |  |  |  |  |  |