

The Orthodox Lenten Season Compared and Contrasted with the Roman Catholic/Protestant Practice

ORTHODOX	ROMAN CATHOLIC/PROTESTANT
<p>Date of the Feast of our Lord’s Resurrection (Pascha): the first Sunday, after the first full moon, after the first day of spring (April 2, acc. to the Julian/Old calendar). <i>Orthodox Pascha can never occur before April 2, therefore never on or before the Jewish Passover. Pascha is the Hebrew word for Passover – Pesach – rendered in Greek, then English letters; Christian Pascha is the fulfillment of the Jewish Passover (see Luke 22:15-16; 1 Cor. 5:7-8).</i></p>	<p>Date of the Feast of our Lord’s Resurrection (Easter): the first Sunday, after the first full moon, after the first day of spring (March 21 [vernal equinox], acc. to the Gregorian/New calendar). <i>Roman Catholic/Protestant Easter can occur on or before the Jewish Passover, which by definition occurs at the full moon (thus the inclusion of this phrase in the formula above).</i> [The term <i>Easter</i> was the name of an ancient Germanic pagan spring festival.]</p>
<p>Holy Week: a unique unit of events beginning one week before Pascha with the commemoration of the raising of Lazarus (John 11) on Saturday and culminating in the Crucifixion, Burial, and anticipation of the Resurrection of Christ.</p>	<p>Holy Week: the final week of the forty days of Lent culminating in the Triduum (lit., “Three Days”) – Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday.</p>
<p>Great Lent: the continuous forty-day season prior to Holy Week, always <i>beginning on a Monday</i>. The <i>forty days</i> recalls the forty-day fast of Christ in the wilderness (see Matt. 4 and Luke 4) and became the final preparatory period for <i>catechumens</i> in the ancient Church who were then baptized and received into the Church at Pascha. The number <i>forty</i> originally referred to the <i>forty hour</i> fast from Holy Friday morning until the Paschal Liturgy.</p>	<p>Great Lent: the forty-day season <i>excluding Sundays, including Holy Week</i>, prior to Easter; therefore, Lent consists of six weeks of six days (6 x 6 = 36) plus four more days totaling 40, thus <i>beginning on a Wednesday</i>. The first day of Lent is called Ash Wednesday after the ancient Roman Church practice of marking the foreheads of penitents with ashes; penitents would then be re-admitted to Holy Communion on the Thursday before Easter.</p>
<p>Pre-Lent: a preparatory period consisting of four Sundays and three weeks. The first week is fast-free; the third week is called <i>meatfare</i> starting abstinence from meats and meat products (including fish) until Pascha. The final Sunday, the day before Lent, is called Forgiveness Sunday and <i>cheesefare</i>, the last day for eating cheese, milk, eggs, and dairy products before Pascha.</p>	<p>Pre-Lent: no longer observed today, this season existed from medieval times as a three-Sunday/week period. The Sundays were called <i>Septuagesima</i> (lit., 70th), <i>Sexagesima</i> (lit., 60th), and <i>Quinquagesima</i> (lit., 50th) leading up to the beginning of Lent (<i>Quadragesima</i>; lit., 40th [day from Easter]). The day before Lent is called <i>carnival</i> (i.e., <i>meatfare</i>), or Fat/Shrove Tuesday, the day of Confession, and last day for eating meat and dairy before Easter.</p>

N.B. The term *Lent* is an Old English word meaning “spring(time).”

2018 Orthodox Lenten Season:

Pre-Lent

- Jan. 28 **Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee** (Lk. 18:10-14; fast-free week)
Feb. 4 **Sunday of the Prodigal Son** (Lk. 15:11-32)
Feb. 11 **Sunday of the Last Judgment** (Matt. 25:31-46; *meatfare*)
Feb. 18 **Forgiveness Sunday/Expulsion of Adam from Paradise** (Matt. 6:14-21; *cheesefare*)

Great Lent*

- Feb. 19 **First day of Lent** (Great Canon of St. Andrew, 2/19-22)
Feb. 25 **1st Saturday: St. Theodore the Recruit's Miracle of the boiled wheat** (*koliva*)
Feb. 26 **1st Sunday: Sunday of Orthodoxy/Restoration of Icons** (Jn. 1:43-51)
Mar. 3 **2nd Saturday: Memorial Saturday**
Mar. 4 **2nd Sunday: St. Gregory Palamas** (Mk. 2:1-12)
Mar. 10 **3rd Saturday: Memorial Saturday**
Mar. 11 **3rd Sunday: Veneration of the Cross** (Mk. 8:34-9:1)
Mar. 17 **4th Saturday: Memorial Saturday**
Mar. 18 **4th Sunday: St. John of the Ladder** (*Klimakos*; Mk. 9:17-31)
Mar. 22* **Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete**
Mar. 24 **5th Saturday: Saturday of the Akathist to the Theotokos**
Mar. 25[^] **5th Sunday: Feast of the Annunciation to the Theotokos** (Lk. 1:26-38)
Mar. 30 **Last day of Great Lent**

Holy Week

- Mar. 31 **Lazarus Saturday/Raising of Lazarus** (Jn. 11:1-45)
Apr. 1 **Palm Sunday: Entrance of Christ into Jerusalem** (Jn. 12:1-18)
Apr. 2* **Holy Monday: Jesus Teaching in the Temple/Cursing the Fig Tree**
Apr. 3* **Holy Tuesday: Jesus Teaching in the Temple/Woe to Pharisees/End Times**
Apr. 4* **Holy Wednesday: Jesus Teaching in the Temple/Betrayal by Judas**
Apr. 5 **Holy Thursday: Institution of Lord's Supper/Arrest in Gethsemane**
Apr. 6 **Holy Friday: Crucifixion of Christ/Burial of Christ**
Apr. 7 **Holy Saturday: Great and Holy Sabbath/Descent into Hades**

PASCHA

- Apr. 8 **Great and Holy Pascha: The Resurrection of Christ**

* The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is served on Wednesday and Friday evenings throughout Lent, except during the Fifth Week when it is served on Tuesday and Thursday evenings as the Great Canon is served that previous Wednesday evening; the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is also served during Holy Week on Holy Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday evenings.

[^] The Fifth Sunday of Lent is normally devoted to St. Mary of Egypt; however, being March 25 this year, the Feast of Annunciation supersedes the commemoration of the saint.