

The Lenten Covenant

A “covenant” is a promise. God has made covenants with us. In the Old Testament, He makes the first Covenant with Abraham, to be the God of Abraham’s descendants. The sign of this Covenant is circumcision. In the New Testament, God replaces the Old Covenant with a New Covenant, which is baptism and Holy Communion. If you are baptized and have received Holy Communion, then you have a Covenant relationship with God—you are part of the Covenant between God and His people. The Lenten Covenant is a promise between us and God—it is a promise to do certain things during Lent so that one can grow spiritually during Lent, with a promise to change one thing after Lent has ended so that spiritual growth continues during the year. ***The Lenten Covenant will help us in keeping the lifelong Covenant relationship we have with God by giving us a short-term covenant by which to evaluate our standing in the lifelong Covenant.***

How does the Lenten Covenant Work?

Below there is a form that lists a menu of plans to help in a Lenten Goal of growing closer to God this year. The menu includes fasting, prayer, worship, reading the Bible, reading a theology book, going to confession, changing one bad habit, and the one that is most important, a goal for once Pascha is over. The menu offers several levels of commitment for each area. Each area is important—it is important that you fast, pray, worship, read scriptures, go to confession, and change a bad habit if you are going to get something out of this Lent. But if you’ve never fasted before, the covenant offers different levels of difficulty. So if you’ve never fasted, perhaps you should check the easiest level. If you’ve mastered the first level, perhaps this year you challenge yourself with the second level. If you’ve never read the Bible, don’t commit to reading the whole Bible during Lent—that is a huge commitment. Commit rather to something smaller like reading a chapter a day, or perhaps reading the Gospels, something that is challenging but attainable. If you’ve never worshipped in church on a day that isn’t Sunday, don’t commit to every service during Lent, but commit to one service per week, or even commit to one of each of the Lenten services, which would be three extra services over the six weeks of Lent. Regarding confession, how many hours of your life have you spent alone with an Orthodox priest to talk about your salvation? If you are over age 20 and the answer is zero, perhaps you need to think about changing that this Lent. If you are over age 60 and the answer is zero, you’ve got even more incentive. Think about how many hours a year you spend watching television, or listening to music, going to movies, doing yardwork, gossiping on the phone—it adds up to hundreds of hours each year, thousands of hours over a lifetime. And then think about how many hours you’ve spent in your whole life talking about your salvation, about repentance, with an Orthodox priest. Sadly, for many people, the answer is zero. This could be the year you change that.

So, if you decide to do the Lenten Covenant, do the following:

1. Fill out the survey which follows.
2. Make two copies of it for each person in your household that is going to participate.
3. Put one copy in a place at home where you can see it, on the refrigerator, by your bedside, in your Bible.
4. Take the other copy of the covenant and place it in an envelope.
5. Seal the envelope and write your name and address on the envelope.
6. Bring the envelope to church on Sunday, March 13, and place it in a box that will be in front of the icon of the Virgin Mary on the solea of the church.
7. The box will be kept locked, the only person with the key will be Fr. Stavros
8. FATHER STAVROS WILL NOT OPEN THE ENVELOPES OR READ THEIR CONTENTS—these will remain private. Father Stavros will merely jot down the names on the envelopes to pray for these people throughout Lent, to pray that they will make good on their covenants. This is my commitment to you.
9. The box will remain in the church until the Resurrection Service on Easter as a reminder to you each time you come to church that you have a covenant or promise to God.
10. After Easter, your envelope will be mailed to you in your self-addressed envelope, as proof that the envelope was never opened, and as a way for you to see how you did.

Lenten Covenant for Children

(Older children should fill out the regular form) Things I promise to do this Lent (Check all that you wish to do)

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pray every day | <input type="checkbox"/> Say prayers at meals | <input type="checkbox"/> Go to confession during Lent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Be nicer to my parents | <input type="checkbox"/> Do my chores without being told | <input type="checkbox"/> Share more |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Say prayers every morning | <input type="checkbox"/> Come to church each Sunday | <input type="checkbox"/> Read a short passage from the Bible each day |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Be nicer to my brother/sister | <input type="checkbox"/> Be more helpful at home | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Say prayers every evening | <input type="checkbox"/> Receive Communion each Sunday | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Try harder in school | <input type="checkbox"/> Not say any bad words | |

PRAYER: Lord help me to be successful in keeping the promises I have made. Help me to grow in my faith and love You more this Lent. Help me to be a nicer person and a better Christian. Amen.

Sign Your Name

Make a copy for yourself, place your covenant in a sealed envelope, write your name and address on front of envelope. Bring covenant to church and place it in locked box on the solea in front of the icon.

The Lenten Covenant

Check as many as apply under each topic. You should (but need not) answer every topic. This is a matter of your own conscience and areas where you want to grow spiritually.

1. Concerning my prayer life, each day I will commit to:

- 5 minute period of un-interrupted prayer
- 5 minute period every morning of un-interrupted prayer
- 5 minute period every evening of un-interrupted prayer
- 5 minute period each morning AND evening of uninterrupted prayer
- Other: Write in here

2. Concerning Worship

- I'll commit to attending Divine Liturgy each Sunday.
- I'll commit to attending ONE additional service each week during each week of Lent.
- I'll commit to attending AT LEAST 1 Compline, 1 Pre-Sanctified Liturgy and 1 Salutations Service.
- I'll commit to attending AT LEAST ONE Saturday of the Souls.
- I'll commit to attending the Forgiveness Vespers.
- I'll commit to preparing and receiving Holy Communion at least once a week during Lent.

Concerning Holy Week, I'll commit to:

- Every Service
- Every Evening Service
- One service each Day
- Specifically Holy Thursday—the Passion of Christ
- Other (write in here)

3. Concerning Fasting, I'll commit to:

- Level One: Fast from meat on Wednesday and Fridays and during Holy Week.
- Level Two: Fast from meat and fish on Wednesdays and Friday and during Holy Week.
- Level Three: Fast from meat the entirety of Lent and Holy Week.
- Level Four: Fast from meat and fish the entirety of Lent and Holy Week.
- Level Five Level Four and eliminate dairy products during Holy Week.
- Level Six Level Four and eliminate dairy products on Wednesdays and Fridays and during Holy Week
- Level Seven Level Four plus eliminate dairy products during all of Lent and Holy Week.
- Level Eight Level Seven plus eliminate oil and wine during Holy Week.
- Level Nine The Strict Fast-no meat, fish, dairy products, wine or oil during the entirety of Lent.
- I can't fast from food for health reasons. I will give up the following: (Write answer here).

4. Concerning reading the Bible, I'll commit to:

- Reading one chapter a day from some book
- Reading the four Gospels
- Reading the Psalms
- Other (Write in)

5. Concerning confession

- I'll commit to going once during this Lenten period either to Fr. Stavros or another Priest.
- I've been recently to confession and don't feel the need to go at this time.
- I don't believe in going to confession.
- I'll get more information on this sacrament and then make a decision.

6. Concerning Holy Communion, I will try to be prepared to receive

- Every Sunday
- Every Sunday and at Wednesday Pre-Sanctified
- At least every other Sunday

7. Concerning bad habits, here are one or two or a few bad habits I'll watch and change this Lent

- Gossip
- Self-aggrandizement
- impatience
- Greed
- Lust
- Disobedience
- Wasting time
- Self-pitying
- Not giving good effort at work/school/marriage/children
- Others: Write in here

8. One spiritual goal I want to commit to once Pascha has passed is:

Prayer: Lord help me to be successful in this task I am about to undertake. May it be for the growth of my soul and the improvement of my spiritual life. Help me to keep all the commitments I have made. Amen.

_____ Sign your name

Make a copy for yourself, place your covenant in a sealed envelope, write your name and address on front of envelope. Bring covenant to church and place it in locked box on the solea in front of the icon

**Note-alcohol should be consumed at a very minimum during Lent, and abstained from totally if possible. Also, activities should be curtailed, socializing a little more sedate, no dancing and loud music. During Holy Week, all unnecessary activities aside from work and children should be curtailed, so that we can focus on the Holy Days of the Passion of Christ.