



# The Tower

Saint Barbara the Great Martyr Orthodox Church  
<https://www.stbarbara.org.uk/>

**Sunday 22nd March 2026**  
**Forgiveness (Cheesefare) Sunday**



## Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On Sunday the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March we begin the Great Lent. This is an important moment of every year. After the Divine Liturgy we will serve Forgiveness Vespers. This is the time in which we ask for forgiveness from each other and begin our journey of repentance. This happens in the church with prayer and physically asking for forgiveness from your surrounding people. I know that the modern life gives us plenty of opportunities to connect with people and there is always a temptation to just send a message, rather than participating physically with them. Also, very often we are distant from our relatives and families and the mobile connection is unavoidable. The church is a place where things are happen in reality, not virtually. We unite, we pray and we ask forgiveness of each other. These acts affect our relationships with the people who are distant from us because the things we do to our immediate neighbour, are not too dissimilar to what we do to our close relatives. Please come and participate in this amazing moment in our liturgical life.

Last Saturday we served a Memorial for the Departed. A good number of people came and participated in this moment of remembrance with koliva, and we shared food after the service. Memory Eternal to all our Departed!

I'll take this moment to reiterate that Saturdays are the correct time to serve a prayer for the departed. We usually do it on Sunday after the Divine Liturgy by the understanding that our people cannot attend all services, and sometimes travel a great distance to come. The logic is very simple, Sunday is the day of the Resurrection, and is the happiest day for us. So when possible, please come for the memorial service on Saturday before Vespers.

I would like to say thank you to all who read the Tower. I can see the effect of printing and sharing The Tower electronically. It is much better when our community are well informed about the everyday life of the church.

Please note that I use AI for grammatical and stylistic correction of my English, as my English writing skills are not the best. The result is not always brilliant and sometimes it changes the entire context.

In the previous edition of the Tower, after AI editing, it appeared as though we were celebrating Sunday of St. John of the Ladder. My intention was to say that we venerate the icon of the divine ascent, based on the writing of St. John the Ladder, but it came out in a completely different way. So, please forgive me for my ignorance. I'm working very hard to improve my skills each day.

Dear people, please forgive me my offences and I wish you blessed and spiritually profitable Great Lent.

Fr. John



## Announcements

- There is still time to enrol your child into the summer camps. Please visit the archdiocese website for further information. The application form is available at:  
<https://thyateirayouthcamps.org.uk/ca/mp-saint-bega/>
- On the 1<sup>st</sup> of March we celebrate Sunday of Orthodoxy. Please bring an icon from home, or take one from the church and return it to the same place. We will have a small procession around the church with prayers at all four sides.
- On Sundays many people travel to church by car and park in the cemetery. Please avoid parking in the middle section around the Cenotaph and always leave enough space for another car to pass by.

On Sunday the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February after the service, we will have quick meeting to plan the renewal of the floor in the church. All are welcome!

## Upcoming Services

<b>22 February Sun</b>	<b>10.00am Matins</b>		<b>Forgiveness Sunday</b>
	<b>11.00am Divine Liturgy</b>		<b>The beginning of Great Lent</b>
	<b>Vespers</b>		

### Beginning of Great Lent

<b>23 February Mon</b>	<b>6.00pm</b>	<b>Great Compline</b>	<b>The Canon of St Andrew of Crete, Pt 1</b>
<b>24 February Tue</b>	<b>6.00pm</b>	<b>Great Compline</b>	<b>The Canon of St Andrew of Crete, Pt 2</b>
<b>25 February Wed</b>	<b>6.00pm</b>	<b>Pre Sanctified Liturgy</b>	
		<b>Great Compline</b>	<b>The Canon of St Andrew of Crete, Pt 3</b>
<b>26 February Thu</b>	<b>6.00pm</b>	<b>Great Compline</b>	
			<b>The Canon of St Andrew of Crete, Pt 4</b>
<b>27 February Fri</b>	<b>6.00pm</b>	<b>Pre Sanctified Liturgy</b>	
		<b>Great Compline</b>	
<b>28 February Sat</b>	<b>6.00pm</b>	<b>Great Vespers</b>	<b>Akathist of Theotokos</b>

<b>1 March Sun</b>	<b>10.00am Matins</b>		
	<b>11.00am Divine Liturgy</b>		<b>Sunday of Orthodoxy</b>

## Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts

Served every Wednesday and Friday during the Great Lent



Liturgy of the Pre Sanctified Gifts will be served during the Great Lent every Wednesday and Friday at 6.00pm.  
This service is the heart and centre of the services of Great Lent; please come and participate.

## A story from the internet

"O Lord and Master of my life! Take from me the spirit of sloth, faith-heartedness, lust of power, and idle talk. But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to Thy servant. Yea, O Lord and King! Grant me to see my own errors and not to judge my brother; For Thou art blessed unto ages of ages. Amen."

Fr. Alexander Schmemmann writes that patience grows from purity and humility. The fallen person is impatient, quick to judge, and centered on himself. God, who sees all things clearly, is patient, and the closer we draw to Him, the more patient we become. Patience gives rise to hope.

Saint Paul teaches that true love endures, is kind, seeks no praise, and rejoices in truth. Love bears, believes, hopes, and endures all things. Love never fails.

Fr. Schmemmann calls love the crown and fruit of all virtues. Saint John Chrysostom says love burns away every sin, and Saint Polycarp teaches that the one who loves is far from sin. The greatest Commandment of God is, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and with all your mind" (St. Matt. 22:37; Deuteronomy 6:5). Saint Tikhon, an 18th century bishop in Russia, teaches how you can determine if you love God more than yourself:

1. God Himself indicates this, saying, "He that hath My Commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me" (St. John 14:21). For the true lover of God will preserve himself from everything that is repugnant to God, and hastens to fulfill everything that is pleasing to God. Wherefore he keeps His Holy Commandments.
2. A manifest sign of love for God is a heartfelt gladness in God, for we rejoice in what we love.
3. The true lover of God disdains the world and all that is in the world, and strives toward God, his most beloved. He counts honor, glory, riches, and all the comforts of this world which the sons of this age seek, as nothing. For him only God, the uncreated and most beloved good, suffices. In Him alone he finds perfect honor, glory, riches and comfort.
4. The true lover of God keeps God ever in mind, and His love toward us and His benefactions.
5. One who loves, desires never to be separated from the one he loves...Likewise the true lover of Christ is he who abides with Christ in this world, and cleaves to Him in his heart, and uncomplainingly endures the cross with Him, and desires to be with Him inseparably in the age to come.
6. A sign of the love of God is love for neighbor.

He who truly loves God also loves his neighbor. "All this summarized and brought together in the concluding petition of the Lenten Prayer in which we ask 'to see my own errors and not to judge my brother.' For ultimately there is but one danger: pride. Pride is the source of evil, and all evil is pride.

Pride is the source of evil, and all evil is pride. Yet it is not enough for me to see my own errors, for even this apparent virtue can be turned into pride. Spiritual writings are full of warnings against the subtle forms of pseudo-piety which, in reality, under the cover of humility and self-accusation can lead to a truly demonic pride. But when we "see our own errors" and "do not judge our brothers," when, in other terms, chastity, humility, patience, and love are but one in us, then and only then the ultimate enemy-pride-will be destroyed in us.

After each petition of the prayer we make a prostration. Prostrations (metanoies) are not limited to the Prayer of Saint Ephraim but constitute one of the distinctive characterizes of the entire Lenten worship. Here, however, their meaning is disclosed best of all. In the long and difficult effort of spiritual recovery, the Church does not separate the soul from the body. The whole man has fallen away from God; the whole man is to be restored, the whole man is to return. The catastrophe of sin lies precisely in the victory of the flesh--the animal, the irrational, the lust in us-- over the spiritual and the divine. But the body is glorious; the body is holy, so holy that God Himself "became flesh" (the Incarnation). Salvation and repentance then are not contempt of the body or neglect of it, but restoration of the body to its real function as the expression and the life of spirit, as the temple of the priceless human soul. Christian asceticism is a fight, not against but for the body. For this reason, the whole man--soul and body--repents. The body participates in the prayer of the soul just as the soul prays through and in the body. Prostrations, the "psycho-somatic" sign of repentance and humility, of adoration and obedience, are thus the Lenten rite par excellence." (Fr. Alexander Schmemmann).

Saint Ephraim's final request is the ability to see his own errors, and refrain from judging others. Judging is not self-examination but "other examination" and in turn usually self-exaltation. Christ sternly warns us not to judge others lest we be judged with the same strictness and unforgiving attitude. During Lent, do not judge, rather forgive those who have sinned against us. Blessed means to extol as holy, to glorify. During Holy Lent we need to bless God as the most holy person and glorify our Creator. This is the antidote to idolatry--to making gods out of anything else in our life.

The following readings and sermon have been extracted from the Archdiocese of Thyateira & Great Britain news bulletin.

To access the full bulleting, please visit: [www.thyateira.org.uk](http://www.thyateira.org.uk).

## ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΙΚΟΝ ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΜΑ

Ρωμ. ιγ´, 11-14 - ιδ´, 1-4

Ἀδελφοί, νῦν ἐγγύτερον ἡμῶν ἢ σωτηρία ἢ ὅτε ἐπιστεῦσαμεν. Ἡ νύξ προέκοψεν, ἡ δὲ ἡμέρα ἤγγικεν· ἀποθώμεθα οὖν τὰ ἔργα τοῦ σκότους, καὶ ἐνδυσώμεθα τὰ ὄπλα τοῦ φωτός. Ὡς ἐν ἡμέρᾳ, εὐσημόνως περιπατήσωμεν, μὴ κώμοις καὶ μέθαις, μὴ κοίταις καὶ ἀσελγείαις, μὴ ἔριδι καὶ ζήλῳ. Ἀλλ' ἐνδύσασθε τὸν Κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, καὶ τῆς σαρκὸς πρόνοιαν μὴ ποιεῖσθε, εἰς ἐπιθυμίας. Τὸν δὲ ἀσθενοῦντα τῇ πίστει προσλαμβάνεσθε, μὴ εἰς διακρίσεις διαλογισμῶν. Ὁς μὲν πιστεύει φαγεῖν πάντα, ὁ δὲ ἀσθενῶν λάχανα ἐσθίει. Ὁ ἐσθίων τὸν μὴ ἐσθίοντα μὴ ἐξουθενεῖτω, καὶ ὁ μὴ ἐσθίων τὸν ἐσθίοντα μὴ κρινέτω· ὁ Θεὸς γὰρ αὐτὸν προσελάβετο. Σὺ τίς εἶ ὁ κρίνων ἀλλότριον οἰκέτην; Τῷ ἰδίῳ κυρίῳ στήκει ἢ πίπτει. Σταθῆσεται δὲ δυνατὸς γὰρ ἐστὶν ὁ Θεὸς στήσαι αὐτόν.

## EPISTLE READING

Rom. 13: 11-14 ; 14: 1-4

Brethren, salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed; the night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us conduct ourselves becomingly as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires. As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not for disputes over opinions. One believes he may eat anything, while the weak man eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who abstains, and let not him who abstains pass judgment on him who eats; for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for God is able to make him stand.

## ΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΙΜΟΝ ΑΠΟΛΥΤΙΚΙΟΝ

Ἦχος δ´.

Τὸ φαιδρὸν τῆς Ἀναστάσεως κήρυγμα, ἐκ τοῦ Ἀγγέλου μαθοῦσαι αἱ τοῦ Κυρίου Μαθήτριά, καὶ τὴν προγονικὴν ἀπόφασιν ἀπορρίψασαι, τοῖς Ἀποστόλοις καυχώμεναι ἔλεγον· Ἐσκύλευται ὁ θάνατος, ἡγέρθη Χριστὸς ὁ Θεός, δωρούμενος τῷ κόσμῳ τὸ μέγα ἔλεος.

## RESURRECTION APOLYTIKION

4th Mode

When the women Disciples of the Lord learned from the Angel the joyful message of the Resurrection and cast away the ancestral sentence, triumphantly they said to the Apostles: Death has been despoiled, Christ God has risen, granting the world his great mercy.

## ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΚΟΝ ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΜΑ

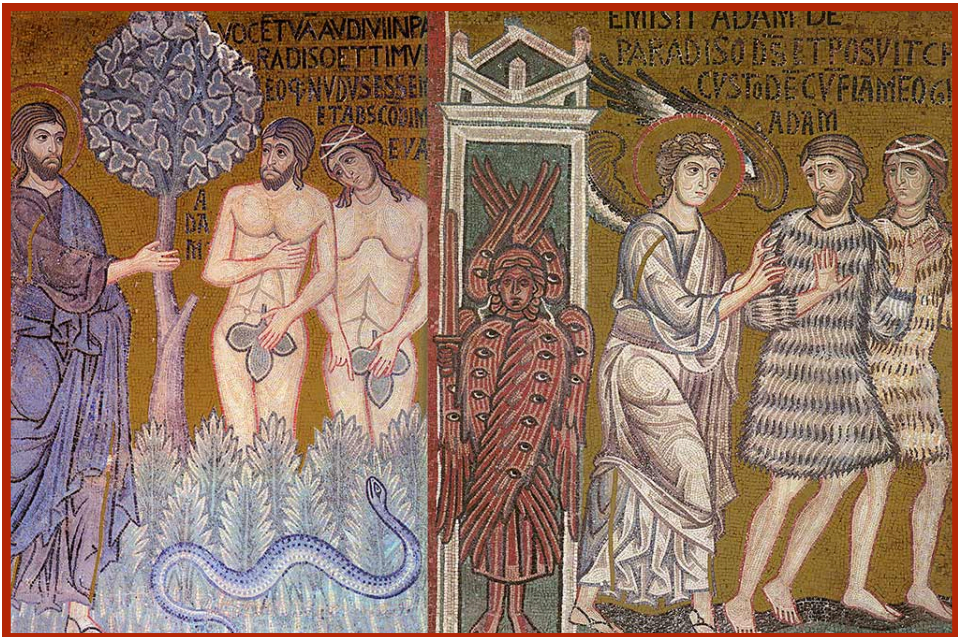
Ματθ. στ´, 14-21

Ἐίπεν ὁ Κύριος· Ἐάν γάρ ἀφήτε τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τὰ παραπτώματα αὐτῶν, ἀφήσει καὶ ὑμῖν ὁ Πατήρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος· ἔαν δὲ μὴ ἀφήτε τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τὰ παραπτώματα αὐτῶν, οὐδὲ ὁ Πατήρ ὑμῶν ἀφήσει τὰ παραπτώματα ὑμῶν. Ὅταν δὲ νηστεύητε, μὴ γίνεσθε ὡσπερ οἱ ὑποκριταὶ σκυθρωποί· ἀφανίζουσι γάρ τὰ πρόσωπα αὐτῶν ὅπως φανῶσι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις νηστεύοντες· ἀμήν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἀπέχουσι τὸν μισθὸν αὐτῶν. σὺ δὲ νηστεύων ἀλειψαί σου τὴν κεφαλὴν καὶ τὸ πρόσωπόν σου νίψαι, ὅπως μὴ φανῆς τοῖς ἀνθρώποις νηστεύων, ἀλλὰ τῷ Πατρὶ σου τῷ ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ, καὶ ὁ Πατήρ σου ὁ βλέπων ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ ἀποδώσει σοι ἐν τῷ φανερῷ. Μὴ θησαυρίζετε ὑμῖν θησαυροὺς ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, ὅπου σὴς καὶ βρῶσις ἀφανίζει, καὶ ὅπου κλέπται διορύσσουσι καὶ κλέπτουσι· θησαυρίζετε δὲ ὑμῖν θησαυροὺς ἐν οὐρανῷ, ὅπου οὔτε σὴς οὔτε βρῶσις ἀφανίζει, καὶ ὅπου κλέπται οὐ διορύσσουσιν οὐδὲ κλέπτουσιν· ὅπου γάρ ἐστιν ὁ θησαυρὸς ὑμῶν, ἐκεῖ ἔσται καὶ ἡ καρδιά ὑμῶν.

## GOSPEL READING

Matt. 6: 14-21

The Lord said, If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.





*“When you begin to read or listen to the Holy Scriptures, pray to God thus: “Lord Jesus Christ, open the ears and eyes of my heart so that I may hear Thy words and understand them, and may fulfil Thy will.” Always pray to God like this, that He might illumine your mind and open to you the power of His words. Many, having trusted in their own reason, have turned away into deception.”*

*— St. Ephraim the Syrian*

An interesting fact is that the prayer read today before the Gospel reading had the same words. St. Ephrem the Syrian was born around year 306 and was ordained as a Deacon. He wrote hundreds of hymns and was the one who started using hymns and poems as a vehicle of the theology in the Orthodox Church. St Jerome witnessed that in some churches his writings were read straight after the Gospel.

## SERMON ON THE GOSPEL READING

At Vespers today we enter in to the Great Fast of Lent. In some churches the hangings are changed to sombre colours and specific Lenten tonalities are introduced into the music. The second half of Vespers takes on its Lenten shape and we begin the regular use of the Prayer of St Ephrem the Syrian. And we are called to enter the Fast through the gateway of mutual forgiveness. This action takes different shapes in different communities, but in all of them we are asked to seek, to receive and to offer forgiveness.

Today’s Gospel tells us that if we forgive others, God will forgive us. But if we refuse forgiveness, God will not forgive us. Our standing with him depends upon our ability to forgive.

This is because God assures us that he will treat us as we indicate we want to be treated. To refuse to forgive is to set a higher value on our grudges than on forgiveness, and God respects our chosen hierarchy of values. If we have our hands tightly closed around them, how can we open them up to receive what God wants to give us? Only by letting go of what we have been clinging on to can we have our hands wide to receive the grace of God, and his forgiveness.

And so, as we embark on the sea of the Fast, we give and receive forgiveness. This is not easy. For if forgiveness is to be real it must start from the recognition that there is something to be forgiven. I have offended or wronged you. I ask your forgiveness. You have offended or wronged me. I offer you my forgiveness. Neither of us minimises or ignores the wrong that has been committed. Indeed it is the presence of the wrong that makes the forgiveness necessary.

We dare not avoid the question by some cliché such as “There’s nothing to forgive” or “It doesn’t matter”. There is something, and it does matter. But forgiveness says, “I recognise that something bad has happened, but I will not let it poison my life or my relationship with you. I am willing to make a fresh start, and if you are willing to do so too we can go forward together.”

To ask for and to give this forgiveness is not at all easy, and yet it is the image of what we ask for, and receive from, God. "In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them" says St Paul (2 Corinthians 5:19), and he goes on to say that God has entrusted that message of reconciliation to us. We cannot proclaim the message of reconciliation if we are not prepared to live it, but if, with God's help, we are willing to live it our whole world can be transfigured. The joy of the Fast, mentioned in the second part of today's Gospel, will become ours, and in that joy we will cross the sea of the Fast to the light of the Resurrection.

Let us pray for forgiveness for ourselves and others, let us forgive that we may be forgiven and may God grant all of us a blessed and a profitable Fast. Amen.

Protopresbyter Ian Graham

This picture from our memorial service on Saturday of the Souls 14<sup>th</sup> of February.

Did you know that in the Greek tradition koliva is also distributed during the feast of St. Theodore Tyron. This tradition of blessing and eating koliva at the end of the first week of Great Lent is connected to an event during the reign of Julian the Apostate.

The tradition states that the Emperor knew that the Christians would be hungry after the first week of strict fasting, and would go to the marketplaces of Constantinople on Saturday to buy food. So he ordered that blood from pagan sacrifices be sprinkled over all the food that was sold there. This made the food unsuitable as Lenten fare and in general as food for Christians, who are forbidden to eat food from such sacrifices. However, St. Theodore Tyro appeared in a dream to Archbishop Eudoxius and advised him that the people should not eat food bought at the marketplace that day, but only boiled wheat mixed with honey.

As a result, this first Saturday of Great Lent has come to be known as Theodore Saturday. Sometimes the first Saturday of the Lent is mistaken with Saturday of the Souls.



### Christian Orthodox Thyateira Youth (COTY)

COTY is the official youth ministry of the Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain, for ages 16-35.

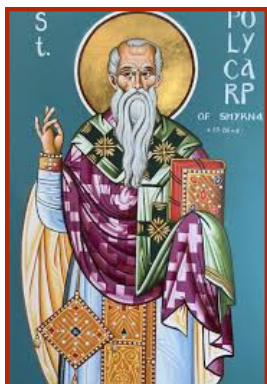
To learn more visit: [www.coty.org.uk](http://www.coty.org.uk).

Instagram: [COTY\\_org](https://www.instagram.com/COTY_org)



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## Synaxarion St. Polycarp Bishop of Smyrna



This apostolic and prophetic man, and model of faith and truth, was a disciple of John the Evangelist, successor of Bucolus (Feb. 6), and teacher of Irenaeus (Aug. 23). He was an old man and full of days when the fifth persecution was raised against the Christians under Marcus Aurelius. When his pursuers, sent by the ruler, found Polycarp, he commanded that they be given something to eat and drink, then asked them to give him an hour to pray; he stood and prayed, full of grace, for two hours, so that his captors repented that they had come against so venerable a man. He was brought by the Proconsul of Smyrna into the stadium and was commanded, "Swear by the fortune of Caesar; repent, and say, 'Away with the atheists.'"

By atheists, the Proconsul meant the Christians. But Polycarp, gazing at the heathen in the stadium, waved his hand towards them and said, "Away with the atheists." When the Proconsul urged him to blaspheme against Christ, he said: "I have been serving Christ for eighty-six years, and He has wronged me in nothing; how can I blaspheme my King Who has saved me?" But the tyrant became enraged at these words and commanded that he be cast into the fire, and thus he gloriously expired about the year 163. As Eusebius says, "Polycarp everywhere taught what he had also learned from the Apostles, which also the Church has handed down; and this alone is true" (Eccl. Hist., Book IV, ch. 14,15).



### Please consider donating!

Our parish is a self-supporting charitable community, relying solely on the generosity of our faithful, with no supplementary funding from external bodies. We rely on your donations for everything you see in the church including small salary for the priest, and don't forget all charitable work of the church and all the fundraisings organised from the Archdiocese. Remember that all our finances are in your hands. You are the owners of everything in the church including of the building and all the bills.

If you are a UK taxpayer, please complete the Gift Aid Form alongside each donation as this allows the church to receive an additional 25p for every £1 you donate, at no extra cost to you. Please use yellow envelopes located at the entrance if the church. If you use card payment for your donations, and you like to Gift aid your payment, please put your receipt in the yellow envelope and sing it. Thank you for your support !



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