

1  **Prayer to the Holy Spirit**

HEAVENLY KING, Advocate, Spirit of Truth, Who are everywhere present and fill all things, Treasury of Blessings, Bestower of Life, come and dwell within us; cleanse us of all that defiles us, and, O Good One, save our souls.

2  **Discovery: Spiritual Journey**

- *The journey through the Great Fast is meant to be one of discovery. Discovery of the image of God, within ourselves and others. Discovery of God's infinite love for us on the cross. Discovery of the gift of grace that can lead us from darkness into the light of spring.*

3 

- March 4 – Preparing the Soil. We prepare the soil of our hearts to be open to God's grace by recognizing the thoughts (*Logismoi*) that can turn our gaze away from Him and we embrace those thoughts that turn us toward Him.
- March 11 – Sowing the Seeds. Once we are aware of how thoughts can affect us and how our weakness can allow them to take hold, we look inward and plant seeds of virtues in our lives.

4  **March 18 – Bearing Fruit.**

- The fruit of all this is love. Our interior work must be reflected in our actions towards others and all of God's creation. We turn to God in repentance, we fast, we receive the body of Christ. Our spiritual work feeds our ability to bear the fruit of love.

5  **This Evening's Journey**

1. Love is the way.
2. Look to exemplars of the faith.
3. Be an exemplar of the faith
  - Lay and Diaconate Formation
  - Life of virtue (care of self, others and the world, discernment)

6  **The Mission of Love:****Memories of Being Loved**

**Ask God to bring to mind an early memory of being loved.**

7 

- What did it mean for you in your life at that time?
- What does it mean for you right now?
- Might this incident of being loved influence your experience of God's love? How is it the same? How is it different?

8 

- 2 Can you think of a time when your awareness of God's love influenced your actions in a significant manner?

9  **Spiritual Lives:  
Invitation to know God's Love**

- The fruit of our spiritual lives is love.
- Our interior work is reflected in our actions towards self, others and all of God's creation.
- "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." John 15: 12

10  **Action #1 Love**

- Notice God's love and the love of others around you.
- Offer love, through prayer and through kindness towards one another.
- Receive love with gratitude.

11

12  **Sacred Scripture: A Love Story**

Word of God: Revelation of God

"To know Christ, one must read the Holy Scriptures."  
(Christ our Pascha, no. 46)

13  **Covenant between  
God and God's People**

- 1 I am establishing my covenant between you and your descendants  
(Gen. 9:9)
- 2 You are precious in my eyes and glorious and I love you.  
(Isaiah 43:4)

14

"God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him may not die, but may have eternal life."  
John 3:16

15

And when the fullness of time had come, you spoke to us through your Son... He appeared on earth and lived among mortals. Taking flesh of a holy Virgin, he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of the image of his glory... so that all who had died in Adam might be given life in Christ.  
Anaphora of the Liturgy of St. Basil

16  **God labors for us!  
God's time is eternity!**

- God continues to work our salvation in and through us, while Jesus has already conquered sin and opened the doors of eternal life.

- Work as if everything depends on you, while knowing full well, that everything depends upon God!

17  **“Spiritual Work”**

- I turn to God with the desire to be my best self. How do I “work” at it?
- “Pray, fast, give alms and other works of mercy” to become more in touch with my intentions and desires and align them with God’s desires for me.
- Look to models and exemplars.

18  **Desert Christians of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> C**

- Lived outside society, “disassociated from its petty factions and ambitions.”
- Friends of God, who had influence on the heavenly course because of their prayers and ascetical lives.
- Focused on God alone.
- Fought demons – aimed at transformation.
- Peace-makers in the community.

19  **The Life of St. Anthony (c. 286-305)**

Written by St. Athanasius (c. 295-373)

20  **Three Theological Themes in the Life of Antony**

1. Christ Victory: over demons.
2. Call to perfect discipleship: Antony, offers an image of deified humanity.
3. Life of faith: Antony is the model of a true believer (orthodoxy faith moves us to right action).

21  **Antony**

- Born to wealthy parents who died when he was about 20 years old.
- He happened to hear a reading from the Gospel of St. Matthew, where Jesus tells a rich young man, “If you want to be perfect, go and sell everything you have and give the money to the poor.”

22

- Antony believed that he was the rich young man and did exactly as Jesus instructed.

23

- After 15 years of living an ascetic life, Antony withdrew for absolute solitude to a mountain by the Nile River.
- He engaged in combat against the devil.
- He emerged from his retreat to organize the monastic life of hermits who imitated him.
- Refuted heresy. (Arian Heresy which taught that Christ the Son of God is not of the same substance as God the Father.)

24  **Task of the Christian Life for Antony**

- Become a “lover of God” by resisting the devil and yielding to Christ.

25 

- Combats with the forces of evil were met with increased prayer and penitential acts.
- Those who followed Antony, sought the same state of spiritual purity and freedom from temptation that they saw in Antony.

26  **Christ's Victory over Demons**

- Ancient world: fear of demons was pervasive.
- Disease, drought, plague, political chaos, was evidence of the workings of demons.
- Antony has "cosmic optimism." The Cross of Christ is the weapon against the Satan.
- The devil is powerless no matter how much noise he makes.
  - William Harmless, *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (pp. 85-104)

27  **Cross of Christ/Sign of the Cross**

- The cross of Christ was raised up, suspended in the air, so that it quite literally cleared the air of demons, removing the celestial roadblocks that barred our heavenly ascent.
  - (St. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 25)

28  **Discernment in Needed**

- The airy nature of the demons made them quick moving and easy to disguise themselves.
- They hoped to draw monks to despair and to get them to abandon the spiritual life.
- Monks needed to be able to discern spirits, is it a voice of God or of the evil one.
- Evil spirits: noisy, disturbance, negative affect.
- Angelic spirits: joy, courage, peace.

29  **Transformation**

- Antony is often misunderstood as running to the caves to escape society. A better interpretation is that he understood that society had grown sick - some people needed to move away and build a new society in the shell of the old one. It was not an attempt to flee the world, but to save the world. . . Starting with what he could actually change, himself.

30  **Antony's invitation**

- We must say "Yes" to Jesus and "No" to all the things that try to get us to settle for something short of God's dream for us and the world.
- Action #2: To become the people, the Church of which we dream! Call to action!

31  **Transforming the Desert**

- Antony did not just speak about Christ's victory, he demonstrated it.
- Antony can be described as a "spiritual land developer," taming the wilderness and reclaiming it from the demonic.
- Before Antony came, the desert was Satan's home. Making the desert a "city" of monks had cosmological consequences, the devil was losing ground.

32

33  **Virtue: Three Areas of Concern**

- Self-Care: care of self
- Fidelity: care of intimate others
- Justice: care of the wider society/world
- Prudence: making choices, application to particular situations.

34  **Self-care**

- Prayer: increase in faith, hope and love
- Nourishment
- Exercise
- Attention to Body (where the Holy Spirit dwells)

35  **Fidelity**

- Relationships
- Good Communication Skills
- Active Listening
- Compassion
- Generosity in interpreting the actions of others
- Family and Parish community

36  **Justice**

- Care of the earth
- Care of the most vulnerable
- Migrants
- Abuse on many levels: exploitation-human trafficking, domestic violence, missing and murdered indigenous women, Indigenous People, disabled.

37  **Prudence**

- Decision-making
- Gather information
- Examine priorities: what needs to be done now
- Listen together

38  **Eparchial Lay and Diaconate Formation Fall 2021**

- Deepen your spiritual lives.
- Develop skills for ministry.
- Build community.
  - Online learning and in-person gathering (as allowed)

39  **Prayer of the Hours**

In every season and at every hour, in heaven and on earth You are worshipped and glorified O good God, longsuffering, rich in mercy, loving the just and compassionate to

sinners, calling all to salvation by the promise of the blessings to come; now at this very hour, Lord accept our prayers, and direct our lives in the ways of Your commandments. Sanctify our souls, purify our bodies, correct our thoughts, and make our knowledge whole and sober. Deliver us from every distress, evil and pain. Surround us with Your holy angels as with a rampart so that protected and guided by their host we may reach the unity of the faith and the knowledge of Your unapproachable glory; for You are blessed for ever and ever. Amen.