



**Self-Ruled**  
**Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America**  
The Diocese of Los Angeles and the West

The Right Reverend Bishop JOSEPH  
*Bishop of Los Angeles and the West*

March 4, 2006

**Christianity = Repentance + Forgiveness + Holiness**

The beloved Right Reverend, Very Reverend, Reverend Fathers; Deacons, Subdeacons, Readers, Parish Council Members, Chanters, Choir Members, Altar Servers, Organization Members and all the Faithful of the Holy Diocese of Los Angeles and the West:

On Monday, March 6, the great and Holy Lent begins:

“Let us enter the Fast with joy, O faithful.

Let us not be sad

Let us cleanse our faces with the waters of dispassion, blessing and exalting Christ forever,

Let us begin the Fast with joy.

Let us give ourselves to spiritual efforts.

Let us cleanse our souls

Let us cleanse our flesh

Let us fast from passions as we fast from foods, taking pleasure in the good works of the spirit and accomplishing them in love, that we all may be made worthy to see the passion of Christ our God and His Holy Pascha rejoicing with spiritual joy.” (*Forgiveness Sunday Vespers*)

With this Spirit of Lent I embrace all of you, my beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, and in this Spirit of Lent I ask your forgiveness. I urge all of you to forgive one another for more love and humility making every effort to observe this great and Holy Lent as a path toward Holiness. Keep strong, confident and devout in what you are doing. Our war is not against food and drink but rather against sin, temptations, passions, slothfulness, pride, unfaithfulness and other vices. Uphold in your life all the Christian virtues and the example of the saints, especially the Holy Life of our Master and Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Theotokos. Only with this Spirit will our Lent be accepted and only with this Lent will our lives be purified and only with this armor of purification will we be the conquerors.

Therefore, I ask all of you, in the Name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, to take this Holy Paschal Season seriously, making enough time to read, in particular, the treasures of our Holy Fathers and the Lives of the Saints. Do everything you can to take some wisdom for your soul, from what you read, and emulate it. Do all the Liturgical Services and do not be discouraged if the attendance is low.

Have a blessed and fruitful Lenten Season.

Your Father in Christ,

**+ JOSEPH**

*Bishop of Los Angeles and the West*

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