



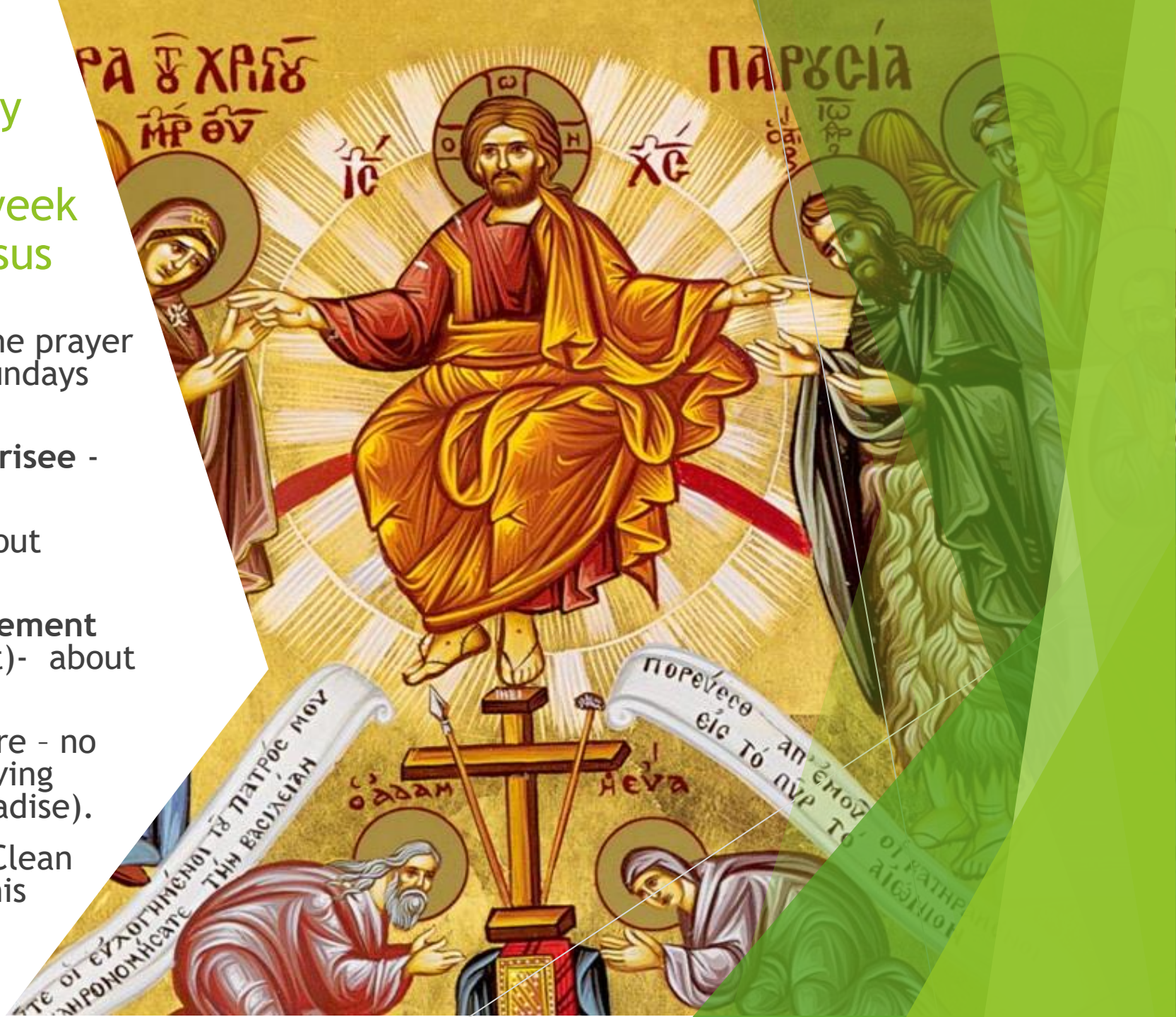
Greek Orthodox Fasting during Lent - 'Megali Sarakosti'

It is a period of great fasting ('nisteia') and abstinence, during which we deny our body sustenance to reflect on heavenly things through prayer.

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Pre-Lenten Sundays of the Triodion - Prayer Book used by chanters in the Church which slowly works through every week to Pascha (resurrection of Jesus Christ)

- ▶ Each Sunday is described through the prayer book, the Triodion - there are 4 Sundays before Lent starts.
- ▶ 1) **Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee** - about hypocrisy.
- ▶ 2) **Sunday of the Prodigal Son** - about repentance.
- ▶ 3) **Saturday of the Dead then -Judgement Sunday** (Meet fayre - no more meat)- about fear of judgement.
- ▶ 4) **Forgiveness Sunday** (Cheese fayre - no more dairy) about asking for and giving forgiveness (casting Adam from Paradise).
- ▶ Lent or Orthodox Fasting starts on Clean Monday ('Kathara Deftera') after this Sunday.





What is *Clean Monday*?

How is it celebrated according to the Greek Orthodox traditions?

Clean Monday

- ▶ It marks the end of 'Apokries', the Carnival festivities that preceded the onset of the Great Lent.
- ▶ **Clean Monday** falls on the Monday of the seventh week before Easter Sunday and it is one of the most important feasts celebrated by the Greek Orthodox Christianity.
- ▶ The Greek Orthodox faithful celebrate *Clean Monday* with excursions to the countryside (called *Koulouma*) and the consumption of shellfish and fasting delicacies such as taramosalata, olives, pickled and fresh vegetables, dishes made with pulses and a special unleavened flatbread, which is called 'lagana'. The traditional dessert of the day is made with *tahini* (sesame paste) and is called *halvas*. The Christians abstain from meat, dairy and fish.
- ▶ *Clean Monday*, also, signifies the beginning of Spring and it is celebrated with kite flying, when the skies get filled with colourful, hand-made or ready-made kites.
- ▶ This year, *Clean Monday* falls on **18th March**.



Kite-flying



Lent or the 40 great days (Megali Sarakosti) is a time for repentance and penance (fasting- Nisteia)

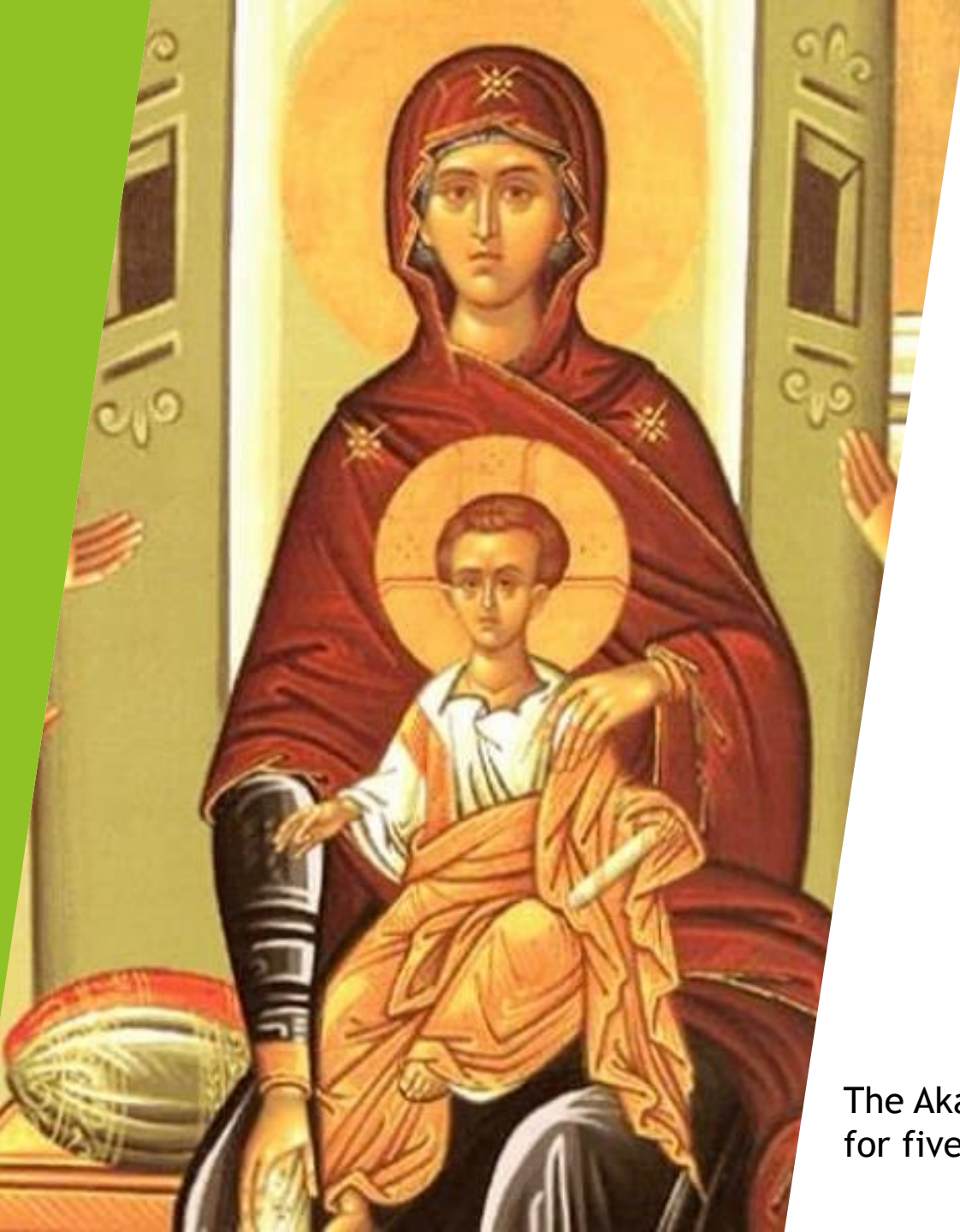
- ▶ Its traditions go back to the Jewish practices, where people would cover themselves in ashes (Ash Wednesday for Catholics) and wear sackcloth.
- ▶ Jesus himself fasted for 40 days and nights (Mathew, Mark and Luke).
- ▶ The narrative is linked to temptation (Jesus was tempted by the devil).
- ▶ Jesus talks about fasting: “do not be like the hypocrites when you fast”.

Lady Lent



Rules for Fasting - what not to eat (when) - controlling the tongue in taste and words

- ▶ James 3:5-10 - “The tongue is a fire...no human can tame the tongue... with it we bless God... and curse men.”
- ▶ So, the Orthodox fast on certain foods (meat, dairy, oil and alcohol) and with their words.
- During the second week of Lent, full meals are allowed only on Wednesday and Friday.
- The week before Lent, all animal products, including meat, are prohibited.
- Good Friday is a day for a complete fast, during which the Orthodox Christians are encouraged to eat nothing.
- If they eat some food, such as pulses, this should be cooked without olive oil. Vinegar is also added to that food to remind the faithful of the vinegar that was offered to Jesus, when He asked for water on the Cross.
- ▶ Throughout the Fasting period, the laity or faithful Orthodox can attend the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy to have communion of the blessed Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.



Sundays of Orthodox Lent (Megali Sarakosti)

- ▶ Orthodox fasting starts on Clean Monday, and the strict fast continues with enthusiasm for the rest of Orthodox Lent but particularly during the first week and in Holy Week.
- ▶ Every evening is said the Office of the Great Compline.
- ▶ Every Friday Evening the Church prays the Akathist ('not seated') Hymn for 5 Fridays.
- ▶ 1st Sunday - Triumph of Orthodoxy
- ▶ 2nd Sunday - Gregory Palamas
- ▶ 3rd Sunday - of the Holy Cross
- ▶ 4th Sunday - John of the Ladder and on Thursday Canon of St Andrew of Crete.
- ▶ 5th Sunday - Mary of Egypt
- ▶ Lazarus Saturday followed by Palm Sunday

The Akathist Hymn is chanted
for five Fridays during the Lent



Ecclesial and Monastic context

- ▶ There is no salvation outside of the Church 'extra Ecclesiam nulla salus' (St Cyprian of Carthage) and thus fasting without the blessings of Christ in the Church is pointless.
- ▶ Fasting is also deeply connected to the Orthodox monastic tradition.
- ▶ Today, the Athos Fathers of the Greek Orthodox Church lead the way in showing us how to live a holy life of prayer and fasting during the Lent.



Holy week services

- ▶ Lazarus Saturday - The Church celebrates the raising of Lazarus.
- ▶ Palm Sunday - the Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem - in the evening, the services of the bridegroom take place.
- ▶ Holy and Great Monday evening service.
- ▶ Holy and Great Tuesday evening service.
- ▶ Holy and Great Wednesday evening service and the sacrament of Holy Oil blessings.
- ▶ Holy and Great Thursday - Last Supper and anticipation of the Lord's Passion.
- ▶ Holy and Great Friday - Royal Hours and the services of the crucifixion, descent from the Cross and Jesus in the Tomb or *Epitaphios*. In the evening, the long service with the Lamentations begins.
- ▶ Holy and Great Saturday Morning - Liturgy of St Basil.



Pascha - Resurrection of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

- ▶ At Pascha -The Holy Fire in Jerusalem starts when the Greek Patriarch enters the real tomb of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem in the Church of the Resurrection and during the Paschal service he raises up candles, which are then lit supernaturally by the Holy Spirt. This light is spread around the world.
- ▶ Every Greek Church celebrates Pascha starting with the beautiful chant - ‘come receive the light ...from Jesus who has risen from the dead.’
- ▶ The service continues with the chant ‘Christ Is Risen!’ (Xristos Anesti!) shouted throughout the Church proclaiming that Christ has risen. Then, the Matins and the Paschal Liturgy is celebrated.