

# ST. INNOCENT ORTHODOX CHURCH SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

## Orthodoxy & Thanksgiving

*The role of Thanksgiving in our faith and in our lives*



There is no feast that seems more American than Thanksgiving.

It may be one of the few "American things" that we can truly make Orthodox. This is so because if you think about and are especially aware of the words and feeling of our Divine Liturgy, there is nothing more Orthodox than giving thanks or "thanksgiving."

It is, therefore, on Thanksgiving Day that we have a chance to help America look deeper into itself – by looking at this typical American holiday of Thanksgiving from an Orthodox point of view.

Orthodoxy, therefore, has the great opportunity to be able to dissect the word "Thanksgiving," to show this fullness. In fact, we are constantly showing what it really means at every Liturgy, for it is here that thanksgiving is not only a memory, not only a day; it is a state or a position that we are in.

Fr. Joseph Allen

November 2018

CHURCH HOLIDAYS

SAINTS' DAYS

November 8

Synaxis of the Archangel  
Michael and the Others

November 13

St. John Chrysostom,  
Archbishop of  
Constantinople

November 14, 15

Holy Apostle Philip. Beginning of  
Nativity (St. Philip's Fast)

November 16

Holy Apostle and Evangelist  
Matthew

November 21

**Entry of the Most-Holy  
Theotokos Into The Temple**

November 30

Holy Apostle Andrew

The First-Called

## ALL ABOUT THANKSGIVING BY FR. LAWRENCE FARLEY

The Christian Faith is all about thanksgiving. Our secular North American society thinks that thanksgiving is moderately important, and so it has a wonderful Thanksgiving Day feast once a year. I love this feast. Every October in Canada—my calendar tells me it is held in November in the US—when the leaves start to turn color and the days become a little cooler, we gather if possible with our extended families and sit down to a turkey dinner. There are no pilgrims and no Plymouth Rock in sight up north, but the rejoicing in family warmth

and domestic coziness is the same, I suspect, both north and south of the border. I do love Thanksgiving Day, even if in many secular households not everyone gives thanks to God for the day's bounty. At least once a year our all-too-often self-entitled culture tells us that it is good to give thanks and to be grateful.

It is otherwise in the Church. In the Church, we are to give thanks not just once a year, but always, so that every day is a thanksgiving day. We are taught this at Vespers: "I will sing praises to my God while



*Happiness can only be achieved by looking inward and learning to enjoy whatever life has and this requires transforming greed into gratitude.*

*St. John Chrysostom*

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## ANAPHORA – "THINE OWN OF THINE OWN"



Following the Creed, we enter into the part of the Divine Liturgy called the Anaphora, which means "lifting-up" or "elevation." At this time, the gifts of bread and wine are offered on the altar and prayers to "send down thy Holy Spirit upon us and these Gifts here spread forth" (Epiklesis) are offered.

At this part of the Liturgy we are told to stand up, listen and pay attention.

The Anaphora continues with the silent prayer of the priest giving thanks to God for all that he has done and ending with the Triumphant Hymn of the Angels.

These are the extract from the Anaphora prayer:

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## The Entry Of The Most Holy Mother Of God Into The Temple

Commemorated on November 21

The parents of the Virgin Mary, Saints Joachim and Anna, praying for an end to their childlessness, vowed that if a child were born to them, they would dedicate it to the service of God.

When the Most Holy Virgin reached the age of three, the holy parents decided to fulfill their vow. They gathered together their relatives and acquaintances, and dressed the All-Pure Virgin in Her finest clothes. Singing sacred songs and with lighted candles in their hands, virgins escorted Her to the Temple (Ps. 44/45:14-15). There the High Priest and several priests met the handmaiden of God. In the Temple, fifteen high steps led to the sanctuary, which only the priests and High Priest could enter. (Because they recited a Psalm on each step, Psalms 119/120-133/134 are called "Psalms of Ascent.") The child Mary, so it seemed, could not make it up this stairway. But just as they placed Her on the first

step, strengthened by the power of God, She quickly went up the remaining steps and ascended to the highest one. Then the High Priest, through inspiration from above, led the Most Holy Virgin into the Holy of Holies, where only the High Priest entered once a year to offer a purifying sacrifice of blood. Therefore, all those present in the Temple were astonished at this most unusual occurrence.

The All-Holy Virgin remained in the quarters for virgins near the Temple. The earthly life of the Most Holy Theotokos from Her infancy until She was taken up to Heaven is shrouded in deep mystery. Her life at the Jerusalem Temple was also a secret. "If anyone were to ask me," said Saint Jerome, "how the Most Holy Virgin spent the time of Her youth, I would answer that that is known to God Himself and the Archangel Gabriel, Her constant guardian."

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## Anaphora (Continued)

“It is meet and right to hymn Thee, to bless Thee, to praise Thee, to give thanks unto Thee and to worship Thee in every place of Thy dominion; for Thou art God ineffable, inconceivable, invisible, incomprehensible, ever-existing and eternally the same, Thou and Thine only-begotten Son and Thy Holy Spirit. Thou it was who didst bring us from the nonexistence into being and when we had fallen away didst raise up us again, and didst not cease to do all things until Thou hadst brought us up to Heaven and hadst endowed us with Thy kingdom which is to come. For all these things we give thanks unto Thee, and to Thine only-begotten Son and Thy Holy spirit; for all the benefits bestowed upon us, both manifest and unseen. And we give thanks unto Thee also for this ministry which Thou dost vouchsafe to receive at our hands, even though there stand beside Thee thousands of archangels and ten thousands of angels, the cherubim and the seraphim...”

The prayers now center on the narrative of the institution of Holy Communion, the words said by Christ at the Last Supper: “Take! Eat! This is my Body, which is broken for you for the forgiveness of sins.” “Drink this all of you! This is my Blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.” Then the priest elevates the diskos and chalice, makes the sign of the cross and says, “Thine own of Thine own we offer unto Thee, in behalf of all and for all!” The gifts are then consecrated, changing from bread and wine to the Body and Blood of Christ.

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How You bring sweetness to  
those who think of You,  
how life-giving is your word  
it is softer than oil, sweeter than honey to talk  
with You.



Praying to you brings life into us and gives us wings.

What trembling then fills the heart;  
what dignity and greatness and wisdom there are  
in nature and all of life.

Where you are not – there is emptiness.  
Where You are – there is richness of soul,  
a torrent of life:  
Alleluia.

- from the **Akathist for Thanksgiving**

This remarkable akathist was written in Russia by Metropolitan Tryphon, (Prince Boris Petrovich Turkestanov) not long before his death in 1934. That he was able to write such a moving and poetic hymn of praise in the conditions of those years, is a revelation not only of the depth of his spiritual vision, but of the Russian experience of faith that emerged in the 20th century. The akathist came to be known through Archpriest Gregory Petroff, who died in a Soviet prison camp in the 1940s. Well known today in the Orthodox world, this akathist was brought to St. Nicholas Cathedral in 1986 by Marina Cheremetieff. It had been given to her by a priest of the Russian Orthodox Church serving in Morocco. The akathist was presented at St. Nicholas Cathedral, read by Bishop Basil (Rodzianko) and sung by their church choir.

**Full text of the akathist:**

<https://www.stnicholasdc.org/files/Prayers/Akathist-of-Thanksgiving.pdf>

## The Entry Of The Most Holy Mother Of God Into The Temple

But there are accounts in Church Tradition, that during the All-Pure Virgin's stay at the Temple, She grew up in a community of pious virgins, diligently read the Holy Scripture, occupied Herself with handicrafts, prayed constantly, and grew in love for God. From ancient times, the Church has celebrated the Feast of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple. Indications that the Feast was observed in the first centuries of Christianity are found in the traditions of Palestinian Christians, which say that the holy Empress Helen (May 21) built a church in honor of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple.

Saint Gregory of Nyssa, in the fourth century, also mentions this Feast. In the eighth century Saints Germanus and Tarasius, Patriarchs of Constantinople, delivered sermons on the Feast of the Entry.

The Feast of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple foretells God's blessing for the human race, the preaching of salvation, the promise of the coming of Christ.

### Troparion — Tone 4

Today is the prelude of the good will of God,  
/ of the preaching of the salvation of  
mankind. / The Virgin appears in the temple  
of God, / in anticipation proclaiming Christ  
to all. / Let us rejoice / and sing to her: /  
"Rejoice, O Fulfillment of the Creator's  
dispensation."

### Kontakion — Tone 4

The most pure Temple of the Savior; / the  
precious Chamber and Virgin; / the sacred  
Treasure of the glory of God, / is presented  
today to the house of the Lord. / She brings  
with her the grace of the Spirit, / therefore,  
the angels of God praise her: / "Truly this  
woman is the abode of heaven."

## Women's Role in the Church - The Perspective of a Seminary Graduate, a Mother, and an Educator

*By Phyllis Meshel Onest, M. Div.*

### Women In The New Testament

...In the New Testament Jesus broke the centuries-old barrier that existed between men and women. Although rabbis did not include women in their group of followers, nor offer women spiritual teaching, Jesus visited and taught His friends Mary and Martha, who were also among His disciples. And there were other women among His followers.

St. Paul saw women as loyal coworkers. He depended on them to help spread the gospel. He spoke of consecrated virgins and widows. He wrote that in Christ there is neither Greek [Gentile] nor Jew, slave nor free, male nor female; all are one in Christ.

Phoebe was one of the first to be called deaconess. St. Paul wrote that she was "a helper of many and myself as well." The role of the deaconess in later years was to help clergy with the administration of baptism to adult women, and to reach out to women in institutions where men were not allowed [prisons, hospices for women, etc.] or where some of the faithful could be scandalized by the presence of men [e.g. bedrooms, isolated homes of the sick or elderly women].

### Women Throughout Christian History

Deaconesses survived until the eleventh century, and

with some rare examples, even into the 20th century. A prayer in the *Apostolic Constitutions* says: "honor the deacon as the image of Christ and the deaconess as the image of the Holy Spirit." Like these two persons of the Holy Trinity, the ordinations of deacons and deaconesses were for two different but equal persons. Different and equal, that is to say, each to fulfill a specific role in the Church, yet equal in the eyes of God.

Women have become saints and have mothered saints. St. Theodota (3rd c.) was the mother of SS Cosmas & Damian; St. Nonna (4th c.) of St. Gregory the Theologian; St. Emilia (4th c.) of St. Basil, St. Macrina, St. Peter of Sebaste, and St. Gregory of Nyssa. Some have been influential grandmothers: St. Leonilla (2nd c.) brought her 3 grandsons to Christ. St. Olga was the pious grandmother of Prince Vladimir of Rus, who had his nation baptized in the 10th century.

Many women have been martyred for their faith. Among them were St. Katherine the Great Martyr, St. Irene the Great Martyr, St. Marcella. The list is endless.

Women have been great teachers. St. Melania (4th c.) taught against the heretic Nestorius. St. Theodora the Empress (9th c.) was instrumental in the return of the icons into Orthodox worship. St. Pulcheria (5th c.), along with her husband, the Emperor Marcian, convoked the 3rd and 4th Ecumenical Councils.

St. Nina the Illuminator, "Equal to the Apostles," was a missionary, converting the country of Georgia in the early 4th century. St. Mary Magdalene and St. Helena are also identified as "Equal to the Apostles."

Women have entered the monastic life and offered spiritual direction. St. Xenia (4th c.), a deaconess, was not only the spiritual mother to her monastery, but also to people in the neighboring community. Today we have women monastics, who do the same thing here in the United States.

#### Women In Modern Times

During the Communist years in **Russia**, the lay people were responsible for preserving the Church's presence. It was the women, the "babas"/grandmothers, who kept the faith alive, who secretly taught the children and grandchildren and had them baptized. The young women of pre-revolutionary Russia, who later became the "babas," had godly nuns as their examples. Not only the nuns, but the older laywomen as well, provided a living image of holiness for younger women to follow. God thus prepared them for the sacred task that would be given them. I have read that Stalin knew he could not kill the soul of the Orthodox Church in Russia without exterminating every pious old woman in the land, and

even Stalin knew he couldn't get away with that!

Russia is not the only land graced with the presence of saintly and righteous women. There are stories of the women of Greece, Lebanon, Syria, Romania, Serbia, Egypt and other countries where Orthodox Christians have had to suffer for their faith. All these stories together make up the **history of Christian women**.

Today, in **Greece** women are devout teachers of religion. Today, in **Romania** there are nuns, including many who have recently embraced the Orthodox faith, who are learned and now influence the Church. They offer ministry by serving the people who come for holy days to spend time with the nuns and seek a spiritual life.

Today, in the **United States** women graduates of seminaries are involved in ecumenical dialogues, teaching in colleges and seminaries, writing, Christian education, music, as theological librarians, in healing ministries, monastic life, iconography, missions, charitable work, and more. There are opportunities for women in nearly every area of ministry: missions, education, healing, administration, evangelism, social services, supporting other women especially young mothers, monasticism, liturgically as readers, chanters, choir directors and choir members, and finally as wives, mothers, and godmothers. All are seeking to live out their faith as best they can!

#### An Orthodox Understanding Of The Roles Of Men And Women

Orthodox Christianity affirms that men and women are created equally in the image and likeness of the trinitarian God. Both Adam and Eve participated in "the Fall of mankind." Both have been redeemed by our Lord Jesus Christ, the "new Adam," and the Theotokos, the "new Eve." Both are called to *theosis*, to deification, that is, to become united with God. And yet total and unequivocal equality does not imply absolute sameness. Femaleness and maleness are part of the varying "charismata" or gifts given by the Holy Spirit to every person...

We, as Orthodox, affirm that manhood and womanhood are not interchangeable. Each member of the Body is equally called to live the Christian life as fully as possible. Each has his/her role. It's all right to have different roles; it does not alter our value in God's eyes, for no one is unimportant.

Full Text: <https://oca.org/parish-ministry/theology/womens-role-in-the-church-the-perspective-of-a-seminary-graduate-a-mother-a>

## DIY KIDS: SAINTS AND FEASTS OF NOVEMBER GARLAND CALENDAR

### Supplies:

- Saints and Feasts of November are found here: [Saints of November](#)
- scissors
- a glue stick
- tape
- red, orange, green, brown, and yellow construction paper

### Directions:

1. Print out the *Saints and Feasts of November* document and gather the supplies
2. Cut the construction paper into strips
3. Read and talk about the Saints and Feasts for each day, (they are in order and color coded by day) then cut out and glue on the names of the Saints or Feasts for each day onto the paper strip
4. Tape the ends together
5. For each day, make links onto the garland in the order and color pattern they are arranged.

This is a fun way to keep track of, and learn about all the different Saints we celebrate in November.



## Discussion With Teens About The Role Of Women And Men In The Church:

The Orthodox Church has always been and will continue to be a patriarchal church. Women however, have always played a key role in the Orthodox Church and the church pays tremendous respect to women starting with the Holy Theotokos and Virgin Mary.

This is a meaningful class that was found on the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America about the men and women in church: <https://www.goarch.org/-/the-role-of-women-in-the-church>

## Creating a Booklet about the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple

### Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple

**THINK ABOUT IT ... Choose the correct answer:**

- Which of the following describe Mary?
  - Most Holy Theotokos
  - Virgin Pure
  - Unwedded Bride
  - All of the above
- Who was Mary's mother?
  - Saint Elizabeth
  - Saint Anna
  - Saint Paraskeva
  - Saint Xenia
- Who was Mary's guardian angel?
  - Archangel Michael
  - Archangel Raphael
  - Archangel Gabriel
  - Archangel Uriel
- A day of celebration in our life in the Church is called a:
  - Sanctuary
  - Psalm
  - Vow
  - Feast
- To solemnly promise to do something specific is called a:
  - Sanctuary
  - Psalm
  - Vow
  - Feast
- A female servant of God is called:
  - Handmaiden
  - Hesychast
  - Hymnist
  - Handmade
- Psalms 119 through 133 are called the:
  - Psalms of Repentance
  - Hymns of Psalm Sunday
  - Song of Solomon
  - Psalms of Ascent



**“We who understand the salvation begun for our sake through the Most Holy Virgin, give her thanks and praise.”**  
(St. Gregory Palamas)

## THE ENTRY OF THE THEOTOKOS INTO THE TEMPLE

We celebrate the **Feast of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple** because this event shows:

- \* **God's love** for those who believe in Him
- \* the events that led to **Christ's Incarnation**
- \* the **role of the Theotokos** in God's blessing of salvation
- \* fulfillment of **God's promises**

The **parents of the Virgin Mary, Saints Joachim and Anna**, had no children. They prayed to God for a child and made a **vow** that if a child were born to them, they would dedicate the child to the service of God. God fulfilled their prayer, and Anna gave birth to a daughter: Mary.

When Mary, the Most Holy Virgin, reached the age of three, her parents called all their relatives and friends together. They dressed her in her finest clothes. Singing **sacred** songs and with lighted candles in their hands, other virgins escorted her to the Jerusalem Temple. At the Temple, the High Priest and several other priests met Mary, the **Handmaiden of God**.

In the Temple, **fifteen high steps** led to the **sanctuary**, which only the priests and High Priest could enter. Because they recited a Psalm on each step, Psalms 119 through 133 (120-134 in Orthodox Bibles) are still today called the "**Psalms of Ascent**."

The steps were steep and Mary was very small, so the people did not at first think that she could make it up this stairway. But when they placed her on the first step, she went up the remaining steps all the way to the highest one. Saint Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica, said that this showed that "she herself entered into the service of God of her own accord, as if she had wings, striving towards this **sacred and divine love**."

Then the High Priest, through inspiration from God, led Mary into the **Holy of Holies**, the inner sacred place where only the High Priest was allowed to enter once a year to offer a purifying sacrifice. All those present in the Temple were amazed, because this was a very unusual thing to do. It showed that the Virgin Mary was the beginning of God's plan for salvation of the human race and that **Christ God glorifies His Mother**, both before and also after His birth. Mary herself is sometimes called the "Holy of Holies" because she carried the Christ God within her body.

After entrusting their child to the Heavenly Father, Joachim and Anna returned home.

The All-Holy Virgin remained in a building set aside for virgins near the Temple. Her life at the Jerusalem Temple was a secret known to God Himself and the **Archangel Gabriel**, who was her constant guardian. She grew up in a community of **pious virgins**, read the Holy Scriptures, prayed constantly, and grew in love for God. Mary remained virtuous and without sin, and is therefore called "**The Virgin Pure**." When she grew up, she "bore Christ without seed" (without a human father), so we also refer to her as the "**Unwedded Bride**" of God.

From ancient times, the Church has celebrated the Feast of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple. Proof that this Feast was observed in the first centuries of Christianity are found in the **traditions of Orthodox Christians in Palestine**, which say that the mother of St. Constantine the Great, Empress Helen (Saint Elena) built a church there at the beginning of the 4th century in honor of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple.

## UNDERSTAND THE ORTHODOX USE OF THE WORDS:

**FEAST** = a day of celebration in the life of the Church

**TEMPLE** = a building for worship, the "house of God"

**INCARNATION** = God the Son took on human flesh

**VOW** = solemnly promise to do a specified thing

**SACRED** = holy, dedicated to a religious purpose

**HANDMAIDEN** = a female servant of God

**SANCTUARY** = the holiest part of a sacred place

**ASCENT** = to rise, to go upward

**DIVINE** = of God, heavenly

**GLORIFY** = to praise as holy

**PIOUS** = religious, those who love and obey God

**TRADITIONS** = teachings handed down through generations

## Feast or Fast: Dispelling Confusion About Fasting During Thanksgiving

In 12 days, on November 22, America is going to celebrate Thanksgiving, one of the few times a year that the family gets together. Thanksgiving Day is also called a Turkey day because it usually involves a meal with turkey or at least a more elaborate meal. Most American Orthodox Christians started the Nativity Fast on November 15. How can an Orthodox Christian navigate these family gatherings, often with family who are not Orthodox, and still keep the Nativity fast?

**Fr. Panayiotis Papageorgiou, Holy Transfiguration Greek Orthodox Church, Marietta, Georgia:**

Thanksgiving for Americans is a family event. The roots of the feast are found in the inclination of the human heart to offer thanks to God for the abundance of blessings He has bestowed upon us. Theologically speaking this feast is an extension of the Divine Liturgy - the Holy Eucharist (in Greek Eucharistia=thanksgiving).

As Orthodox Christians, who value the unity and strength of the family, we are inclined to adopt this feast as our own, especially at a time when the institution of the family is under attack from all directions. Considering the traditional Thanksgiving meal, however, which involves turkey, ham and dairy products, Orthodox Christians trying to hold the fast of Christmas are faced with the dilemma: Should I hold the fast and go contrary to the established social and cultural norms associated with Thanksgiving Day or should I break the fast in order to facilitate the need of blending in and not making others uncomfortable with my presence?

Several years ago, responding to the request of the faithful under its jurisdiction in America, the Patriarchate of Constantinople applying "economia" discreetly granted its blessing for those who live in America to break the fast on Thanksgiving Day while focusing on the unity of the family and the "eucharistic" aspects of this feast, but quickly return to the observance of the fast immediately afterwards. The non-Orthodox cultural norm is thus transformed through our theology and this pastoral approach to a positive element for the strengthening of family bonds, while keeping with the necessity of our spiritual ascesis of fasting.

**Fr. Sergei Sveshnikov, rector of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russian church in Mulino, Oregon:**

This question rarely troubles those who keep the Julian calendar, as is the case in the Russian Orthodox Church, since our Nativity Fast begins on November 28. However, some years, Thanksgiving does land on November 28--the first day of our Nativity Fast. I can see two approaches to resolving the conflict between fasting rules and a Thanksgiving turkey.

First, in my opinion, there would be nothing wrong if diocesan authorities or even parish rectors chose to relax some fasting rules on this day, especially in those parishes which are composed of mostly American converts to Orthodoxy, who not only have many non-Orthodox family members, but have grown up with the tradition of celebrating Thanksgiving in a certain way. Perhaps, a token morsel of turkey and a symbolic piece of pie with a heartfelt prayer to God, thanking Him for His boundless mercies to us, is a better witness to Orthodoxy than a senseless discussion among non-Orthodox family members of which foods are allowed and which are not. A true fast is much more than food. An Orthodox Christian would do well abstaining from gossip, back-biting, and judging, as well as gluttony, drunkenness, and other sins and passions which may find for themselves fertile soil at the Thanksgiving table.

Second, keeping a strict fast in America is rarely a problem at all. There are many Americans who do not eat turkey, or pie, or mashed potatoes for any number of reasons--various health and weight-loss diets, vegetarian and vegan convictions, and others. Most American families seem to have absolutely no problem with someone declining one dish in favor of another and having tofu instead of meat, salad instead of cake, or fruit instead of ice-cream. Nobody seems to get offended or upset, and Orthodox Christians should stop making belly-pleasing excuses for why they cannot keep the fast.

Source: [http://www.pravmir.com/article\\_1159.html](http://www.pravmir.com/article_1159.html)

## INVOLVING CHILDREN IN THE NATIVITY FAST BY ORTHODOX MOM

The Nativity fast begins every year on November 15. Unlike the start of Great Lent, the start of this fast gets lost somewhere among all the other fall activities. This means we must make an extra effort to mark it as an important event in our homes. The Nativity fast is also a slightly easier fast because fish is allowed on most weekends and seafood throughout the week, yet it still ends up feeling more difficult, doesn't it? I think this is mainly because the majority of our friends and family are not fasting and are busy pre-celebrating Christmas with parties full of all of the things we are abstaining from. Below you'll find a few delicious recipes to serve at this year's Christmas parties and lots of ways to help your children prepare for the wonderful feast of the Nativity. It's so important to keep our fast and focus during this time of year, especially when we have little ones looking to us as examples. We should pay careful attention to include them during the fast and make them feel involved. Some of my favorite ways to do this are:

- Celebrate the various feasts during the fast like the [Entrance of the Theotokos to the Temple](#) on November 21, [St. Katherine](#) on November 25, [St. Nicholas Day](#) on December 6, and [St. Herman of Alaska](#) on December 13.
- Try [Orthodox Kid's Ornament Exchange!](#) This gives children the opportunity to make Christ centered ornaments and meet other Orthodox kids! Who doesn't love getting lots of homemade packages in the mail?
- Make [paper chains](#) and write the names of people your children want to pray for on the inside.
- Something we've never done and I'm looking forward to doing this year is an [Advent wreath](#). I finally ordered this one and can't wait for it to come in!
- Make your own or buy a pre-made [Advent calendar](#). It's okay to use the twenty five day ones in addition to an Orthodox one, but you definitely want at least one with forty days! We use [this](#) little house and [this](#) wall one. Several years ago we made [this one out](#) of a cookie sheet and this year I've started on [this one](#) with an additional fifteen mittens.
- Bake [Lenten Christmas cookies](#). It makes stashing away all those non-fasting ones a bit easier!
- Go purchase some of the [coloring books](#) from [Potamitis Publishing](#). They are fantastic and are an excellent way to get kids engaged during the fast. Here's [a link](#) to their Nativity ones.
- This is also a great free printable for kids- [Little Orthodox Christian Workbook](#)
- Making [prospora](#) certainly isn't limited to fasting periods, but if it's not something you do regularly throughout the year this is a great time to introduce it to your children. This fantastic [Orthodox Prosporo Lesson and Activity book](#) provides the perfect introduction.
- Look for [Nativity themed toys](#) rather than Santa Claus and elves. This helps children remember that Christmas is about Christ not about presents. Hobby Lobby always has some terrific stuff as do most Christian stores.

Full text is here: <http://www.orthodoxmom.com/2015/11/19/involve-children-in-the-nativity-fast-with-yummy-lenten-recipes-and-christ-centered-activities/>