



CLEAN MONDAY

March 18



Did you know that Clean Monday is our first day in the wilderness of Great Lent?

Clean Monday (Greek: **Καθαρά Δευτέρα**) is the first day of Great Lent and an official holiday in Greece. On this day, we ceremoniously leave behind all sinful thoughts and practices, “clean” out all non-fasting food and drink from our diet, and enter into the wilderness of repentance.

On this day's third scripture reading, we hear: “Wisdom cries aloud in the street; in the markets she raises her voice” (Proverbs 1:20). One cannot help but think of Saint John the Baptist, who was described as “the voice of one crying in the wilderness” (Matthew 3:3). The Forerunner of the Messiah was called to prepare the way for the coming of Christ by preaching: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:2).

This is what we are all called to do during Great Lent: repent and prepare the way — within our hearts and lives — for the coming of Christ at Pascha (Easter). We do this through prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and forgiving everyone.

Even Christ Himself was led to be tested in the wilderness (also described as “desert”) for 40 days. It was necessary for Christ (the “New Moses”) to succeed where the first Moses and the old Israel had failed through their disobedience to God's Law, so that the Church (the “New Israel”) would not die in the wilderness (desert), but receive the promises of God.

In the liturgical season of Great Lent, we spiritually accompany Christ in the wilderness (desert) to battle with the enemies of our flesh, the world, and the evil one, in order that we may emerge victorious with Christ at Pascha (Easter).

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