

Reading the Psalms During the Christmas Lenten Season

St Athanasius wrote: *"In the Psalter, you learn about yourself. You find depicted in it all the movements of your own soul, all its changes, its ups and downs, its failures and recoveries. Indeed, whatever your particular need or trouble may be, from this same book you can select words that not only accurately describe it, but also provide its remedy."*

One of the ancient and beautiful Orthodox traditions of preparation for the Nativity of Christ is to read the entire Psalter as a community every day during the Christmas Lenten season.

For almost a decade a group of us have been following this tradition by reading the Psalter on a schedule. We have found it to be illuminating and a prayerful enhancement to our Lenten season. The following is an explanation of how the Psalter Group works.

In the Orthodox Church, the Book of Psalms, which has 150 Psalms, is divided into 20 sections, each called a "Kathisma" (literally, a "sitting", since the Psalms are read sitting down). A "Psalter Group" is therefore comprised of a minimum of 20 people who commit to reading one of the 20 Kathismata of the Psalter each day. A Kathisma takes about 10-15 minutes to read.

In this way, we will have read the entire Psalter every single day, as a group, in 20 days. Also, at the end of the 20 days, each member of the group will have individually read the entire Psalter once. In this manner, in our community of St George, the Psalter will be read every day in its entirety as preparation for Christmas.

For example, if you are assigned to start reading at Kathisma 4 on the first day of Nativity Lent, November 15th, then the next day you read Kathisma 5, and so on, until you have read all 20 of the Kathismata twice in the 40-day Lenten period. You can read your Kathisma anywhere and at anytime of the day that is convenient for you. If you miss a day, you simply move on to the next Kathisma.

The order of the reading is as follows:

- Begin with the Trisagion Prayers.
- Next, read your Kathisma for the day.
- At the end, say a "Lord have mercy" for each person in your group, and one for the entire parish community.

In this way, the Psalter reading becomes a blessing for our entire St George community!

We hope you will join us this Nativity Lent. It would be so joyful to have everyone at the Cathedral daily reading the psalms and praying for one another during lent.

To sign-up and be assigned a spot in a reading group, please send an email to Vasiliki Oldziej at vasiliki1@cox.net. ***Be sure to include your baptismal name in your email.*** The deadline to sign up is Saturday, November 13. We begin reading Monday, November 15.