

**Antiochian Orthodox
Christian Archdiocese
of the British Isles and
Ireland**



الأبرشية الإنطاكية
المسيحية الأرثوذكسية
للجزر البريطانية وإيرلندا

Registered Charity Number: 1175538

Archbishop: His Eminence, Metropolitan Silouan Oner

London 21/02/2026

To the Reverend Fathers, the Diaconate, and the Faithful Laity of this God-protected Archdiocese,

Beloved children in the Lord,

As we stand at the threshold of the holy season of fasting, the Church once again opens before us the sacred path of repentance, purification, and renewal. With the hymnographer we cry: *“Open unto me the doors of repentance, O Giver of Life.”* This holy Fast is not merely a change of diet, but a change of heart.

Fasting, if it is to be pleasing to God, must be joined to prayer and mercy. As the Prophet declares: *“Is not this the fast that I have chosen... to loose the bonds of wickedness... to share thy bread with the hungry?”* (Isaiah 58:6–7). The true Fast is one that purifies our thoughts, softens our hearts, restrains our tongues, and teaches us to love more deeply.

I lovingly encourage each of you to fast according to the guidance of the Church, with obedience and discernment. Let our fasting not become a source of pride or judgement, but a hidden offering laid quietly before the Lord. Let our prayer be pure, not hurried words, but a sincere cry from the depths of the heart. Set aside time daily for stillness, for the Psalms, for the Jesus Prayer, for spiritual reading. Without prayer, fasting becomes an empty discipline; with prayer, it becomes a ladder to heaven.

This season also calls us to generosity. I urge you to give not only from your abundance, but from your heart, whether time, effort, compassion, or material support, to those in need. Let no one in our parishes feel forgotten. Let no family struggle alone. Let us become living witnesses of Christ’s love in practical and tangible ways.

To my beloved brother priests and deacons: our spiritual life is not private. The life we live before God is reflected directly in the life of our parishes. If we pray with attention, our people will learn to pray. If we forgive readily, they will learn mercy. If we fast with humility, they will fast with understanding. Let us lead not only by words, but by example — in our homes, in our churches, and in our dealings with all.

At the beginning of this holy Fast, I ask forgiveness from each one of you. If I have spoken harshly, acted hastily, neglected your needs, or failed to meet your expectations as your bishop

and father, I humbly ask you to forgive me. Forgiveness is the foundation of our Christian life. As we pray in the Lord's Prayer, "*Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.*" Without forgiveness, there is no true fasting; without reconciliation, there is no real peace.

I also encourage every family, every parish community, to begin this Fast by seeking forgiveness from one another. Let husbands and wives reconcile, parents and children embrace, clergy and faithful renew their bonds of love. The Fast must begin with a clean heart.

May this holy season become for all of us a time of return — a return to the Father like the Prodigal Son, a return to humility like the Publican, a return to the joy of salvation.

Assuring you of my prayers for each of you and your families, I remain

Your Father in Christ,

+ Silouan
Metropolitan of the British Isles and Ireland.

+ **Silouan, Metropolitan of the Orthodox Christian
British Isles and Ireland**



Patriarchate of Antioch and all the East