

From the Divine Office for Cheesefare Sunday

Most honored Paradise, garden of beauty and delight, dwelling-place made perfect by God, unending gladness and rejoicing, delight of the prophets and home of the saints: by the harmony of your rustling leaves, beseech the Creator of all that He may open to me the gates I had closed by my sins, and that I may be worthy once more to partake of the tree of life and bliss which You had made mine from the beginning. (Vespers)

Adam was cast out from the delight of Paradise: bitter was his eating, when in uncontrolled desire he broke the commandment of the Master; and he was condemned to work the earth from which he himself had been taken, and to eat his bread in toil and sweat. Therefore, let us love abstinence, that we may not weep as he did outside Paradise, but may enter through the gate! (Orthros)



SUNDAY OF CHEESEFARE

FEBRUARY 27, 2022



EXPULSION OF ADAM AND EVE FROM PARADISE

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Melkite Catholic Church
256 Hamilton St.
Worcester, MA 01604
Rectory: (508) 752-4174 Hall: (508) 755-2199
Email: olphmelkite@gmail.com
Rev. Bryan McNeil, Pastor
Email: Brymc56@comcast.net Cell: (978) 314-1962
Divine Liturgy: Sunday 10:00 AM

Antiphon (1st)

1: Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth; sing praise to His name.

Through the prayers of the Mother of God, O Savior, save us.

2: Say to God: How awesome are Your deeds! So great is Your power that Your enemies cringe before You.

Be shafa'ati Walidatil Eelah, ya Mukhallisu, khallisna.

3: Let all the earth worship You and sing praises to You; let it sing praises to Your name, O Most High!

Through the prayers of the Mother of God, O Savior, save us.

Entrance Hymn

Priest: Come, let us worship and bow down before Christ.

People: O Son of God, who are risen from the dead, save us who sing to You, Alleluia!

Troparion of the Resurrection (Tone 7) pg. 42

You destroyed Death by Your cross. You opened paradise to the thief. You changed the weeping of the myrrh-bearers, and commanded Your apostles to proclaim that You, O Christ God, have risen, granting to the world great mercy.

Patronal Troparion (Tone 1) Pg. 15

In giving birth, you have preserved your virginity and in falling asleep you did not forsake the world, O Mother of God. You have passed to life being the Mother of Life. Through your intercession, save our souls from death.

Kondakion of Cheesefare (Tone 6)

O You who guide men toward wisdom, and give them intelligence and understanding, instructor of the ignorant and helper of the poor, strengthen and enlighten my heart, O Lord, give me word, O Word of the Father, for behold I will not refrain my lips from crying out to You: “O merciful One, have mercy on me who have fallen.”

The need for wakefulness was apparently well known to the Christians of St Paul’s day. Writing to the Ephesians he cites what seems to have been a popular saying, “*Therefore it is said: ‘Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.’ See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil*” (Eph 5:14-16). Believers, like sentries, need to be awake to see the dangers to faith in a godless society and distance themselves from them.

Light and Darkness

The images of sleep and night are connected to another set of images, used even longer to contrast the way of God and the ways of this world. We find the image of light in the midst of darkness representing the coming of the Messiah in the Book of Isaiah: “*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined*” (Is 9:2). This passage is quoted in Mt 4:16 as fulfilled when the Lord Jesus began His ministry. And, of course, Jesus is, in His own words, the Light of the world. Surrounded as we are with artificial light all day and night, we find it difficult to fathom the importance of daylight to people living before the twentieth century. Throughout most of human history productive life all but stopped at the setting of the sun. As the Lord Himself said, “*I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work*” (Jn 9:4). Immoral or treasonous activity is hidden under cover of night unless the “time is redeemed,” to use St Paul’s image. From its earliest days Christians devoted the night to prayer rather than to “revelry and drunken-ness” (see Acts 20:7-9). All-Night Vigils are still observed on some occasions, generally, but not exclusively, in monasteries.

Casting Off and Putting On

The final pair of contrasts St Paul uses here is that of old and new garments. We are to “*cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light*” (Rom 13:12). Armor, of course, suggests a soldier dressed for combat and St Paul develops that aspect of the image in Eph 6:11-18. “*Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil*” (v.11). Putting-on and taking-off becomes an important rite in the mystery of baptism where the removal of one’s ordinary garments represents the catechumen’s willingness to die to sin. The new life in Christ is, of course, represented by the white baptismal garment, the “robe of light” which the newly baptized puts on. During this Great Fast, then, we who have put on the robe of light at our baptism are called to put aside any form of physical or emotional self-gratification (what St Paul calls “*revelry and drunkenness ... lewdness and lust... strife and envy*”) through fasting, almsgiving and forgiveness. Similarly by increased prayer and worship during these days we “put on the Lord Jesus Christ.” Each person’s circumstances in life are different, but the Lord’s call to prayer, fasting and almsgiving is meant for everyone. If you have not already done so, discuss your Lenten program with your spiritual father. He can help you discern whether your plans are too little or too much, depending on your spiritual strength.

A Final Word

The next section of this passage is equally appropriate to the Fast: “*Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. Who are you to judge another’s servant?*” (Rom 14:3, 4) We must be on guard lest our desire to keep the Fast with augmented prayer, fasting and almsgiving push us to judge the observance of others and thus render our observance barren. As always in the Church, our brethren should be more important than our devotions or other practices. After all, they are more important to God.

DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

Today +Richard Nejaimey
March 13 +Richard Nejaimey (40 day). Requested by the family

Please Remember in your prayers: Susan Arraje, George Arraj, Jr., Robert Ghiz, Archie Opatka, Katherine Thomas, Charlotte Stockhaus, and Ruth Welsh.

If there are people for whom you would like me to pray, please reach out and give me their names. Part of our vocation as Christians is to pray for each other, especially when someone is sick or suffering in any way.

Fr. Bryan

Today is Cheesefare Sunday. This is traditionally the last day we eat dairy products until Pascha. As we finalize our preparation for Great Lent, let us remember that our fasting must be done in a spirit of humility. The Church provides guidelines for the Fast. Each of us must do the best we can without jeopardizing our health. Also, fasting without prayer and almsgiving is just a diet! If we have medical reasons for not fasting from food, we can all fast from gossip, speaking negatively about our brothers & sisters, etc. Please contact me if you need any guidance on fasting.

Fr. Bryan

Last Week's Collection

Weekly	\$ 687
Candles	\$ 32
Stole	\$ 100
Easter Flowers	\$ 60
Memorials	\$ 100
Picnic	\$1,150
TOTAL	\$2,179



COFFEE HOUR

Given the recent announcement from Gov. Baker that the mask mandate will expire Feb. 28, I think we can start the coffee hour once again. We will begin having a coffee hour **next Sunday, March 6**. If you would like to sign up to host, please reach out to me. March 6 is during Great Lent, so the menu should be meatless, as should all of the Coffee Hour menus throughout the Lenten season. I will also begin to distribute Antidoron on that date.

Thanks be to God that Archie Opatka is now cancer free!! Joe and Christie send their heartfelt love and thanks for all your prayers and support during this difficult time. We look forward to seeing the family at Divine Liturgy again soon!

PICNIC UPDATE

The final tally of income and expenses has been completed. We had a net profit of **\$10,239!** We received a generous donation of \$1,150 to cover the cost of the band, which is what increased our profit. Again, thanks to all who donated and/or worked so hard to make the picnic a success.

I would like to have an initial meeting for the 2022 picnic on **Monday, March 7 at 7:30pm**. All are welcome!

Next Sunday (March 6) is the First Sunday of Great Lent, also known as the Sunday of Orthodoxy. On this Sunday, we commemorate the restoration of the icons by the Empress Theodora in 842AD. We will have a procession with icons at the end of the Divine Liturgy. Please bring an icon from home or we will have some available for you to use.

Cheesefare Sunday

TOMORROW IS THE FIRST DAY of the Great Fast, the forty days of preparation for the observances of Great Week and Pascha. On this, the eve of the Fast, our Church always reads these words from St Paul's Epistle to the Romans, "*Now it is high time to awake out of sleep... let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light*" (Rom 13:11, 12). Appropriate as these words may be to this day, we know that they were not written with the Fast in mind; there was no Great Fast in St Paul's day. To what was he referring? Commentators believe that St Paul's sense of urgency derived from the portentous events in the Roman Empire of his day. The persecution of the Church had begun. Jewish unrest was intensifying and a full scale revolt would be mounted in a few short years, bringing about the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. Many Jews believed that the Messiah would be coming soon; many Christians believed that He (Jesus) would be returning soon. The "Day of the Lord" was at hand. For St Paul, this critical time in the history of the Church and the Jewish nation demanded that Christians focus their attention on the fundamental truth of their existence: they had a unique relationship to God in Christ. Everyone in the world was related to God as the work of His hands; Christians, however, were related to Him as His adopted children, God "*having predestined us to adoption as sons*" (Eph 1:5) in order to make present throughout the world the Gospel of salvation in Christ. It is this reality which should define a Christian's way of life at this time. St John Chrysostom, commenting on this passage, says that St Paul "... puts the Resurrection close at hand. For as time advances, he means, the season of our present life is wasting away, and the life to come approaches. If then you are prepared, and have done all that He has commanded, that day is salvation for you; but if you are not ready, it is not so." That is not some kind of threat for Chrysostom: "It is not to alarm them that he exhorts them in this way, but out of kindness, in order to untie them from their attachment to the things of this present world" (Homily on Romans). Most of us are quite happy to be attached to the things of this present world and resist parting from them. It is not unusual to find older people, who have moved from a family home to smaller quarters, trying to cram all "their things" into one or two rooms. Few are those who come to realize that, as the saying goes, "what you own, owns you." For St Paul, our "things" are not something to hold onto, but to leave behind happily, because what awaits us is so far superior. In our lectionary the Epistle to the Romans is read during the first weeks after Pentecost. Why is this section appointed for this Sunday? – because "*the day is at hand.*" The Great Fast begins this evening with "Forgiveness Vespers." We have the opportunity to be untied from "our attachment to the things of this present world," to "*cast off the works of darkness, and ... put on the armor of light*" (v. 12), through the observances of the Fast.

Wakefulness and Sleep

St Paul uses a number of contrasting examples in his epistles to represent the difference between the ways of believers and those of non-believers. Christians are told to be awake rather than to sleep, for "*the night is far spent, the day is at hand*" (v. 12). In the ancient world sleep was frequently an image of death. As a descent into unconsciousness, sleep foreshadows the end of life. Because it is temporary, however, sleep is also an image pointing to the resurrection. At Christ's resurrection, we are told in the Gospel, "*the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised*" (Mt 27:52). To be asleep is, in effect, to be dead. Sleep is also an image of inattention when contrasted to watchfulness. The sentry is awake, alert to any danger. Thus St Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, "*Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober...*" (1 Thess 5:7, 8). Sleep and drunkenness are equally devastating to a sentry who is supposedly on watch.

Prokimenon

Reader: Sing praise to our God, sing praise! Sing praise to our King, sing praise!

People: Sing praise to our God, sing praise! Sing praise to our King, sing praise!

Verse: All you peoples, clap your hands! Shout to God with cries of gladness.

People: Sing praise to our God, sing praise! Sing praise to our King, sing praise!

Reader: Sing praise to our God, sing praise!

People: Sing praise to our King, sing praise!

Epistle: Rom. 13:11-14; 14:1-4

Alleluia Verses

In You, O Lord, I have hoped: let me never be put to shame. In Your Justice, save me and deliver me.

Verse: Be for me a protecting God, a sheltering house to save me.

Gospel: Mt. 6:14-21, Sunday of Cheese-Fare

THIS WEEK'S LENTEN SEVICE SCHEDULE

Sun Feb. 27 6PM - Forgiveness Vespers (Beginning of Great Lent)

Mon Feb. 28 6PM - Great Compline

Wed Mar, 2 6PM - Presanctified Liturgy

Fri Mar 4 6PM - Compline & Akathist Hymn

Sun Mar 6 10AM - Divine Liturgy of St. Basil. Sunday of Orthodoxy followed by procession with icons.

Our basic Lenten schedule will be:

Mon.- Great Compline, Wed,-Presanctified Liturgy, Fri.-Compline & Akathist.