

Hymns for Cheesfare Sunday

Adam was driven out of Paradise, because in disobedience he had eaten food. But Moses was granted the vision of God, because he had cleansed the eyes of his soul by fasting. If then we long to dwell in Paradise, let us abstain from all needless food; and if we desire to see God, let us, like Moses, fast for forty days. With sincerity, let us persevere in prayer and intercession; let us still the passions of our soul. Let us subdue the rebellious instincts in the flesh. With light step, let us set out on the path to Heaven, where the choirs of angels with never-silent voices sing the praises of the undivided Trinity; and there we shall behold the surpassing beauty of the Master. O Son of God, Giver of Life, in You we set all our hope: count us worthy of a place there with the angelic hosts, at the intercession of the Mother who bore You, O Christ, of the apostles and the martyrs and all the saints!" (Orthros)



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EXPULSION FROM PARADISE

CHEESEFARE SUNDAY
SUNDAY OF FORGIVENESS
FEBRUARY 23, 2020

Antiphon (3rd)

1: Come, let us sing joyfully to the Lord; let us shout with joy to God our Savior.

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

2: Let us come into His presence with thanksgiving and let us joyfully sing psalms to Him.

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

3: For God is a great Lord and a great King over all the earth.

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

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 4 , Pg. 40)

The women disciples of the Lord, having learned from the angel the joyful announcement of the resurrection, and having rejected the ancestral sentence, proudly told the apostles: Death is despoiled. Christ God is risen, bestowing 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.

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 uncon-sciousness, 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 sleep 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.

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 had 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.

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.”

The next section of this passage is equally important during 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 own observance barren. As always in the Church, our brethren should be more important than our devotions or other practices. They are, after all, more important to God.

DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

Today

+Larry Bettley, +Charles Welsh. Requested by Joe & Lorraine Lian
+Nan Nejaimey
+Robert Sadousky. Requested by Ronald and Aileen Abraham

March 1

+Nan Nejaimey. Requested by Michael & Virginia Mischitelli & Antonio & Karen Solitro

March 8

+Agnès Esper, Evgenia Georges. Requested by Lauri Moosa & Michael Georges

Great Lent is a time for us to focus more intensely on the aspects of the Christian life that should always be at the center of our faith: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. This three-legged stool on which our faith rests is not an end in itself, but rather a means through which we deepen and strengthen our relationship with God and each other. When we fast, we are saying that there are more important things than food, video games, or gossip. We strive to lighten ourselves by eating less and abstaining from certain foods so that we can pray more. Some foods we abstain from for the whole of Great Lent. Other foods we abstain from for periods of time. In our Byzantine Tradition, we fast from all food from midnight till noon on the weekdays of Lent. We abstain from meat, meat products, fish, and dairy for all of Lent, except for a couple of days when fish is allowed. That is the ideal for which we strive. No one is dispensed from fasting, but we must use common sense. People who are ill, women who are pregnant or nursing, and children may need to modify the fast. If you have any questions, please reach out to me.

Fasting is of no spiritual benefit unless it is accompanied by an increased prayer life and almsgiving. Come to the Lenten services, read the Scriptures, pray more at home by yourselves and with your families. Use the money you save from fasting for almsgiving. If you have not fasted before, start slowly. I am happy to help you, as it can be quite confusing at the beginning. The most important thing is to make a start and do your best to keep to your fasting rule. If you fall off the fasting wagon, just get back on!

The Fathers of the Church called Great Lent a “bright sadness.” It is not all doom and gloom, but rather a time to remove the rocks and weeds from the garden of our hearts so that our faith can flourish and grow. The spirit of Lent is how we should live each day; in humility, repentance, prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

Praying for us all to have a blessed Lent.

Fr. Bryan

Welcome to those who are visiting today. We are happy to have you worship with us. If this is your first time here, please come downstairs to the Hall, introduce yourself, have some refreshments, and get to know the Community. If you have any questions about the Melkite Church and its traditions, please don't hesitate to ask Fr. Bryan.

Weddings — One year notice. Contact Fr. Bryan for Sacramental Preparation.

Baptisms — One month notice. Contact Fr. Bryan for Sacramental Preparation.

Please let Fr. Bryan know about anyone who is sick, in the hospital, or homebound so that he can visit and bring them the Eucharist on a regular basis.



THE BISHOP'S APPEAL: The annual Bishop's Appeal is a vital means of support for our Melkite Church in the U.S. Your gifts to the Bishop's Appeal provide funding for many important works of our Eparchy, such as: the formation of our seminarians for the Priesthood and Diaconate; providing for our elderly priests; producing **SOPHIA** magazine; teaching the Faith to our children and young adults; establishing/supporting new missions and outreaches. Our Father and Shepherd, Bishop Nicholas asks every Melkite household in the U.S. to give **at least \$100-\$200 each year** to support our Eparchy in America.

Those who give a gift of \$1000 or more will be automatically enrolled in the Order of Saint Nicholas, the charitable society of our Eparchy.

Our goal is 100% participation for our parish. Please send your gift today. May God bless your generosity.

Cheesefare Sunday - The Expulsion from Paradise

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).

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. 13), through the observances of the Fast.

Appropriate as these words may be on 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 on to, but to leave behind happily, because what waits us is so far superior.

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!

Reader: 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, Sunday of Cheesefare

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: Matthew 6:14-21, Sunday of Cheesefare, Sunday of Forgiveness

LENTEN SERVICE SCHEDULE FOR FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Wed. 2/26 - Presanctified Liturgy - 7:00PM

Fri. 2/28 - Compline & Akathist - 7:00PM

Sun. 3/1 - First Sunday of Great Lent, The Sunday of Orthodoxy. The first Sunday of Great Lent celebrates the restoration of the icons and an end to the iconoclastic controversy. The veneration of icons was restored to its rightful place as part of our worship. We will have a procession with icons at the end of Liturgy. Please bring an icon from home and join the procession.