

*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 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 of 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 intercessions of the Mother who bore You, O Christ, of the apostles and the martyrs and all the saints! (Orthros)*



**SUNDAY OF CHEESEFARE  
FEBRUARY 11, 2024**



**ADAM AND EVE EXPELLED FROM PARADISE**



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Divine Liturgy: Sunday 10:00 AM

### 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.

*Khallisna Ya-Bnallah, Ya Man qama min baynil-amwaat, nahnu muranneemeena Laka. Haleloueya.*

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 Cheese-fare (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.

People with real health issues will always receive a blessing to eat meat or dairy during the Fast but for most people, their reluctance to avoid these foods – and for forty days, at that – is because they don’t want to give up the taste. If we look to the Fast in the way that the Church does, as an exercise in curbing our ego, we may well decide to avoid meat and dairy “look-alikes” as well.

### Taking Pride in Fasting

Another way fasting can become an ego trip for the unwary is the way we take pride in it, be it our personal fasting or that of our Church. “We don’t fast just one day – our 40 days is 40 days!” As Christ indicated in Mt 6:16-18, there are always people who fast with fanfare – another manifestation of the ego. This is something we must be on our guard against as it is so easy to fall into this trap. If you are having lunch with friends or colleagues avoid saying things like, “I can’t eat that, I’M FASTING!” It would be more in the spirit of a true Fast to say something like, “I’ll just have a salad, I’ve been watching my diet lately.” This is a verbal way of anointing one’s head and washing one’s face, to use Christ’s imagery, lest we appear to be broadcasting our fast to one and all.

As we prepare to intensify our fasting during this season, let us examine the spirit in which we fast. Let us begin the Fast with this understanding: not measuring our fasting by what we eat and how much, but of the effect it has on us, whether our fasting makes us free or whether we become slaves of fasting itself.

The Great Fast is a time to struggle with our ego, our self-centered self-love. Our fasting is truly effective in this regard when we pay less attention to ourselves, to our wants to our needs and increase our love for others. Find someone who is hungry for food and feed them, or someone who is spiritually hungry and nourish help them. To do that, we must be able to see and pay attention to the needs of another. And we can’t do that if we are constantly focused on ourselves.

It is easier to observe the Church’s fasting rules, attend its additional services, and contribute to its charitable programs in a formal way without struggling against our ego. To do so empties our Fast of any worthwhile result as the following hymn from the Triodion indicates: *In vain do you rejoice in not eating, O my soul! For you abstain from food, but from passions you are not purified. If you persevere in sin, you will perform a useless fast.*

### Fasting and Compassion

The teaching on fasting in the Sermon on the Mount, read at today’s Liturgy, concludes with the admonition, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal” (Mt 6:19). Fasting is a school in which we try to live by this precept. In our affluent society most of us have some “treasures on earth” which we are reluctant to give up. Fasting helps us learn that we can in fact live without some of the things on which we base our way of life.

In the Gospel Christ admonishes us to avoid making a show of our fasting. In ancient Israel people often manifested their sorrow or repentance by tearing their garments or wearing sackcloth and smearing their faces with ashes. Christ taught the opposite: “But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting” (Mt 6:17-18).

The Church encourages us to do the same, and specifies the ointment we should use: “Let us anoint the head of our soul with the oil of loving compassion” (Canon, First Monday of the Fast). In Greek the words for oil and mercy are virtually identical, giving rise to the idea that the joy of the season is to be found in extending compassion to the needy. “When you give, give generously, your face lit up with joy. And give more than you were asked for...” (Isaac the Syrian, *Ascetic Treatises*, 23). The frequency of Lenten charity suppers or alms boxes in our churches are expressions of this sentiment.

Compassion has been defined as “the deep awareness of the suffering of others coupled with the desire to relieve it.” It is much more personal than writing a check or dropping off a donation to the local thrift store. Compassion is what motivates the coming of Christ in the flesh. “If He came down to earth, it was out of compassion for the human race. He suffered our sufferings before suffering the cross, even before taking our flesh. If He had not suffered, He would not have come down to share our life with us” (Origen, *Sixth Homily on Ezekiel 6,6*). Imitating the compassion of Christ, then, means becoming personally involved with those you seek to help, even to the extent of sharing their condition. For most of us, learning to do so might take a lifetime of Lents.

**DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS**

**Today**      +Tom Syseskey. Requested by Antoinette Arraj & Lisa Jagielski  
                  +Ron Abraham  
                  +Katherine Thomas

**Feb 18**      +Alfred Jagielski, Jr. (25yr.). Requested by Lisa Jagielski & family

**Our Cheesefare Potluck replaces the Coffee Hr. this morning**  
**Next week's Coffee Hr. will be hosted by Antoinette Arraj & Lisa Jagielski**

**Please remember in your prayers:** Lorraine Lian, George Arraj, Jr., Peter Abraham, Robert Ghiz, Sadie Mirante, Archie Opatka, Charlotte Stockhaus, Richard Abraham, Sr., Frank Boyda, Carol Boyda, Bob Lynch, Joe Najemy, Michael Mooradian, Dennis Desplaines, Michael McNeil, Jeff McNeil, Billy Rahall, Dan Rahall, Lauren Abraham, Nicholas Haddad, Nicholas Halal, Elaine Foley, David Ahlin, Elio Kanaan, Tom Sarrouf, Sandra Hanlan, Susan Bailey, Jacqueline Ventriglia, those affected by the natural disasters throughout the world, the people of Gaza, and for peace in the Middle East.

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.

**Last Week's Collection**

Weekly	\$1,140.00
Coffee Hr.	\$ 48.00
Candles	\$ 46.00
Stole	\$ 585.00
Memorials	\$ 175.00
Interest Inc.	\$ 94.50
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$2,088.50</b>

**FINANCIALS**

<u>1.2024</u>	<u>YTD(10.2023-1.2024)</u>
Income \$7,328	Income \$51,986
Expenses \$9,448	Expenses \$48,094
Net (\$2,120)	Net \$ 3,892

**Welcome to any visitors we have with us this morning! We are happy to have you worship with us.**  
**Please join us downstairs in the church hall for the coffee hour so that we can get to know each other better and answer any questions you may have about the parish or the Melkite Church.**

**CHEESEFARE POTUCK**

Today is Cheesefare Sunday. We will have a potluck brunch in place of the Coffee Hour. At **12:30pm** we will celebrate Forgiveness Vespers to kick off Great Lent.

Please bring your favorite meatless dish to share and then celebrate Forgiveness Vespers with your brothers and sisters. Asking for and giving forgiveness to each other is a wonderful way to begin the 40 days of Lent.

Fish, eggs and dairy are allowed for the brunch.

**LITURGICAL SCHEDULE FOR THE FIRST WEEK OF GREAT LENT**

**Sun Feb 11, 12:30pm - Forgiveness Vespers**

**Mon Feb. 12, 6pm - Great Compline**

**Wed Feb. 14, 6pm - Presanctified Liturgy**

**Fri Feb. 16, 6pm- Compline & Akathist**

**Sun Feb. 18, 10am-Sunday of Orthodoxy. Divine Liturgy of St. Basil followed by procession with icons. Bring an icon from home to carry. We will also have icons available.**

**Please join us!**

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THE LAST SUNDAY BEFORE THE GREAT FAST has several descriptive names. It is called the *Sunday of the Expulsion*, remembering the sin of Adam and Eve and their expulsion from the Garden. It is also *Cheesefare Sunday*, the last day for eating dairy products. Finally it is the *Sunday of Forgiveness*. On this day we are expected to ask forgiveness from anyone we have offended. Perhaps it is a good idea to give this day yet another name, one which includes the meaning of the others. Let's call it **Ego-fare Sunday**.

### **The Expulsion from Paradise**

The story of Adam and Eve – really the story of any sin – is about ego. In Genesis we read that God said, "...if you eat of it [the tree] you will surely die." But Eve said, "Gee, it looks good. I'd like to see for myself." And we know the rest.

Sin is about ego: someone (Eve or me) decides that they will ignore someone else (God or my spouse) and do what I want. I prefer my will to the will of another, to God's word in the Scriptures or to the Tradition of the Church. And so the remembrance of the original sin on this Sunday is a call for us to see that our ego is at the heart of our own sins and to resolve to hold it in check. This struggle is at the heart of any profitable Fast.

### **Fasting with the Mind of the Church**

Cheesefare Sunday is traditionally the last day for eating dairy products until Pascha, as the Great Fast begins tomorrow. This poses a problem in our society where meat and dairy are the substance of every meal. Some people say that they cannot do without meat and so they only fast sporadically. By this they may mean they need protein and are not aware of other sources of protein, such as beans, peas, soy products (tofu), as well as seeds and nuts. But it is perhaps more likely that people miss the taste of meat, fish or dairy products more than their protein content.

As a result many people replace these foods, not with vegetables and grains, but with meat and dairy substitutes made to taste like meat and dairy products. Technically these foods are not meat or dairy – they only taste like them – so they don't break the Fast. Or do they?

Christian fasting is not based on an avoidance of any foods because they are unclean or taboo in any way. Neither do we abstain from meat or dairy during the Fast for health reasons, out of respect for the creatures that produce them or for environmental concerns, legitimate as they may be. We do not even fast during this season to lament Christ's suffering and death. As St John Chrysostom wrote, "The Passion is not a reason for fasting or mourning but one for joy and exultation" (Sixteenth Homily on Matthew).

Fasting in the Eastern Churches is a tool for retraining the ego. It is a way of curbing the "I crave" in each of us and doing it together as a community. Fasting is a type of self denial, an imitation of Christ's own emptying Himself in order to share our human condition. The liturgy expresses this poetically: "The flower of abstinence grows for the entire world from the tree of the Cross. Let us then accept the Fast with love and take pleasure in the fruit of Christ's divine commandments" (Orthros, First Wednesday of the Fast). The self-emptying of the cross bears fruit in us when we strive to empty ourselves through fasting.

While we strive to control our greed, lust or pride, ego does not take a break. Fasting (and actually any Church practice) can become focused on my will. One example is what we fast from. Before children are old enough to actually fast, they are often encouraged to "give something up for Lent," to decide what they want to do in observance of this season. Unfortunately many people don't progress beyond this age spiritually. They still try to decide what they want to do. Ego again!

When we fast we are called to follow the Church's way of fasting, not to decide for ourselves how or when to fast. We fast, for example on most Wednesdays and Fridays, not Tuesdays and Thursdays. We may need to lessen the amount of fasting because of our health or the rigors of our work, but we should be wary of letting what we want to do turn our fasting into an ego trip. We may feel the need of more protein than some fasting foods provide while conveniently forgetting that some pulses (e.g. lentils) contain more protein than some meats. This is why making any changes in the traditional practice should be done with the blessing of one's spiritual father who can help us distinguish a real need from the promptings of our ego.

### **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**

### **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**

### **GREAT LENT**

This year, Great Lent begins on February 12. During the Fast, we abstain from meat, fish with a backbone, and dairy. We also eat or drink nothing from midnight to noon, Monday through Friday. This is the ideal. We try to keep the Fast as best we can. There are legitimate reasons for adjusting one's fasting (i.e. medical issues). The important thing is to fast as best you can.

It is also important to pray more; individually and communally. We will have services on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays during Great Lent. Make an effort to come to at least one service per week. Spend time reading the Scripture. You can also add spiritual reading, such as *Great Lent* by Alexander Schmemman.

We are also called to give alms. The money we save by not eating meat should be given to the poor. The Diocese has its Shepherd's Care program for that purpose. There are brochures and mite boxes at the back of the church. You may also have a charity to which you want to donate.

Without prayer and almsgiving, fasting is just a diet. These three aspects of our lives are tools to help us get closer to God.

Blessed Lent!