



reminds us of our need for God's forgiveness and guides our hearts, minds, and spiritual efforts on returning to Him in repentance.

Forgiveness Sunday (Cheesefare Sunday), Commemoration of the exile of Adam from Paradise

25 February / 10 March

The Sunday of Forgiveness is the last Sunday prior to the commencement of Great Lent. During the pre-Lenten period, the services of the Church include hymns from the Triodion, a liturgical book that contains the services from the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee, the tenth before Pascha, through Great and Holy Saturday. On the Sunday of Forgiveness focus is placed on the exile of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, and event that shows us how far we have fallen in sin and separated ourselves from God. At the onset of Great Lent and a period of intense fasting, this Sunday

Resurrection Tropar, Tone 8: Thou didst descend from on high, O Merciful One! / Thou didst endure the three-day burial / to free us from our sufferings! / O Lord, our Life and Resurrection, glory to Thee.

Resurrection Kondak, Tone 8: By rising from the tomb Thou didst raise the dead and resurrect Adam/ Eve exults in Thy Resurrection, / and the world celebrates Thy rising from the dead, O Greatly Merciful One.

Kondak to Cheese-fare Sunday, Tone 6: O Thou guide unto wisdom, bestower of prudence, instructor of the foolish and defender of the poor: Establish and grant understanding unto my heart, O Master. Grant me speech, O Word of the Father; for behold, I shall not keep my lips from crying unto Thee: O Merciful One, have mercy on me who have fallen.

Matins Gospel VIII

Epistle: St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans 13: 11 — 14: 4

11. And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. 12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. 13 Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in licentiousness and lewdness, not in strife and envy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil its lusts.

Romans 14: 1 Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. 2 For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. 3 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. 4 Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

WHO ARE YOU TO JUDGE ANOTHER'S SERVANT?

Why do we usurp God's right to judge? ...It is for God alone to judge, to justify or to condemn. He knows the state of each one of us and our capacities, our deviations and our gifts, our constitution, and our preparedness ...according to the knowledge that He alone has ...And how do you know what tears he has shed about it before God? You may well know about the sin, but you do not know about the repentance.

St. Dorotheos of Gaza. Discourse on Refusal to Judge our Neighbour. B#45, pp. 133,135.

The Gospel According To St. Matthew 6: 14 -21

14 The Lord said: if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. 16 Moreover, when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily, I say unto you, They have their reward. 17 But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face, 18 That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father, which is in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. 19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: 20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

FORGIVENESS SUNDAY

This is the very beginning of Great Lent. For whatever we begin in life, we always compose some kind of plan of action, a program of what we have to accomplish and in what order. But here we don't have to do this; today's Gospel gives us this program. Earlier, the Holy Church was more often teaching us, but now she is requiring actions from us. Just let us examine the present Gospel attentively, and we will see how simple, how accessible for each of us, and at the same time, how comprehensive these rules are.

“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Mt. 6:14-15). Therefore, what is the real purpose of Great Lent? Here it is: so that our Heavenly Father will forgive us our sins. And how do we achieve this? Forgive people their sins. Let us start here with this. This is the very first thing.

Secondly, “moreover, when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance; for they disfigure their faces that they may appear unto men to fast.... But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret” (Mt. 6:16-18). And so let us fast, but not for the sake of people, but before God, and not despondently, but in spiritual happiness.

And thirdly, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth. . .but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven” (Mt. 6:19-20). This determines all our activities, gives direction to our whole life.

And finally, the last thing: “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Mt. 6:21). Here is the purpose of our life! That our heart be in God, filled with God, so that God will become our treasure. But to learn this is possible only in the Church. And this is so important for us that it is worth the labour, and the fasting, and standing longer in church, and praying more at home. For only then will we be able to cry out with joy: “Christ is Risen!” and to answer those greeting us: “In Truth He is Risen!”

THE RITE OF FORGIVENESS

Brothers and sisters! What the Holy Church asks us to perform right now is no longer a thought or a feeling, but an action, a deed. Thoughts and feelings have been cultivated in us for the past weeks. In fact this is the way it always happens: thought gives birth to feeling, and feeling gives birth to action. And this action is of special importance. Listen: “If ye forgive not men...neither will your [Heavenly] Father forgive you” (Mt. 6:15). This means that our fasting and going to church and prostrations, in fact all our devotions, will be in vain.

That's how important this first step is. But it is not easy. To do it in words only, just for the sake of decency, for the sake of formality, might not be difficult. But what is the good of that? However, really to make this step, to recognise that we are worse than others, worse than everyone, truly guilty before everyone (and after all, this is how it is: each of us is guilty before everyone, in everything, and for everything), to come to this realisation is very, very difficult. And to consider the guilt of another before us as nothing, as if it did not exist, and maybe was even provoked by us—this is still more difficult. Even in the Lives of the

Saints we read examples of how great strivers and confessors were not able to do this, and thereby ruined everything. And even more for us sinners is the special help of God needed to forgive and to ask forgiveness sincerely, from our whole heart, to draw out of it our self-love, our self-justifying “I.” But we have to do this, the Lord requires it of us, the Lord is waiting. Without this effort within ourselves we cannot begin Lent. So let us ask for forgiveness and forgive from our whole heart. And here, as the first one, I ask you: Forgive me!

The One Thing Needful - Archbishop Andrei.

For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you (*Matt. 6:14*)

Dear brothers and sisters, in the Gospel read on the last Sunday before Great Lent, the Holy Church reminds us all of the great and saving command of Christ that we be reconciled with our neighbour and repent before God. Each of us knows from his own experience and accepts humbly, together with St. James that *we all stumble in many things* (James 3:2). We all offend God, break His holy commandments, and it often happens in our lives that we make these saving commandments a reason for sin and transgression against God's commandments.

Our first parents, Adam and Eve, once found in God's commandment not to eat *of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*, a cause to heed the devil's temptation; they broke this commandment and, since they did not repent sincerely before God, they were driven out of the beautiful Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:17; 3:6,23).

What do we see in the lives of men on earth and in our own life? Just like our first parents, we all reach out fearlessly to *the tree of the knowledge of good and evil* forbidden to us by God, that is to say, to sin, thereby breaking Christ's saving commandments. And through our sin we become, just like our first parents, the adversaries of God's commandments, unworthy of the heavenly paradise. Only God's mercy can turn us back again from the way of sin onto the way of saving faith and virtue.

However, our return to the way of salvation can only come about through our sincere and heartfelt repentance before God. For this reason, the first commandment made by Christ our Saviour was on penitence: *Repent, and believe in the Gospel* (Mark 1:15). Repenting sincerely for our sins before God, we must strive with all our will always to act in the future according to the commandments of the Gospel of Christ.

Brothers and sisters, just as we often sin against God, so we often sin against other people—our neighbours. Love for one's neighbour is the second commandment of God. The Lord saw fit to link these two commandments—love of God and love of our neighbour—so closely, that breaking one of them makes a man break the other as well. *If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen* (1 John 4:20)?

Without love of our neighbour we can never love God and live a beneficial life, pleasing to God on earth. *And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also* (1 John 4:21).

Before Great Lent, brothers and sisters, the Holy Orthodox Church commands us to restore peaceful relations with those of our neighbours whom we have offended or saddened in any way, in thought, word or deed. Christian humility demands that we make our peace not only with those whom we have offended, but also with those who have offended us in any way, and forgive them. And only through reconciliation with our neighbour and forgiving him when he has offended or saddened us can we with a clear conscience fast successfully, praying and sincerely repenting before God, throughout the holy days of Great Lent. And only through completely forgiving others can we, according to Christ's commandment, expect in faith the forgiveness of our sins. *For if you forgive men their trespasses, says the Lord, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses* (Matt. 6:14-15).

Let us forgive, dear brothers and sisters, all sorrow that others have caused us; let us put out of our minds all thought of who was right and who was wrong in any quarrel or offence, and forget it completely. Let us sincerely and wholeheartedly forgive one another our sins and in peace with our neighbour search the inner recesses of our souls to wash clean our hearts with tears of repentance before God.

Having made our peace with our neighbour and having wept sincerely for our sins before God, through sincere repentance we will become worthy to partake, without condemnation, of the saving and Holy Gifts of Christ—His Most-pure Body and Blood. And on the day of the Last Judgment, may we all be found worthy, brothers and sisters, to hear from our God and Saviour, the joyful words: "Your Heavenly Father forgives you your sins!" Amen.

The Living Word

F.I.S.

Saints of the Week **Beginning of Great Lent**

25 February / 10 March — St Tarasius, Patriarch of Constantinople - His predecessor, Patriarch Paul, secretly left the patriarchal throne, retired to a monastery and received the Great Habit. This was during the reign of Irene and Constantine. By Paul's advice, Tarasius, a senator and advisor to the Emperor, was chosen as Patriarch in 784. He quickly passed through all the stages of ordination and became Patriarch. A man of great physical stature and great zeal for Orthodoxy, Tarasius accepted this undesired state in order to help in the struggle of Orthodoxy against heresy, especially that of Iconoclasm. He was responsible for the summoning of the 7th Ecumenical Council in Nicaea in 787, where the iconoclasts were condemned and the veneration of the holy icons was restored and confirmed. Tarasius was very compassionate to the poor and indigent, building them shelters and feeding them, but he was decisive with those in power in the defence of faith and morals. When the Emperor Constantine divorced his lawful wife, Maria, and took a kinswoman to live with him, seeking the Patriarch's blessing to remarry, Tarasius not only withheld his blessing, but first counselled and then reproached him, and finally excommunicated him. As death approached, those round him saw him answering the demons: 'I am not guilty of that sin, nor of that one', until he was incapable of speech. He then began defending himself with his arms, driving them away from him. As he breathed his last, his face shone as with the light of the sun. This truly great hierarch entered into rest in 806. He had governed the Church for 22 years and four months; Our Holy Father Paphnutius of Kephala; St. Walburga, abbess of Heidenheim.

26 February / 11 March — Commemoration of Great Martyr Theodore the Recruit — On this day we celebrate the most glorious miracle which was performed by the holy and glorious Great-martyr Theodore the Tyro, through the boiled wheat - according to tradition recorded in the Synaxarion the Emperor Julian the Apostate (reigned 361-3), as part of his campaign against the Christians, attempted to defile their observance of the first week of Lent by ordering all the food for sale in the market of Constantinople to be sprinkled with blood from pagan sacrifices. St. Theodore then appeared in a dream to Eudoxios, Archbishop of the city, ordering him to warn his flock against buying anything from the market, instead the Saint told him, they should boil wheat (kolyva) and eat this alone.

St Porphyrius, Bishop of Gaza - This great bishop and pastor was born in Salonica of wealthy parents. He spent his youth to the age of 25 in his home town, then left his parents' home and worldly life and went off into the Egyptian desert. Under the guidance of an experienced spiritual father, the young Porphyrius became a monk and remained for five years. He then paid a visit to the Holy Land in company with his friend, the monk Mark. He lived another five years in asceticism in a cave near Jerusalem. But then his legs became weak and he was no longer able to walk. But he was always able, crawling on his knees, to be present at Divine Service. One night the Lord Himself appeared to him in a vision and healed him of the weakness in his legs, and he became completely well. When he was chosen as bishop of Gaza, Porphyrius accepted this obligation with a heavy heart. He found only 280 Christians in Gaza; the rest of the inhabitants being fanatical idol-worshippers. Only by his great faith

and patience did Porphyrius succeed in bringing the people of Gaza to the Christian faith. He had to travel in person to Constantinople, to the Emperor Arcadius and the Patriarch, John Chrysostom, to beg for help in the unequal struggle against the idolators. Seeking support, he received it. The temples of the idol-worshippers were closed, the idols demolished and a fine church built with thirty marble pillars. There was especial help forthcoming from the Empress Eudoxia. Porphyrius lived long enough to see the whole city brought to the Christian faith, but only after great toil, suffering and tearful prayer on his part. He entered peacefully into rest in 421. He was a wonder-worker during his lifetime and after his death. His relics are preserved in Gaza to this day; The Holy Martyr John Calpha.

27 February / 12 March — Our Holy Father Procopius of Decapolis - This saint came from Decapolis by the Sea of Galilee; hence his name. In youth, he gave himself to the monastic life and passed through all those prescribed labours that purify the heart and uplift the soul to God. When a persecution on the part of the wicked Emperor Leo the Isaurian broke out over icons, Procopius stood up and defended icons, showing that their veneration is not idolatry, for Christians know that to prostrate themselves before icons is not to prostrate before dead matter but before the living saints depicted on the icons. Procopius was bestially tortured, imprisoned, beaten and flogged with iron flails. When the wicked Emperor was murdered, being already a lost soul, the icons were returned to the churches and Procopius returned to his monastery, where he spent his remaining days in peace. In old age, he entered into God's Kingdom, where he beheld with joy the living angels and saints whose images were on the honoured icons on earth. He departed this life peacefully in the 9th century; Our Holy Father Thaleleus; Our Holy Father Titus of the Kiev Caves; Our Holy Father Stephen; The Holy Martyr Julian the Gout-Sufferer.

28 February / 13 March — The Hieromartyr Proterius - This saint was a priest in Alexandria at the time that the Patriarch there was the heretic Dioscorus, one of the founders of the Monophysite heresy which holds that in Christ there are not two natures but one. At that time, Marcian and Pulcheria were on the imperial throne. Proterius, a holy and devout man, stood up against Dioscorus, as a result of which he endured much misery. Then the 4th Ecumenical Council was summoned at Chalcedon, at which the Monophysite heresy was condemned. Dioscorus was cast down from the patriarchal throne and sent into exile, and in his place the orthodox Proterius was chosen, He governed the Church with zeal and love, a true follower of Christ. But the followers of Dioscorus did not stop creating confusion in Alexandria. In the face of such bloody chaos, Proterius left the town with the intention of going away for a time, but the Prophet Isaiah appeared to him on the road and said: 'Return to the town; I am waiting to take you.' Proterius returned and went into the church. Hearing of this, the insolent heretics rushed into the church, seized the Patriarch and stabbed him. About six of the faithful perished along with Proterius. Thus this wonderful pastor of Christ's flock received the crown of martyrdom for the truth of Orthodoxy, in 457; St Basil the Confessor; The Hieromartyr Nestor, Bishop of Magydos; Blessed Nicolas the Fool for Christ of Pskov; Our Holy Father John Cassian; Our Holy Father Barsanuphius; St. Oswald, archbishop of York (992).

1 / 14 March — Our Holy Mother, the Martyr Eudocia - Living in Heliopolis, a city of Phoenicia, during the reign of Trajan, she was at first a great harlot, then a penitent, a nun and finally a martyr. She gained great wealth from her harlotry. The reversal of her life was brought about, through the providence of God, by an elderly monk, Germanus, and that unintentionally. Coming to Heliopolis in the course of his work, he stayed at the house of a Christian woman whose home abutted onto Eudocia's. When at night he began, as was his monastic custom, to read the Psalter and a book on the Dreadful Judgement, Eudocia heard him and stood listening attentively to his every word until the end. Fear and dread took such hold on her that she remained awake until daybreak. As soon as it was dawn, she sent a servant to beg that monk to come to her. Germanus came, and they began a long conversation on that which the old monk had been reading the previous night, and especially on faith and salvation. The result of these discussions was that Eudocia asked the local bishop to baptise her. After her baptism, she gave all her goods to the church, to be distributed to the poor, dismissed her servants and slaves and retired to a women's monastery. She so devoted herself to the monastic life—to obedience, patience, vigils, prayer and fasting—that after thirteen months she was chosen as abbess. She lived fifty-six years in the monastery and was worthy in the eyes of God to be given the gift of raising the dead. When a persecution of Christians arose under the governor, Vincent, holy Eudocia was beheaded. Here is a wonderful example of how a vessel of uncleanness can be purified, sanctified and filled with a precious, heavenly fragrance by the grace of the Holy Spirit; Our Holy Father Agapius; The Holy Martyr Antonina;

St. David of Wales, bishop (542 - 601) - of Welsh royalty. Son of King Sant of South Wales and Saint Non. Grandson of Ceredig, Prince of Cardigan. Uncle of King Arthur. Priest. Studied under Saint Paulinus. Collaborated with Saint Columba, Saint Gildas, and Saint Finnigan. Missionary and founder of monasteries. Following his contribution to the synod of Brevi in Cardiganshire, he was chosen primate of the Cambrian Church. Archbishop of Caerleon on Usk; moved the see to Menevia. Presided at the Synod of Brevi which condemned the Pelagian heresy. Encouraged and founded monasteries. First to build a chancel to Saint Joseph of Arimathea's wattle church at Glastonbury. After a vision in his monastery in the Rhos Valley, he set out next day with two monks to Jerusalem to aid the Patriarch. While there his preaching converted anti-Christians. It is said that once while he was preaching, a dove descended to his shoulder to show he had the blessings of the Spirit, and that the earth rose to lift him high above the people so that he could be heard by them all. Born at Menevia (now Saint David's), Wales. Died 601 at Mynyw, Wales. Name means beloved one.

2 / 15 March — The Hieromartyr Theodotus, Bishop of Cyrenia - He was chosen for his wisdom and virtue as bishop, and governed the Church of God with love and zeal. When a persecution of Christians arose in the time of the wicked Emperor Licinius, this man of God was taken before the judge and put to various tortures. When the torturer, Sabinus, urged him to deny Christ and worship pagan idols, Theodotus replied: 'If you knew the goodness of my God, who, it is my hope, will by these brief tortures make me worthy of eternal life, you would wish to suffer for Him as I do!' They hammered nails into his body, and he thanked God; then, believing that the end was near, he counselled and instructed the Christians that were around him. But, by the providence of God, there came at that moment an order from the Emperor Constantine to free all Christians

who had been brought to trial for the sake of Christ. Then this saint also was freed, returned thus tortured to his see in Cyrenia and lived for a further two years. He then entered into rest in the Lord whom he had served faithfully and for whom he had suffered greatly. He finished his earthly course in 302, and went to the courts of the Lord; The Holy Martyr Troadius; The Four Hundred and Forty Martyrs of Lombardy; Our Holy Father Agathon; The Holy Martyr Euthalia.

St. Chad of Mercia (672) - Our holy father Chad was tonsured in Ireland while still in his teens. When he came to Great Britain, we do not know, but in about 655, he became abbot of a monastery in Yorkshire where he was known as a great struggler. St Aiden had been his elder, and St Chad followed his example in everything. St Chad became well known throughout Britain for his holiness, meekness and patient love. In 664, the Bishop of York reposed in the Lord, and Saint Chad was chosen as the new bishop. The saint was filled with love for his flock, and he wanted to teach them all about Christ. The holy bishop began to walk through the whole diocese, teaching the Gospel everywhere. He celebrated the Divine Liturgy in every village and town, and preached from the town squares, where he set up crosses. Moreover, St Chad stopped to teach at every cottage, farm, castle and cross-road, and his diocese became one of the most enlightened in Britain. When blessed Theodore of Tarsus, a Greek bishop, was made Archbishop of Britain in 669, he soon heard of St Chad. When the blessed Theodore visited York, he commanded the holy bishop to travel by horse, rather than on foot, for he saw that St Chad was already old and frail. The saint did not want to fulfil this, for he wanted to come to his people as a minister and servant, as Christ had done, and not like a lord on horseback. Nevertheless, the meek saint obeyed. In this same year, 669, St Chad was appointed as bishop of the Kingdom of Mercia. At that time, Mercia was ruled by King Wulfer. Wulfer had been baptised many years before, but later, he supported the worship of demons in his land, and his chief adviser was a cruel pagan. The king's wife, Erminhilda, was a fervent Christian, however, and tried to teach her children about Christ and His Holy church. St Chad began his long, hard work of teaching the people of Mercia the way of salvation. Again, the holy bishop travelled from town to town, preaching, baptising and celebrating the Divine Liturgy. The saint often preached standing near one of the great stone crosses left behind by the Celtic Christians who had long before been driven out of the country by the invading Angles and Saxons. More than anything else, St Chad liked to go alone into the forest, and pray to God for his flock, and for his own soul. He built a small cell and chapel in the woods, and went there to pray and struggle as often as he could. Once, while St Chad was in his cell praying, he heard a loud crashing sound outside. He went out and saw a large stag, collapsed from exhaustion, by the side of the pool, drinking. Making the sign of the Cross, the saint went to the poor animal and stroked it. He knew that hunters must be chasing the stag to kill it, so the saint hid the animal. Soon, the sound of a hunter's horn was heard, and a richly dressed young man on horseback came galloping into the clearing. He reverently greeted the bishop, and asked if he had seen the deer. "I do not tend the deers, nor the beasts of the forest, nor the birds of the air, but this deer, perhaps, has led you to salvation," the bishop replied. The young man was Prince Wulfade, the eldest son of the King. The saint's words opened the heart of the young prince, and he asked the holy bishop to explain the path of salvation to him. St Chad began to tell the prince about how the world was created by Christ our God and how Christ died on the Cross and rose again to save us. He explained about the Church and how everyone who wants to be saved must be born again in Holy Baptism and be united to Christ's Holy Church. The young prince heard all this, and then begged St Chad to baptise him. The saint took Prince Wulfade to the pond, and entering the deep water, baptised him in the name the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. He then taught the prince many more things. Later, Prince Wulfade brought his younger brother Rufine to the saint to be taught and baptised. After this time, the young princes came often to the holy bishop to be taught how to struggle and pray. The evil pagan counsellor of the king found out about the new, holy life of the two young princes, and he feared that he might lose his power because of them. For this reason, and because he hated the two princes, he began to slander them to the king. "Your two sons have disobeyed you. They have become Christians, even though you forbade it. They no longer obey your law, and they are now plotting against you to take over your throne." The evil counsellor convinced the king that he had to kill the two princes before they killed him. One day, the king and the counsellor followed the two princes into the forest, to the cell of St Chad. The holy bishop was away, and the two young men stood alone in prayer. Suddenly, the king burst through the door and cried out: "Why do you disobey my commands and follow this religion of Christ. You know my law, that the old gods must be worshipped by my sons and nobles. I command you to renounce Christ and give honour to the old gods." "We belong to Christ's Holy Church, and we will never turn from Him. But you yourself were once a Christian. We beg you, father, to return to the Holy Church and save your soul." At these words, the king became enraged, and, drawing his sword, furiously cut the two princes to pieces. Thus, the two holy princes received the crown of martyrdom. When the queen learned of this evil deed, she and her daughter immediately went and buried the relics of the two martyrs, and then went to live in the women's monastery at Sheppey. Soon after this, the king's evil counsellor fell ill and died. Suddenly, the king was left all alone: he had killed his two sons; his wife and daughter had fled from him and become nuns, and his counsellor was dead. Now, the king began to feel sorrow for his evil deed. He realised that his sons were innocent, and he remembered his own baptism, and the last words of his sons, begging him to return to Christ's Holy Church. Finally, overcome by sorrow and repentance, the king set out at dawn to the cell of Saint Chad, to ask his help and prayers. As King Wulfer entered the chapel, the holy bishop was celebrating the Divine Liturgy. The king, feeling his guilt, stood at the door and watched. When the bishop reached that part of the Liturgy in which the great mystery takes place, the sanctuary was suddenly filled with a great light. The king was amazed, and fell to the floor in prostration, looking up with fear. He saw that the great light stayed around the Holy Table and filled the sanctuary until the saint had finished communion. The king remained on the floor until the Liturgy ended, and the saint came to him. After this, the king listened to everything Saint Chad taught him, and then he confessed his faith in Christ, and returned to His Holy Orthodox Church. King Wulfer struggled to completely change his life. He helped Saint Chad and his presbyters to lead the people of the kingdom to Christ's Church, and he became merciful and gentle. St Chad chose the town of Lichfield for his cathedral, as in earlier days, St Arnphibale and nearly a thousand other Christians had been martyred there. King Wulfer helped to build the new Church. St Chad continued his life of holy struggle, teaching the Gospel of Christ's Church everywhere in the Kingdom of Mercia. At length, God called the holy bishop to Himself, and Saint Chad gave up his holy soul to the Saviour on 2 March, 672. Through the prayers of our God-bearing father, St Chad, may we find repentance, and save our souls, glorifying the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen!

3 / 16 March —The Holy Martyrs Eutropius, Cleonicus and Basiliscus - They were comrades of St Theodore the Tyro. When glorious Theodore gloriously laid down his life, they remained behind in prison, and were not condemned for a long time because of the courage of the imperial governor of the town of Amasea. When a new governor arrived, more inhuman than his predecessor, he ordered these three to be brought before him . All three were young men; Eutropius and Cleonicus were brothers and Basiliscus a kinsman of Theodore's. But all three were, through their brotherly love, as blood-brothers. And they therefore said to the governor: 'As the Holy Trinity is indivisible, so are we indivisible in faith and inseparable in love . ' All flattery on the governor's part was in vain, as were all his efforts to bribe Eutropius. He first invited him to dine with him, which Eutropius refused with a quotation from the Psalms: 'Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsels of the ungodly', after which he offered him vast wealth—150 litres of silver—which Eutropius likewise refused, reminding the governor that Judas lost his soul for silver. After all these attempts, followed by interrogation and torture, the first two were condemned to be crucified, for which they gave thanks to Christ that He had counted them worthy to die the death He had died; and the third, Basiliscus, was beheaded. They all entered into the Kingdom of joy, where their commander, Theodore, was waiting for them, glorified before Christ the Lord and Victor. They suffered with honour in 308. St Piama of Egypt; An Unknown Girl in Alexandria; St. Non – also known as Nonna; Nonnita - Nobility, possibly of a royal house. A widow, it is said she was the unwed mother of Saint David of Wales. Lived in convents in Wales, Cornwall, and Brittany.

Some Reflections on Fasting for Great Lent

By Dr. John L. Boojamra

FASTING — OR MORE CORRECTLY, the practice of abstinence for certain days and certain periods of the year — has long caused difficulty in the minds of many Orthodox Christians in North America. Every year, as the Easter Lent approaches, Orthodox Christians begin to wonder what, if anything, to do in preparation for the feast. In general, I think it is safe to say that the practice and idea of fasting is largely ignored in this regard. Many people generally dismiss fasting with the rather simple and naive belief that "This is the twentieth century; fasting is an arcane practice that was made for the past and simpler days," or worse, they dismiss fasting because "fasting is a man made discipline" - as if being "man made" by definition makes something worthless.

Nonetheless, in spite its neglect by most people, we must take the practice of fasting seriously, if for no other reason than the fact that other people, throughout Christian history, have taken it seriously. It is valuable here to consider not so much "how" we must fast as "why" we must fast. A deeper understanding of the significance of this practice in Christianity will help us in determine our own fasting practices.

We must first admit that fasting has a firm foundation in the Scriptures and Tradition of the Church, as well as in the practice of the Jewish community which gave birth to the Church. We know, for instance, that Jesus fasted, that the disciples of John the Baptist fasted, and that Jesus said that prayer and fasting were necessary for casting out certain evils. We know also that the early Church picked up its Wednesday and Friday abstinence from the Jewish Monday and Thursday weekly fast.

Fasting and this World

TO THIS EMPHASIS we must add a certain otherworldly emphasis in Jesus' teaching. Perhaps the most realistic treatment of this is in Matthew (6:19-21): Do not lay up for yourselves treasure on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be.

In order to understand the significance of fasting in Christianity, we must look at it in the context of the Christian view of the world. In spite of the great love which Jesus and His Church have demonstrated for the world and for life in it, there is in Christianity a reservation about the world and human life as it is now. The Church calls this a "fallen world," a world which in all its aspects is in some way separated voluntarily from the love and life of God, its Creator. How does this perspective reflect on the practice of fasting? As it turns out, fasting cannot be separated from this realistic appraisal of the world, and from the struggle to find the Kingdom of God. There is something about fasting, something about refusing to make a total investment in the world as it is, that is associated with the struggle to build the Kingdom of God; for insofar as we are occupied with the delusions of this fallen world, we are impeded in our struggle to find the Kingdom. Fasting, therefore, must be seen as a means of turning away from the fallenness of the world so that we can discover another, better world - i.e. the Kingdom. "Seek first the kingdom of God and all else will be added" we are told. As finding the Kingdom of God is a matter of priority, the importance of fasting as a means of helping ourselves in this endeavor cannot be overstated.

Before discussing what fasting is, perhaps it would be beneficial to say a few words about what it is not. This is a valuable approach since there is a great deal of misunderstanding regarding the nature and function of fasting, both as an idea and as a practice.

God, we must admit first, is not simple-minded. He has no need for our fasting. Our efforts do not affect Him in any way. We cannot buy His love or His grace. This immediately takes fasting out of any legalistic framework and puts it on the level of personal spiritual growth and struggle. For instance, because one person fasts more strictly than another does not mean that God loves the first more or gives him more grace. It is as unimaginable that you could get more grace from a greater effort as getting more grace from a larger portion of the Eucharist. Yet, many people think of grace in strictly legalistic terms. God's love

is always given freely and the degree of participation in that love is conditioned by our ability to receive it and be changed by it. This is the Orthodox idea of cooperation or synergy—we must open ourselves to the love and strength that God offers freely. Fasting is a way of achieving this openness.

Another view of fasting, which, like the previous one contains an element of distortion, is that which sees it as a means of voluntary suffering, a way of atoning for sins. Indeed, there may very well be an element of this in fasting, but this is not the most important aspect of fasting. If fasting was to be seen primarily as a means of atonement, this would bring the practice to the level of individual pathology. Again, we cannot pay God back for our sins, and fasting as a means of atoning for sins must be seen in the light of trying to direct our spiritual lives in a more positive direction.

A third view of fasting is common among both Christians and non-Christians. This view mistakenly sees fasting in the history of the Church as an expression of a pathological morbidity with regard to the world, which is based on a docetic view—i.e. the idea that the world, the body, sex, and all created and material things are essentially evil, whereas all spiritual things are good. In this context, fasting becomes an effort to disconnect the self from any connection with matter—i.e. from food, sex, bodily functions, etc. There has indeed been a tendency towards this view on a number of occasions throughout Christian history, but whenever it has expressed itself, it has consistently been condemned by the Church. The Church has always affirmed that the created world is essentially good, though suffering from profound distortion and misdirection.

Fasting as Preparation

WHAT FASTING IS will necessarily involve us in a discussion of the nature of man and the nature of the world. Fasting is, as the Church uses it, a preparation. Every time we encounter a fast it is prior to a feast. We all know the fast before the Eucharist as preparation for the Eucharist and the fast before Pascha as preparation for the great feast. Nothing in life just happens; that is obvious. All major events require a variety of preparations. The Church recognizes the fact that part of getting somewhere is the journey, and just as important as the journey is the anticipation. This is a basic human psychological quality. Perhaps children understand this expectation and anticipation best of all. Full participation demands this kind of expectation and preparation. In this context, the nature of Orthodox preparations is no mystery.

The Church has taught that man is a unity - he is not a being which has a body and which has a soul; rather, he is a body and he is a soul. The Christian vision is that of a total and unified personality—body and soul. Hence, the Church calls on the entire being to share in the fast and the feast. As a season changes in Church, as the colors change, the music changes, the services get longer, the icon changes, and so forth. How does our body share in this except through fasting, except through imitating a change in its normal routine? Now this description keeps the nature and degree of fasting open, and this "openness" is important in our personal spiritual direction. It can involve food, entertainment, sex - in fact, any aspect of our daily and routine lives. It is clear that we Orthodox Christians are not spiritualists or intellectualists; we are Christian "materialists." The Church's emphasis on fasting is precisely a reflection of this materialism.

Our Lord says, "lay not up treasures on earth," and fasting is in effect the reminder that our heart cannot be invested like our money in the world. We all know the feeling we have for something when we have made an investment in it. People always try to protect their investment. This is natural. That is what our Lord meant! Here we find a rejection of the world, not in an absolute sense, but in a relative sense. The world in itself is valuable only when it is seen in its relationship to God. Since the world is in effect separated from God, freely, then it cannot be fully normal, and the Church says limit your participation in the life of the world—not because it is evil, but because it in itself is limited.

Food is the most obvious example. Everyone agrees that eating, after breathing, is the most necessary and normal activity of our life. It is in this area which is regarded in a worldly sense as normal that the Church says "Stop! Think! Question everything which the world calls normal and necessary, because the world itself is 'abnormal' - that is, it is abnormal as it now exists, separated from God's love." But fasting is only a beginning, and this questioning must be our approach to all the values that the world regards as necessary and even virtuous—victory, self defense, getting ahead, accumulating wealth and property, competition, popularity, self-aggrandizement, etc. All of these are to be followed with a question mark.

Fasting and a Clear Image of the World

MIND YOU, this is not a rejection of the world; it is a questioning of those values which the world as it now exists -and human societies which inhabit it - hold as valuable. Insofar as the world is treated as normal - because this is in fact the only world we know - whereas in fact it is not normal or truly worldly in the Christian sense, then it is a deception and a lie, and we must recognize it for what it is. In a real sense, the Church, in asking her people to fast, is declaring a moratorium on the world. A moratorium, whether in the context of war or in the context of spiritual discipline, means the same thing - it means "time out." Those of us who remember the war in Vietnam remember the various moratoria that were declared to stop the fighting. Before a final, lasting moratorium was called, the war had dragged on for almost ten years on an incredibly brutal level, characterized by My Lai; in the meantime, everyone here went about his business, and apart from inflation, no one's life was really affected - we bought our food and celebrated all those little occasions; there was no shortage of butter or meat or autos; and yet, the very normalcy of life here at home, at the same time that wholesale death swept Southeast Asia, was a deception - a deception that was recognized only after a final "time out" was declared, allowing us to come out of the delusional mindset that kept us from questioning the war's necessity. In the same way, calling moratorium or "time out" on our "normal" worldly routines allows us to recognize the deception inherent in our preoccupation with this fallen world, and allows us to free ourselves from the delusional mindset that keeps us fettered to its routines.

On a cosmic level, the fast is this effort to put the world and life in the world in its proper perspective. To accept the present state of the world as normal is a deception! There is no hate for the world in this, but there is a recognition that something has happened to the "worldliness" which God created and declared "good."

I think we must then see fasting never as a rejection of food or the world, but as a search for true worldliness - a search which must necessarily pass through the stage of preferring something else to the world. "Seek first the Kingdom of God, and all else will be given to you." In the same way, we fast from all food before liturgy so that we might receive the one true food in the Eucharist. It is in the Eucharist that we can get a glimpse of the true nature of food. There is no judgment on food as such. The same is true of the world. As food completed itself in the Eucharist, so the entire created world completes itself in the Kingdom of God.

The world is ours; it belongs to us and, needless to say, we were not meant to be slaves to its pleasures, its categories, and its values. Fasting, then, is a declaration of independence from the world and a proclamation of victory over its limitations and evil. "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). This does not mean that we cannot take pleasure in the world.

It is a recognition that the values of the world are limited and often perverted. Here we are freed, liberated in a real sense, not only from sin but from the fears that characterize life - free to act without fear of criticism, as God wants us to act in our everyday life in politics, business, school, family, and social affairs. Nothing in human society, the first declares, is sacred in itself and can demand our loyalty - no form of government, regime, ideology, or community. We are freed to conform to the patterns of the Kingdom of God here and now— free to practice sacrifice, love, charity, justice, and faith. To those for whom the world is the ultimate reality and the ultimate gain, it is essential to buy the love of the world, and the world will only love those who accept its values. Our Lord assures us that the world will hate us; it has to, because the Christian is the on-going judgment on an on-going corruption that infects human relations and human societies.

For us Christians who live in the world, there a choice: we can consume the world or allow the world to consume us. The first is the only creative approach. The second is psychological and personal disintegration. The fast is what gives us the opportunity to make the better choice.

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