

LIVING LENT: CHEESE WEEK
Weekly Reflections by Metropolitan Tikhon

His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon offers a series of reflections on the themes contained in the Triodion Hymns sung on Tuesday of each week during Great Lent.

On the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee, the Orthodox Church begins to use the Lenten Triodion, which is the book containing the liturgical texts for the Sunday's of Great Lent, as well as those for every day of the First Week and of Holy Week. In their English version, the texts for the other weekdays of Lent are contained in the book known as the "Lenten Trioden Supplement." Last year, I shared with you some reflections on texts taken from the Mondays of Great Lent and this year I will focus on the texts from the Tuesday services that I have found meaningful.

We find ourselves now in Cheese Week, a pre-Lenten period which Orthodox Christians already begin to abstain from meat, which is our second ascetical exercise in fasting. The first fasting discipline was given to us in the week following the Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee, which was a fast-free week.

It may seem counter-intuitive to say that the fast-free week was an ascetical exercise, since we had the opportunity to eat everything we wanted, without any restrictions. But precisely because of this gastronomic freedom, we were being called to direct our full attention to the inner labor of attaining humility, patience, and love, while also being watched for the pride that might arise from the external fulfillment of bodily labors during the days of Great Lent.

The fast-free week was pointing us of the real purpose of our fasting and reminding us, in the words of the hymns, that: "This should be the manner of our fasting, not with hatred of contention, not in envy and strife, not in self-glory and with hidden deceit, but like Christ, in humble-mindedness."

The labors that we offer are part of our stewardship as we "offer the King a tenth part of the year." What we offer back to God is not simply abstinence from food but rather abstinence from the passions and a striving for the virtues. At the same time, we are asked to "give bread to the hungry" and "abstain from all hatred of our neighbor, from lust and falsehood and every evil." Though we are asked for a tithe, the purpose is not to accomplish these things for a limited time only, but rather to receive God's mercy throughout our lives. May God strengthen us all of the good combat that lies ahead.

**Sunday of Cheesefare: Expulsion of Adam
from Paradise**

Commemorated on [March 10](#)

As we begin the Great Fast, the Church reminds us of Adam's expulsion from Paradise. God commanded Adam to fast (Gen. 2:16), but he did not obey. Because of their disobedience, Adam and Eve were cast out of Eden and lost the life of blessedness, knowledge of God, and communion with Him, for which they were created. Both they and their descendents became heirs of death and corruption.

Let us consider the benefits of fasting, the consequences of disobedience, and recall our fallen state. Today we are invited to cleanse ourselves of evil through fasting and obedience to God. Our fasting should not be a negative thing, a mere abstention from certain foods. It is an opportunity to free ourselves from the sinful desires and urges of our fallen nature, and to nourish our souls with prayer, repentance, to participate in church services, and partake of the life-giving Mysteries of Christ.

At Forgiveness Vespers we sing: "Let us begin the time of fasting in light, preparing ourselves for spiritual efforts. Let us purify our soul, let us purify our body. As we abstain from food, let us abstain from all passion and enjoy the virtues of the spirit...."

PRAYER

We were exiled once, O Lord, from paradise, through disobedient eating from the tree of knowledge; but You, our God and Savior, have led us back into Your Kingdom, through Your Cross and saving passion. By the intercessions of the Theotokos and through the power of the cross, give us strength to keep the fast in holiness and to worship Your divine resurrection, the Passover of salvation. Amen.

Matin Hymn, Cheesefare Sunday

Romans 13:11-14:4 (Epistle)

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. 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 armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts. Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. 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? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

Matthew 6:14-21 (Gospel)

For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

MARBLEHEAD MERCHANTS

The merchants are holding a 50 / 50 raffle next Saturday March 16 with proceeds going to the beautification project. The tickets are : 6 for \$5.00 or 15 from \$10.

You don't have to be present to win. If you need tickets please call Father ASAP.

PARADISE LOST AND REGAINED

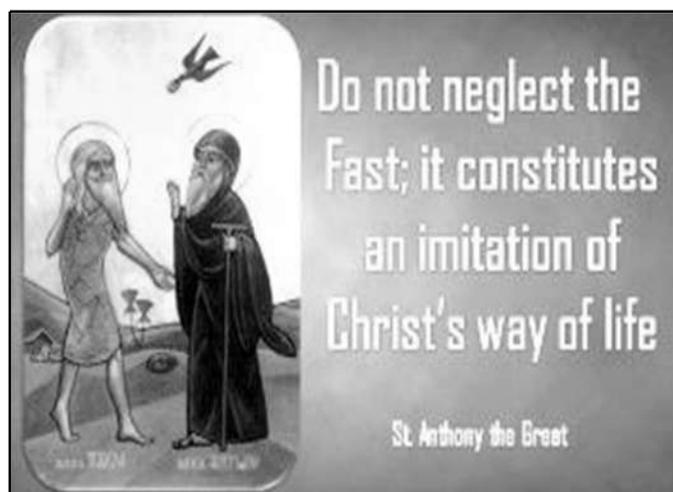
How do you feel when you lose something important? What is the most important thing you can lose? According to a saying attributed to St. Anthony the Great "the most grievous loss, the worst calamity and the greatest disaster is for a person not to know God." A person may in a lifetime achieve many things and rejoice in many delights. Yet of what value are all these if the same person misses personal communion with God and is instead separated from God?

Adam sat before paradise lamenting and weeping over his nakedness: "Woe is me! By evil deceit was I led astray and now I am in exile from glory. Woe is me!...no more shall I look upon the face of the Lord my God and Maker, for I shall return to the earth from

Vesper Hymn, Cheesefare Sunday

Adam was driven out of paradise because in disobedience he partook of food; but Moses was granted a vision of God because he had cleansed the eyes of his soul by fasting. If, then, we long to dwell again in paradise, let us abstain from all needless food. If we desire to see God, let us like Moses fast forty days. With sincerity let us persevere in prayer and intercession; let us still the sinful passions of our soul; let us subdue the rebellious instincts of the flesh... O son of God, Lifegiver, in You we set our hope: count us worthy of a place with the angels, by the intercessions of the Mother who bore You, O Christ, of the Apostles and the Martyrs and of all the saints.

Matin Hymn, Cheesefare Sunday



When the “Little Church” consists of two families coming together through Marriage

Over the last 30 years, remarriage has become a far more common experience in American family life. A man and a woman remarry, each bringing children with them from a previous marriage. They all begin to live a new life together under one roof. I have no statistics to offer on how many Orthodox Christians face this reality.

How does this reality impact on making the family home a “Little Church?” Three things come to mind.

- **Identity issues:** Each family has a history before coming together as a reconstituted family. What happens to that history? What can continue, and what needs to change? If a false unity is imposed on the whole, causing some to prematurely lose practices/norms they have brought with them, trouble may arise. This could involve such areas as family rules, how one communicates, and parenting styles. I think it is important that regular family meetings take place to hash some of this out. I am assuming work had been done in preparation for the parents’ marriage. Such matters need to be discussed well before the marriage, and children should be involved in some of these discussions.
- **Faith issues:** While it would be great if everyone in the new, blended family were of the Orthodox Christian faith, this is often highly unlikely. In some ways, if two different Christian faith traditions are present, it might be better for family members to attend their respective churches. This, of course, is not ideal, but it does seem to give members more time to address this issue. It would be my hope that all of the members would in time embrace the Orthodox Church, but this has to happen when the time is right — and by choice.
- **How does the family pray?** One could just allow each family member to pray in the manner with which he or she has been accustomed. But this is one place that the family might be able to pray as a group, even when different faiths are involved. How about taking prayers from the Orthodox Tradition and prayers from the other faith tradition and seeing were there is overlap? This could form the basis for establishing a unity in prayer. Over the years this could lead into a greater growth “in life and faith and spiritual understanding.”

These suggestions are educated guesses on my part. This appears to be an area that does not get discussed often. I put this on the table for further consideration, thought and questions, something that I welcome since the above is just a start.

The blessing of the Lord be upon you, The unworthy +Paul

THE TIME HAS COME!

Cheesefare Sunday is the last day on which the eating of dairy and egg products is allowed. The next day, Pure or clean Monday, Great Lent begins, a period of fasting from meat, fish, dairy, and egg products. The time of the Great Lent has come!

Many of the Hymns of Cheesefare Sunday seek to remind each worshipper of Adam’s experience of separation from God and to lead each Christian to true repentance:

Come, my wretched soul, and weep today over your acts. I weep for my loss, O Savior, and cry to You with faith: Forsake me not, O God of love, but call me back to you.

Matin Hymn, Cheesefare Sunday

With prayers and tears let us seek our Lord and Savior. Putting aside all memories of evil, let us cry aloud: We have sinned against You, Christ our King; save us as the people of Nineveh in days of old, and in Your compassion make us sharers in your heavenly kingdom.

Vesper Hymn, Cheesefare Sunday

The hope of the humble and repentant soul is Christ. “We have someone who pleads with the Father on our behalf—Jesus Christ, the righteous one. And Christ Himself is the means by which our sins are forgiven: (1 Jn 2:1-2). This hope of forgiveness is expressed by the following hymn in the form of a personal prayer:

O Christ my Savior, boldly I put my trust in the abundance of Your mercies and in the blood that flowed from Your divine side; for through Your blood You have sanctified the nature of mortals.

Matin Hymn, Cheesefare Sunday

ORIGINS OF THE LENTEN FAST

In the earliest days of Christianity, only two days of fasting were designated prior to Easter (Friday and Saturday). Later the entire week of the Lord's coming to Jerusalem, His arrest, trial, and passion was set aside for fasting. By the fourth century the period of fasting had been extended an additional forty days in imitation of Jesus' forty-day fast in the wilderness before His temptation (Mt 4:1-2).

Strict fasting in the ancient Christian tradition meant eating no food at all during the day, or it meant eating sparingly of either dry foods or boiled vegetables and grains. Strict fasting is possible today in monasteries, in agricultural settings, and for some individuals living in modern society. Of course fasting regulations do not apply to people who are ill, in hospitals, expectant mothers, to small children or to others following special diets under a doctor's care.

GOD'S FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is a central theme of Cheesefare Sunday which is also known as the Sunday of Forgiveness. "Turn to God so that He will forgive your sins!" The Apostle Peter cried out to the people at the Temple (Acts 3:19). The Apostle John taught Christians: "If we confess our sins to God, He will keep His promise and do what is right: He will forgive us our sins and purify us from all our wrongdoing" (1 Jn. 1:9) St. Isaac the Syrian urges each of us: "Arouse yourself and with tears pray to the Savior of the world that He may take away the sin from your heart and disperse the inner darkness, so that you may be deemed worthy to see the light of His grace" (Mystical Treatises).

Let us set out with joy upon the season of the fast, preparing ourselves for spiritual combat. Let us purify our souls and cleanse ourselves for spiritual combat. Let us purify our souls and cleanse our bodies. As we fast from food, let us also fast from every evil passion, rejoicing in the virtues of the Spirit. Let us persevere with love and so be deemed worthy to venerate the passion of Christ our God and with great spiritual gladness to behold His holy resurrection.

Vesper Hymn, Cheesefare Sunday

NEW PASTOR WARRANTY

*It has come to our attention that the pastor you received was shipped with a slight defect -- he is not psychic. Because of this, you must observe certain procedures to ensure optimum performance.

*It is necessary to inform him of any members who are hospitalized. If someone you know is in need of prayer, the pastor must be told, or he won't know. If you are in need of a pastoral visit, you will get the best results if you ask him.

*We regret any inconvenience this may cause.

www.PastorsHelper.com

Some hymns of Cheesefare Sunday call us to begin Great Lent as athletes begin a race. The race is the present life. The prize is the Kingdom of God. Athletes begin a race not only with downcast but with eager spirits; not with gloomy but with radiant faces. Here are some examples:

The time has come! The spiritual contest begins! The victory over demonic powers is at hand! Let us put on the armor of self-control and clothe ourselves in the glory of the angels, that we may attain boldness before God.

The arena of the virtues has been opened. Let all who wish to strive for the prize now enter, girding themselves with the discipline of fasting...taking up the armor of the Cross...having faith as an invincible rampart, prayer as a breastplate, and almsgiving as a helmet.

Matin Hymns, Cheesefare Sunday

