

The Confessor's Tongue for March 1, 2009

Forgiveness Sunday; Cheesefare; Expulsion of Adam from Paradise

In honor of St. Maximus the Confessor, whose tongue and right hand were cut off in an attempt by compromising authorities to silence his uncompromising confession of Christ's full humanity & divinity.

March 1: Nun-Martyr Eudocia

She came from Phoenician Heliopolis (now Baalbek). Distinguished with rare beauty and proportionate stature, she led a sinful life and acquired a huge fortune. Converted to Christ by a certain pious monk, she distributed her wealth to the poor "and vested her soul with the beautiful clothes of passionlessness". The strict woman ascetic did all this in the monastery, for which she was elected rector of this monastery. For 56 years she practiced asceticism in monasticism and died as a woman martyr. She was beheaded by the sword in the year 152 for spreading the Christian faith during the reign of Antoninus. *S. V. Bulgakov, Handbook for Church Servers, 2 ed., 1274 pp. (Kbarkov, 1900) p. 0493-4 Translated by Archbishop Eugene D. Tarris © January 7, 2004. All rights reserved.*

Sunday of Forgiveness: Cheesefare

On this day, Cheesefare Sunday, we commemorate the banishment of Adam, the First Creature, from the Paradise of Delight.

Our Holy Fathers appointed this commemoration before the beginning of Great Lent to demonstrate how beneficial the medicine of fasting is to human nature and how shameful are gluttony and disobedience by an example of the results of each. They set before us the example of Adam, the first-formed man. They give a clear, case-in-point demonstration of how many evils he suffered—and hence introduced into our nature—from neglecting to fast for only a short time. Furthermore, they show that the first precept of God given to mankind was the ideal of fasting. By not keeping this precept but yielding instead to his stomach, or rather to the serpent-deceiver by the agency of Eve, Adam not only failed to become God, but he also brought death upon himself and communicated this sickness to the entire human race. In order to remove the first Adam's indulgence, the Lord fasted forty days, thus obeying the commandment of fasting. This was the origin of the forty-day Fast of Great Lent. It was instituted by the Holy Apostles so that, if by means of Great Lent we keep the Fast, unlike Adam who did not, we might again enjoy the incorruptibility that he lost....

The purpose of the Holy Fathers was to include in the *Triodion* a concise account of the deeds wrought by God from the beginning of time to the end. Adam's disobedience and subsequent fall from the delight of Paradise are the cause of everything relating to us. In today's commemoration of the fall, the Holy Fathers develop the theme of disobedience so that we might avoid it and strive not to be immoderate in anything....

Therefore, it is because Adam neglected to fast just once that we have had to endure such woes. The commemoration of this is appointed now at the

beginning of Holy Lent so that by remembering how many evils the failure to fast has brought upon us, we might welcome Great Lent eagerly and gladly keep the Fast. For by means of it, we can attain *theosis*—deification—of which Adam fell short. We shall attain this only by lamenting and fasting until the appointed time that God shall visit us. For it is not easy or feasible to regain what we have lost in any way.

We should know that today we ask forgiveness from our brethren in Christ so that we may begin the race in the stadium of Great Lent unhindered by any animosity. As long as we live self-centered lives, we cannot forgive our neighbor—our ego will not allow it. Once our lives are God-centered, however, we are able to forgive others as God forgives us. Let us remember that God's mercy and forgiveness to us is often hidden in our mercy and forgiveness to others. Our Lenten journey is not an isolated or individual affair but a "family" event. Therefore, we are reminded in today's reading from the Holy Gospel that unless there is mutual forgiveness between one another, there can be no true reconciliation with God.

We should also know that this Holy and Great Lent is like a tithe of the entire year. Due to our laziness, we do not choose to fast and abstain from evil all the time. Knowing this, the Holy Apostles and Holy Fathers gave us this Lenten tradition as a kind of harvest-time for our souls. It provides us with the opportunity to remove whatever unseemly deeds we have committed throughout the year by now becoming contrite and humble through fasting. For this reason, we ought to keep it all the more strictly. We should keep the other three fasts as well, the Holy Apostles' Fast, the Holy Dormition Fast, and forty-day Holy Nativity Fast. The Holy Fathers instituted four periods of fasting, corresponding to the four seasons of the year. However, they ascribed a greater prestige to this forty-day fast of Great Lent because of the Lord's Passion, and because Christ likewise fasted forty days and was glorified. The Holy Prophet Moses received the Law after fasting forty days, and the Holy Prophet Elijah and the Holy Prophet Daniel likewise fasted, as did all those who were approved by God.

Therefore, fasting is something beneficial. Adam proved this by doing the opposite. It was for this reason the Holy Fathers placed here today's commemoration of Adam's exile from Paradise.

From the Synaxarion

From St. Thalassios, friend of St. Maximus

Think good thoughts about what is good by nature, and think well of every man.

On the day of judgment, we shall be asked by God to answer for our words, acts, and thoughts.

Inveterate wickedness requires long practice of the virtues; for an engrained habit is not easily uprooted.

Impel your intellect continually to payer and you will destroy the passions hidden within us.

3.1-2. 7, 9

Lenten Notes

Cheesefare Sunday is so named because it marks our saying 'farewell' to cheese and dairy products until Pascha.

Rule of Silence: Strive during this first week of the Fast to abstain from any unnecessary speech. Remember that if a man can control his tongue, he may be considered perfect (James 3); misusing our tongues either for wrong purposes or for excessive speech does great harm to us and others.

Jesus Prayer: You are encouraged to come a few minutes early to services during the Fast to sit or stand quietly in the Church while praying the Jesus Prayer. You may also remain after a service for this purpose if no confessions are being heard. Please avoid loud conversations in the Narthex before services.

Read the NT: A plan to help you read through the New Testament during Lent has been prepared and is available for you use if you think it might be helpful. Copies will be on the candle table.

Fasting: we abstain from meat, animal products (dairy, eggs, cheese, etc.), fish, wine (alcohol), and olive oil. Married couples abstain from marital relations. Fish is permitted on Annunciation (March 25) and Palm Sunday. Wine and oil are permitted on week-ends and feast days: see the wall calendar. Any questions about how our personal circumstances might affect our fasting should be directed to our priest or spiritual father.

The **Lenten Prayer of St. Ephrem** ("O Lord and Master of my life...") is said as part of our morning and evening prayers with prostrations, if we are physically able. It is not said on weekends.

O Lord and Master of my life, the spirit of idleness, of despondency, of love of power, and of idle words, grant me not. (*Prostration*)

But the spirit of continence, of humility, of patience, and of love, do Thou grant unto me Thy servant. (*Prostration*)

Yea O Lord and King, grant unto me to perceive mine own offences and not to judge my brother; for blessed art Thou unto ages of ages. Amen. (*Prostration*)

Then 12 bows to the waist while saying:

O God, cleanse Thou me a sinner and have mercy on me. (12)

or

O God, have mercy on me a sinner. (3)

O God, cleanse Thou me a sinner and have mercy on me. (3)

Thou hast created me, O Lord, have mercy on me. (3)

Countless times have I sinned, O Lord, forgive me.

(3) *Then repeat the prayer once with a prostration.*

The **Presanctified Liturgies** on Wednesdays and Fridays will be followed by soup and spiritual reading of an appropriate book and discussion of it and our life in Christ for those who desire it. Please see Matushka if you would like to bring lenten foods for after a particular service.

Entering and leaving the Church during Lent from Sunday evening after Vespers through Saturday evening before Vigil (or after a service when we have received Communion) it is customary to make three prostrations (if physically able). When prostrations are not made, we make three bows to the waist instead. In both cases, as we bow, we pray "Thou hast created me, O Lord, have mercy on me," "O God, have mercy on me a sinner," "Countless times have I sinned, O Lord, forgive me."

Confession: We should plan on making at least one confession (if not more!) during the Fast. All the faithful are expected to receive Confession Holy Communion during the Fast. Please make your Confession before Holy Week, if at all possible. If you confess to someone other than your parish priest, please inform him as to when and to whom you confessed.

March Namedays

1 Becky (Eudokia) Stevenson (St. Eudokia)

10 Galina Frieda Gluschenko (Martyr Galina of Corinth)

17 Patrick St. Jean (Patrick of Ireland)

26 Gavril Gary Goble (Archangel Gabriel)

March Birthdays

5 Hannah Stokes (07)

12 Anna Stokes

16 Gary Goble

19 Mark Jackson



Upcoming Events 2009

1 March, Forgiveness Vespers, 6:00 p.m. All parishioners should make every effort to attend this service, which marks the beginning of the Great Fast.
2-6 March, Clean Week, Great Canon
12-18 April, Holy Week
19 April, Pascha

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!