

# The Confessor's Tongue for February 18, A. D. 2018

Cheesefare; Forgiveness Sunday; Expulsion from Paradise; St. Leo of Rome

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.

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## 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.

## The Eight Principal Vices, Part I

*St. John Cassian*

In a community of very old men there was a man by the name of Serapion who was particularly adorned with the grace of discretion and whose conference I think is worth the effort to put down in writing. When we had begged him to say something about the assault of the vices that would cast light on their origins and causes, he began in this way: There are eight principal vices that attack humankind. The first is gluttony, which means the voraciousness of the belly; the second is fornication; the third is filargyria, which is avarice or love of money; the fourth is anger; the fifth is sadness; the sixth acedia, which is anxiety or weariness of heart; the seventh is cenodoxia, which is boastfulness or vainglory; and the eighth is pride.

Of these vices there are two kinds. They are either natural like gluttony or unnatural like avarice. But they have four kinds of operation. Certain ones cannot be consummated without bodily action, such as gluttony and fornication. Certain others, however, can be completed without any bodily action whatsoever, such as pride and vainglory. Some take their motivating causes from without, such as avarice

and anger. Others, however, are aroused from within, such as acedia and sorrow.

Let us make this still clearer not only by a short discussion as well as we are able, but also by scriptural texts.

Gluttony and fornication, although they are in us naturally (for sometimes they also arise without any provocation from the mind but solely due to the instigation and itching of the flesh), nonetheless require external matter in order to be consummated, and thus they operate through bodily action. For everyone is tempted by his own lust. When lust has been conceived it gives birth to sin, but when sin has been consummated it brings forth death - "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." James 1:14-15)

The first Adam would not have been able to be deceived by gluttony had he not had something to eat and immediately and lawlessly misused it, nor was the second tempted without the enticement of some substance, when it was said to him: "And when the tempter came to him, he said, if thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." (Matthew 4:3). It is clear to everyone that fornication also is not committed except by means of the body, as God says to the blessed Job with reference to this spirit: "Lo now, his strength is in his loins, and his force is in the navel of his belly." (Job 40:16).

Therefore these two in particular, which are exercised by means of the flesh, more especially require not only the spiritual concern of the soul but also bodily abstinence, since the mind's attentiveness is not enough of itself to check their urgings (as it sometimes does in the case of anger or sadness and other passions, which it can expel by mental effort alone and without chastising the flesh). Bodily discipline must come to its assistance, and this is accomplished by fasting, vigils, and works of penance, and to these is added living in a remote place, because just as they are generated through the fault of both soul and body, so they cannot be overcome except by the toil of both.

Although the blessed Apostle has declared that all the vices in general are carnal, since he has numbered enmity (hostility) and anger and heresies among the other works of the flesh (Gal 5:19-21), nonetheless we make a distinction based on a twofold division for the sake of a more refined understanding of their remedies and their natures. For we say that some of them are carnal, while some others are spiritual.

The carnal ones pertain especially to the enjoyment and feelings of the flesh; by them it is so delighted and gratified that it sometimes even arouses peaceful minds and drags them reluctantly to acquiesce in its will. About these the Apostle says: "Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by

nature the children of wrath, even as others." (Ephesians 2:3).

But we call spiritual those that, having arisen at the prompting of the soul alone, not only give no pleasure to the flesh but even inflict it with serious sufferings and merely provide the sick soul with the food of a miserable enjoyment. Therefore these have need of the medicine of a simple heart, whereas those that are carnal are only remedied by a twofold cure, as we have said. Hence it is important to those who strive for purity first of all to remove from themselves the very stuff of these carnal passions, by which either an occasion for or the memory of those same passions can be aroused in the soul that is still sick.

For a twofold sickness necessarily requires a twofold cure. Seductive images and matter need to be removed from the body, lest lust attempt to break out into deeds, and by the same token a more careful medication on Scripture, constant watchfulness, and solitude must be applied to the soul, lest it so much as conceive this in thought. In the case of the other vices, however, human companionship is of no harm, and indeed it is even of great help to those who really want to be rid of them, since they are frequently rebuked by the presence of other people, and although aggravations more readily appear, they are quickly remedied.

Therefore our Lord Jesus Christ, although he was declared by the Apostle to have been tempted in every respect as we are, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." (Hebrews 4:15). That is, he was without the contagion of this passion, having had no experience whatsoever of the pricks of fleshly lust by which we are inevitably stung, even unwittingly and unwillingly, for in his regard there was nothing like our own insemination and conception, as the Archangel said in announcing how his conception would take place: "And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).

Although these eight vices, then, have different origins and varying operations, yet the first six -- namely, gluttony, fornication, avarice, anger, sadness, and acedia (anxiety, or weariness of the heart) -- are connected among themselves by a certain affinity and, so to speak, interlinking, such that the overflow of the previous one serves as the start of the next one. For from an excess of gluttony there inevitably springs fornication; from fornication, avarice; from avarice, anger; from anger, sadness; and from sadness, acedia. Therefore these must be fought against in a similar way and by the same method, and we must always attack the ones that follow by beginning with those that come before. For a tree whose width and height are harmful will more easily wither up if the roots which support it are exposed and cut beforehand, and pestilential waters will dry up when their rising source

and rushing streams have been stopped up with skillful labor.

In order to conquer acedia, sadness must first be overcome; in order to drive out sadness, anger must be cast out beforehand; in order to extinguish anger, avarice must be trampled on; in order to eradicate avarice, fornication must be repressed; in order to overthrow fornication, the vice of gluttony must be disciplined.

But the two remaining ones, vainglory and pride, are linked in similar fashion, like the vices that we have spoken of, such that growth in the first becomes the start of the second, for an overflow of vainglory begets the beginnings of pride. But these differ wholly from those first six vices and are not leagued with them since they are not only not generated by them but even arise in a contrary manner and order. For when the former have been rooted out these sprout forth all the more, and at the death of the former these spring up and grow more vigorously.

Hence we are also attacked by these two vices in a different way. We fall into one of those six vices when we have been seduced by the one that comes before it, but we are in danger of falling into these two when we are victorious and, indeed, particularly after triumphs. Each vice, then, since it is begotten by an increase in the one that comes before it, is purged away when the one before it is diminished. Therefore vainglory must be suffocated in order for pride to be driven out. Thus, whenever the preceding ones have been overcome, those that follow fall idle, and, with the extinction of the ones that go before, the remaining passions wither away without any effort.

And although the eight vices that we have spoken about are connected and joined among themselves according to the scheme that we have mentioned, yet they are divided more particularly into four couplets. Fornication is allied by a special relationship to gluttony, anger is closely yoked to avarice, acedia to sadness, and pride to vainglory. *To be continued...*

### Homily Against Anger, Part I

*St. Basil the Great*

When medical precepts are to the point and accord with the art's teachings, their usefulness is demonstrated above all from experience; likewise with spiritual injunctions, above all when the precepts receive testimony from their outcome, then they are manifest as wise and useful for the correction of life and the perfection of those who comply with them. For we have heard Proverbs explicitly declare, "Anger destroys even the prudent" [Prov. 15.1], and we have also heard the apostolic injunction, "Put away from you all anger and temper and clamor, with all malice" [Eph. 4.31], and the Lord's saying that one who is angry without purpose at his brother is subject to judgment [Mt 5.22]. Now, when we have come to experience this passion, not arising in ourselves but assailing us from outside like some unexpected tempest, then above all we discover the excellence of the divine precepts. When we make space for the

anger, like an outlet for a violent river, while quietly observing the undignified confusion of those overpowered by the passion, we discover from their actions that these words are to the point: "An angry man is not dignified" [Prov. 11.25].

For whenever, once reason has been pushed aside, the passion takes control of the soul for itself, it makes the human being entirely like a wild beast; it does not allow him to be a human being, since he no longer has the help of reason. For as venom is in venomous animals, so temper becomes in those who are provoked. They are maddened like dogs, they strike like scorpions, they bite like snakes. Scripture also acknowledges this in calling those ruled by this passion by the name of wild beasts, to whom they have made themselves akin through evil. For it calls them dumb dogs [Is 56.10], and snakes, a generation of vipers [Mt 23:33], and the like. For those prepared to destroy each other and harm those of their own kind would be appropriately counted among the wild beasts and venomous animals, in whom is present by nature an irreconcilable hatred toward human beings.

Because of anger tongues are unbridled and lips are unguarded; unrestrained hands, outrages, reproaches, slanders, blows, and other such things that cannot be numbered, are offspring of the passions of anger and temper. Through temper also a sword is sharpened; a human hand dares to kill a human being. Through this brothers have become ignorant of each other, and parents and children have forgotten their natural bond. For angry persons are first ignorant of themselves, then indeed of all their friends as well. For as mountain torrents rushing together toward the valleys sweep away whatever is in their path, so the violent and ungovernable attacks of angry people likewise sweep everything...

... Those whose temper is aroused respect neither gray hairs, nor virtuous life, nor close kinship, nor favors previously received, nor anything else worthy of honor. Temper is a kind of short-lived insanity. Often they even rush to do manifest harm to themselves in their zeal for revenge, heedless of their own concerns. For as if stung on all sides by a gadfly by the memory of those who have grieved them, as their temper struggles and leaps within them, they do not desist until either they have done some harm to those who have provoked them, or perhaps also received some, as may happen, as often objects that are smashed violently suffer greater damage than they cause when shattered against hard bodies.

Who could adequately describe the evil, how those with quick tempers, having fastened on a chance pretext, shouting and furious, attack no less than some shameless venomous beast? Such a person does not stop until great and incurable harm is done, as if a bubble of anger bursts and boiling, seething hot phlegm pours out. For neither a sword's edge, nor fire, nor anything else frightening, is sufficient to hold back the soul driven insane by anger; any more, perhaps, than they hold back those subject to the demons, from whom angry people differ in nothing,

either in the appearance or in the disposition of their soul. For in those who long for revenge, the blood boils around the heart as if stirred up and blustering because of a raging fire. Bursting forth to appear visibly, it shows the angry person with an appearance different from the one customary and familiar to all, as if it were exchanged for some mask on stage. Those near him do not recognize in his eyes their usual expression; but his gaze is frenzied and fire is in his eyes. He sharpens his teeth like a boar going into battle. His face is livid and suffused with blood, his swollen body is heavy, his blood vessels burst. His breathing rushes wildly, driven by the storm within. His voice is harsh and strained to the uttermost, and his speech is inarticulate, pouring forth heedlessly, proceeding without sequence or order or clarity.

But whenever anger becomes implacable, like a flame with abundant fuel, and holds tight to provocations, then indeed the spectacle is indescribable and unbearable to behold...

But whenever anger becomes implacable, like a flame with abundant fuel, and holds tight to provocations, then indeed the spectacle is indescribable and unbearable to behold. His hands are lifted against his kinsfolk and all the limbs of his body attack, while his feet leap mercilessly upon the most vital organs, and everything at hand becomes a weapon for the madness. And if such persons also find an equal wickedness fighting against them from the opposing side, another anger and a similar insanity, then indeed they come to blows. They then inflict on each other and themselves suffer such things as perchance those under the command of such a demon are to suffer. For maiming of limbs or even death are often the prizes of anger that those fighting carry away. One started to do violence unjustly and the other repaid it; the second inflicted harm in return, the first did not submit. And the body is cut asunder by blows, while the temper removes the perception of pain. For they do not have time for the perception of what they have suffered, since the whole of their soul has been moved toward revenge against those who have grieved them.

...Do not then cure the evil with evil, nor attempt to outdo each other in such matters. For in contests for superiority in wickedness the victor is more miserable, since he departs having the greater sin. Therefore, do not become one who pays an evil debt in full, nor take out a wicked loan by greater wickedness. Has someone insulted you in anger? Stop the evil by silence. But you, as if receiving the stream of that person's anger into your own heart, imitate the wind, repaying by blowing back what it has borne to you. Do not use your enemy as a teacher, and as for what you hate, do not emulate this. Do not, as it were, become a mirror of the one prone to anger, showing the likeness of that person in yourself. He has turned red. But are you not the color of wine? His eyes are bloodshot. But, tell me, do yours look calm? His voice is harsh. Is yours gentle? The echo in the desert does not shout back as clearly to one who

speaks loudly as the insults turn back against the abuser. Rather, the echo comes back the same while the abuse returns with something added. For what sorts of things do insulters say to each other? One says the other is an insignificant person born of an insignificant person; the other in return calls him a slave born of a slave in the household. One says "poor laborer," the other says "tramp." One says "stupid;" the other says "crazy, until their insults, like arrows, run out. Then, when all the abuse of the tongue has been hurled, then in addition they proceed to avenge themselves through actions. For temper incites fighting, and fighting gives birth to abuse, and abuse to blows, and blows to wounds, and often wounds to death.

From the very beginning let us stop the evil, removing the anger from our souls by every contrivance. For thus we could excise the greatest number of evils together with this passion, since it is a kind of root and source. Has someone abused you? Bless him. Has he struck you? Endure it. Does he spit on you and regard you as nothing? Then accept this thought about yourself, that you were taken from the earth, and you will return to the earth again [Gen 3.19]. For one who applies this concept to himself beforehand, will find all dishonor to be less than the truth. For thus indeed you will provide your enemy no means of revenge, you will show yourself invulnerable to the abuse, and you will procure for yourself a great crown of perseverance, making the other's insanity a starting point for your own philosophy. So, if you listen to me, you will even add freely to the insults. Does he say you are insignificant, and lower class, and a nobody from nowhere? Then say you are yourself earth and ashes. You are not more majestic than our father Abraham, who called himself these things...

#### **Prayer for the Start of the 40-Day Fast**

O God, Hope of all the ends of the earth, and of those who are far off at sea, who didst foretell these holy days of fasting in the Law, and in the Prophets, and the Evangelists: Do Thou count all of us worthy to pass the course of the Fast in purity, to preserve the Faith undivided, and to keep Thy commandments all the days of our lives. Bid an Angel of peace to preserve our comings-in and goings-out for every good work, being obedient together and together pleasing Thee unto a perfect communion of Thy most-pure Mysteries. And accept, O Master, the bending of the knees and the fasting of Thy servants, granting unto all of us spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus our Lord, with Whom Thou art blessed, together with Thy most-holy, good, and life-giving Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

#### **Upcoming Events 2018**

18 February: Forgiveness Vespers at 5:00 p.m.  
19-24 February: Clean Week  
1-7 April: Holy Week  
8 April: Pascha

**GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!**