



Words of Wisdom

From the Saints & Teachers

13:11 *The Nearness of Salvation*

Full Time to Awake. St John Chrysostom: The time is short.... The day of resurrection and of the terrible judgment is fast approaching.... If you have done everything that was asked of you and are prepared for it, then you have nothing to fear, but if you have not, then look out! Paul is not trying to frighten his hearers but to encourage them, so as to detach them from their love of the things of this world. It was not unlikely that at the beginning of their endeavors they would be more dedicated and slacken off as time went on. But Paul wants them to do the opposite—not to slacken as time goes on but to become even more dedicated. For the nearer the King is, the more they ought to be ready to receive him. Homilies on Romans 23.

6:24 *God and Mammon*

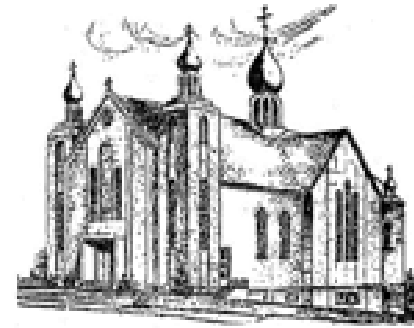
Serving Two Masters. St John Chrysostom: Now Jesus calls mammon here “a master,” not because of its own nature but on account of the wretchedness of those who bow themselves beneath it. So also he calls the stomach a god,² not from the dignity of such a mistress but from the wretchedness of those enslaved. To have mammon for your master is already worse itself than any later punishment and enough retribution before the punishment for any one trapped in it. For what condemned criminals can be so wretched as those who, once having God for their Lord, do from that mild rule desert to this grievous obsession for money? Even in this life such idolatry trails immense harm in its path, with losses unspeakable. Think of the lawsuits! The harrassments, the strife and toil and blinding of the soul! More grievous, one falls away thereby from the highest blessing—to be God’s servant. The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 21.2.

Simonetti, M. (Ed.). (2001). [Matthew 1–13](#) (pp. 143–144). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Today Readings

Epistle: Romans 13:11–14:4

Gospel: Matthew 6:14–21



From The Ambvon

ST MICHAEL ORTHODOX CHURCH,
OLD FORGE, PA

Priest Michael Shepherd (frmichael@stmichaelof.org)

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Sunday, February 26th, 2023

SUNDAY OF CHEESEFARE — Tone 4. The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise.

Birthdays & Anniversaries for February

Birthdays: Barbara Sevensky (2/14)

Nameday:

Anniversary:

Baptism:

Travelers:

Prospora Schedule: Please sign up to bake prospora.

February. Thank you to Matushka Emilia for this week's Prospora!

Visitors: PLEASE JOIN US FOR COFFEE HOUR DOWNSTAIRS

Agape Meal: Thank you to all who have donated and contributed to our Agape Meal.

All are encouraged to sing the “Lord Have Mercy” & “Amen” responses. And please sing along if you know the other verse, troparions, and kontakions as well.

Service Attendance: 42 Last weekend Divine Liturgy:

DEAR GUESTS AND FRIENDS: A most sincere and heartfelt welcome to you from our community. According to the ancient traditions of the Orthodox Church, the Sacrament of Holy Communion is to be administered only to Orthodox Christians who have prepared to receive themselves by fasting and a recent (monthly) confession..If you have questions please ask Fr Michael!



Service Schedule
WEEK of 27Feb-05Mar

27Feb-03Mar: @ 5:00 PM Compline w/ Canon of St. Andrew

SAT, Mar 4th: @ 5:00 PM Great Vespers

SUN, Mar 5th: Hours @ 9:20 Hours, Sunday of Orthodoxy -
 Divine Liturgy @ 9:30 AM

SUN, Mar 5th: @ 5:00 PM Sunday of Orthodoxy Lenten Mission Vespers

UP COMING

WED, Mar 8th 5:00 PM Presanctified Liturgy

SAT, Mar 11th: @ 5:00 PM Great Vespers

SUN, Mar 12th: Hours @ 9:20 Hours, St Gregory Palamas -
 Divine Liturgy @ 9:30 AM

SUN, Mar 19th: @ 5:00 PM Sunday of the Cross Lenten Mission Vespers
 PLEASE SEE MONTHLY CALENDAR

Announcements



& Upcoming Parish & Diocesan Events

CLEAN WEEK CONFESSIONS: 27FEB-03MAR 9:00AM - 12:00PM

Silent Prayers: Every Wednesday 11:00AM - 1:30PM

Church Work Day: Every Friday is Church Maintenance day. Come help!

Catechumen Class: Every Saturday 3:30 PM Catechumen Class - All are invited

Lenten Mission Vespers Choir Concert - St Michael's will be hosting a Lenten
 Choir Concert after our deanery mission vespers led by Fr Mikel Hill.

*Please coordinate with me who would like to do another proshpora class. Several
 people have spoken to me about one but we need to find a date so we all can attend.
 Need volunteers for a lenten pierogi sale.*

Kontakion, Synaxis of Archangel Michael & all the Bodiless Hosts

Commanders of God's armies and ministers of the divine glory, princes of the
 bodiless angels and guides of mankind, ask for what is good for us, and for
 great mercy, supreme commanders of the Bodiless Hosts.

Holy Archangel Michael Pray unto God for us!

*opened his soul to the poison of the serpent, but there was still hope that he
 might turn and embrace God. He could have raised his arms to God and
 cried: 'God, I am your voice, your self-expression; I am your creation, your
 child, and I have sinned. Bend down and hold me; save me before I perish
 completely!' Instead, he said, in effect: 'What do You want, God? Have you
 come here to judge me?'" ([Archimandrite Aimilianos, The Way of the Spirit, p
 239](#))*

Interestingly in the Gospels, it is the demons who have nothing but fear for Christ;
 they are terrified that He is there to judge them, yet they do not repent. For example
 in Mark 1:24, the demons possessing the man cry out:

*"What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy
 us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God."*

Adam feared God and God's judgment, yet it did not bring him to [repentance](#), to seek
 reconciliation with God. Instead, Adam blames Eve and God for his sin and fails to
 ask the merciful God for forgiveness and reconciliation.

Also in the various versions of the Gospel lesson of the Gadarene swine and the
 demoniacs (Mt 8:28-34; Mk 5:1-20; Lk 8:26-39), the demons squeal in fear that
 Christ is there to torment them before the Judgment Day, yet they do not seek to be
 reconciled to God. So too in Archimandrite Aimilianos' meditation, Adam fears
 God's judgment, yet fails to seek reconciliation with the merciful Lord.

So often many want a just God who punishes sinners, yet so seldom do we willingly
 seek God in [confession](#). We believe sinners should fear God like the demons, yet
 what we should be doing is offering all an example by our own repentance.

Beginning of Great Lent

In the Orthodox Church, the last Sunday before Great Lent—the day on which, at Vespers, Lent is liturgically announced and inaugurated—is called Forgiveness Sunday. On the morning of that Sunday, at the Divine Liturgy, we hear the words of Christ:

“If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses...” (Mark 6:14-15).

Then after Vespers—after hearing the announcement of Lent in the Great Prokeimenon: “Turn not away Thy face from Thy child, for I am afflicted! Hear me speedily! Draw near unto my soul and deliver it!”, after making our entrance into Lenten worship, with its special melodies, with the prayer of Saint Ephraim the Syrian, with its prostrations—we ask forgiveness from each other, we perform the rite of forgiveness and reconciliation. And as we approach each other with words of reconciliation, the choir intones the Paschal hymns, filling the church with the anticipation of Paschal joy.

What is the meaning of this rite? Why is it that the Church wants us to begin the Lenten season with forgiveness and reconciliation? These questions are in order because for too many people Lent means primarily, and almost exclusively, a change of diet, the compliance with ecclesiastical regulations concerning fasting. They understand fasting as an end in itself, as a “good deed” required by God and carrying in itself its merit and its reward. But the Church spares no effort in revealing to us that fasting is but a means, one among many, towards a higher goal: the spiritual renewal of man, his return to God, true repentance and, therefore, true reconciliation. The Church spares no effort in warning us against a hypocritical and pharisaic fasting, against the reduction of religion to mere external obligations. As a Lenten hymn says:

“In vain do you rejoice in not eating, O soul!
For you abstain from food,
But from passions you are not purified.
If you persevere in sin, you will perform a useless fast!”

Now, forgiveness stands at the very center of Christian faith and of Christian life because Christianity itself is, above all, the religion of forgiveness. God forgives us, and His forgiveness is in Christ, His Son, whom He sends to us so that by sharing in His humanity we may share in His love and be truly reconciled with God. Indeed, Christianity has no other content but love. And it is primarily the renewal of that love, a growth in it, that we seek in Great Lent, in fasting and prayer, in the entire spirit and the entire effort of that season. Thus, truly forgiveness is both the beginning of, and the proper condition for, the Lenten season.

One may ask, however: Why should I perform this rite when I have no “enemies?” Why should I ask forgiveness from people who have done nothing to me, and whom I hardly know? To ask these questions is to misunderstand the Orthodox teaching concerning forgiveness. It is true that open enmity, personal hatred, real animosity may be absent from our life, though if we experience them, it may be easier for us to repent, for these feelings openly contradict Divine commandments. But the Church reveals to us that there are much subtler ways of offending Divine Love. These are indifference, selfishness, lack of interest in other people, of any real concern for them—in short, that wall which we usually erect around ourselves, thinking that by being “polite” and “friendly” we fulfill God’s commandments. The rite of forgiveness is so important precisely because it makes us realize—be it only for one minute—that our entire relationship to other men is wrong, makes us experience that encounter of one child of God with another, of one person created by God with another, makes us feel that mutual “recognition” which is so terribly lacking in our cold and dehumanized world.

On that unique evening, listening to the joyful Paschal hymns we are called to make a spiritual discovery: to taste of another mode of life and relationship with people, of life whose essence is love. We can discover that always and everywhere Christ, the Divine Love Himself, stands in the midst of us, transforming our mutual alienation into brotherhood. As I advance towards the other, as the other comes to me—we begin to realize that it is Christ who brings us together by His love for both of us.

And because we make this discovery—and because this discovery is that of the Kingdom of God itself: the Kingdom of Peace and Love, of reconciliation with God and, in Him, with all that exists—we hear the hymns of that Feast, which once a year “opens to us the doors of Paradise.” We know why we shall fast and pray, what we shall seek during the long Lenten pilgrimage.

Forgiveness Sunday: the day on which we acquire the power to make our fasting—true fasting; our effort—true effort; our reconciliation with God—true reconciliation.

—Father Alexander Schmemmann

THE EXPULSION OF ADAM FROM PARADISE

Fr. Ted Bobosh

In the long history of Christianity, many insightful meditations have been offered giving Adam voice to explain his free choice and to lament the loss of Paradise after sinning against God and being expelled from God’s hand-planted Garden of Eden. Below is a modern meditation from Archimandrite Aimilianos who has Adam fearfully explaining himself, ignoring the merciful nature of the God whom Adam knew from the beginning.

“And so it was with Adam: ‘I’m over here, hiding, because I was afraid to see you, because I have sinned. I’m afraid that you wouldn’t accept my excuses; that You’d say it was all my fault. I was afraid that you would no longer acknowledge me as Your child.’

To be sure, Adam’s desire to justify himself, the various excuses he contemplated, were the signs of certain death. And this is why St. Makarios says: ‘When Adam fell away from God, he died spiritually,’ Seeking to justify himself, Adam condemned himself to life without God. Until then, the damage wasn’t fully done; the blow could have been blunted, the tragedy averted. This was the critical moment which we all must face, when it becomes clear whether we’ll choose God or our self. As a general rule, we choose our self. Every day we repeat the sin of Adam. He fell when he

Parish Prayer List

Please remember in your prayers LIVING

Ill-afflicted Archpriests John Nightingale & Fr Theodore Orzolek

All those caring for the sick and suffering at this time throughout the world, especially our

families and friends: Mike Jadick, Bernie Elko, Margaret Pregmon, Marie Buranich, Helen Wytovich, Tammy Wytovich, Rosemary Kuzmich, Sandra Pritchky, Marie Pasternak, Sandy Batton, Paula Stavisky, Al Pritchky, Eli Stavisky, Evelyn Bunevitch, Nadia Macheska, John Pritchky, Paulette Ezbiansky, Andrew Lutzick, Daniel Jones, Charissa Voroziichak, Matushka Paula Soucek; Al Horek

Servants of God Fr Nathan, Mat. Katherine, Micaiah, Evangeline, Gideon, Zacharias, Ignatius, Basil (Clausson), Mat. Emilia, Blaise, Maximus, Rodion, Savina (Shepherd), Barbara Sevensky, Bev Elko, Sandra Condon, Ann Tyrpak, Sandy & Danny Pregmann, Walter Pritchky, Michael & Euphemia (Mia) (Keklak); Amaya Jackson; Robert Kane; Maria & Vitaliy Rakovsky; Ekaterina & Anna; Kelly Cigna; Natasha & Rosa Coyoy

Catechumens: Jason, Emily, Judah, Nadia, & Silas

DEPARTED

Newly Departed: Martha Matechak 2/21/2023

Departed: Ellen Pasternak 1/24/1982; Stephen Pasternak 1/30/2009; Alexandra Toczko 2/3/1995; Anna Zupko 2/6/2014; Jean Wasko 2/7/2019; Femia Pasternak 2/14/1961; Ann Freeman 2/18/2015; Walter Pritchky Sr. 2/28/2015

PLEASE STOP GATHERING YOUR BELONGINGS AND GETTING READY TO GO IN THE MIDDLE OF ANNOUNCEMENTS.

*Please sign up and help Marie Pasternak with the Agape Meal and Coffee Hour. She will be coordinating an Agape Meal every other week. However, we have Meatfare and Cheesefare Sunday coming up and this is the time to “Spring Clean” your pantry and refrigerator.