

# Sunday of Cheesefare

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*"The Lord said: If you forgive the faults of others, your heavenly Father will forgive you yours. If you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive you."*

*When you fast, you are not to look glum s the hypocrites do. They change the appearance of their faces so that others may see they are fasting. I assure you, they are already repaid. When you fast, see to it that you groom your hair and wash your face. In that way no one can see you are fasting but your Father who is hidden; your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you.*

*Do not lay up for yourselves an earthly treasure. Moths and rust corrode; thieves break in and steal. Make it your practice instead to store up heavenly treasure which neither moths nor rust corrode nor thieves break in and steal. Remember, where your treasure is there your heart is also." (Matthew 6:14-21)*

Today's Gospel tells us that there are two things we must do in order to complete the Journey of the Great Fast.

Our first task is to fast. Why do we fast? To empty ourselves to hear God's voice. In this day of fast food and instant messaging, we need to not only fast from food but from things that distract us from hearing God's voice: TV, texting, internet, computer games, or anything else that stands between us and the quiet voice of God in our lives.

Second, we must forgive. Hurts and resentments have a way of building up in our lives like dust on shelf. If we don't clean it off once in a while, our heart become full of hurts and resentments. Forgiveness is like cleaning off the dust and making room for us to meet God.

Cheesefare means 'Farewell to Cheese'. In the early Church, no dairy products were eaten from this Sunday until Easter Sunday. Meat and cheese were seen as luxuries for most people. What luxuries can I give up?

The icon for this Sunday is called the Expulsion of Adam from the Paradise of Bliss or the Garden of Eden. We were created for Paradise but our sin sent us packing. We long for that heavenly home and our experience on earth is exile. Jesus, the Saviour, opens the door of paradise to us. That is our journey of life. We see it concentrated in the Great Fast and we experience the joy of Salvation on Resurrection.

### **FORGIVENESS VESPERS**

In the evening of the Sunday, the faithful gather for Forgiveness Vespers. At the end of the regular Vespers service, the priest kneels before the people and says three times:

*"Bless me, brothers and sisters, and forgive me, for I have committed sins today and through my entire lifetime, by word, deed, thought and by my senses."*

The people, standing, respond three times:

*"May God forgive you and have mercy on you, Reverend Father, and we forgive you."*

Then, the people kneel and say three times:

*"Bless me, Father, and forgive me for I have committed sins today and through my entire lifetime, by word, deed, thought and by my senses."*

Then, the priest, standing, responds three times:

*"May God in His mercy, forgive you your sins, and I forgive you."*

The priest concludes the Forgiveness ceremony with this prayer:

*"How good and how delightful it is when brothers and sisters live in harmony. Now it is required that we forgive each other. Let the right part of the church turn towards the left and the left towards the right. Look well, brothers and sisters, if there is someone with whom you personally will require to make peace. And now let us mutually forgive each other."*

### **KONDAK (Tone 6)**

*Guide of wisdom, giver of understanding, \*teacher of the ignorant and protector of the poor. \*Master, strengthen my heart and make it understand. \* You give me speech, Word of the Father, \*for I will not keep my lips from crying out to You. \*Merciful Lord, have mercy on me a sinner.*

### **WHAT CAN I DO AT HOME OR IN MY CLASSROOM?**

- Celebrate forgiveness as a class or family.
- Talk about fasting on the first day of the Great Fast.
- Read the Gospel of the day. Ask children what earthly treasures are and what heavenly treasures are.
- Read Psalm 139 which speaks about God's presence in our lives.
- Pray for people who have hurt us.