



Catechist Connection



Glory to Jesus Christ!

Sunday, March 3, 2019 is Cheese Fare Sunday. This is the last preparatory Sunday before the beginning of the Great Fast. This Sunday is known by several names: Cheese-fare, Adam's Lament, and Forgiveness Sunday. Cheese-fare is derived from the past practice of fasting from all meat, egg and dairy products for 40 days. Today, we have two days (Monday the 1st day of Lent and Good Friday) of a strict fast, which is abstinence from meat, eggs and dairy products.

This final Sunday before Great Lent has two themes: it commemorates Adam's expulsion from Paradise, and it heightens our need for forgiveness. There are obvious reasons why these two things

should be brought to our attention as we stand at the beginning of Great Lent.

One of the primary images the Church sets before us during the Great Fast is that of the return to Paradise. Lent is a time when we weep with Adam and Eve before the closed gate of Eden, repenting with them for the sins that have deprived us of our free communion with God. But Lent is also a time when we are preparing to celebrate the saving event of Christ's death and rising, which has reopened Paradise to us once more (Luke 23:43). So sorrow for our exile in sin is tempered by hope of our re-entry into Paradise.

The second theme, forgiveness, is emphasized in the Gospel reading for this Sunday (Matthew 6: 14-21) and in the special ceremony of mutual forgiveness at the end of the Vespers on Sunday evening. Before we enter the Lenten fast, we are reminded that there can be no true fast, no genuine repentance, no reconciliation with God, unless we are at the same time reconciled with one another. We do not travel the road of Lent as isolated individuals but as members of a family. Our asceticism and fasting should not separate us from others, but should link us to them with ever-stronger bonds.

Today's Gospel tells us that there are two things we must do in order to complete the Journey of the Great Fast. First, we must fast. Fasting is an ancient practice that dates back even to pre-Christian times. Fasting allows us to empty ourselves in order to be filled with God and God's spirit. We do not only fast from food, in today's world, we also need to fast from television, radio, internet, computer games, facebook, or anything else that prevents us from hearing God's voice.

Second, we must forgive. Forgiveness means we let go of resentment and hurt because someone has offended us or hurt us. In a way, Forgiveness is like fasting because when we let go of hurts, it empties a space in our heart where we can meet God.

Did you know that the Great Fast actually begins this Sunday evening at Vespers? Forgiveness Vespers is a deeply beautiful service that expresses the spirit of the Great Lent. We are challenged to enter the Great Fast by forgiving and asking forgiveness of each other. We are called to express our love for God by forgiving those who have wronged us; we are also called to examine our lives and seek forgiveness from those we have hurt.

<http://lentgoarch.org/forgiveness/learn/>

UCREC Saskatoon

St. Ephrem Prayer

The Prayer of St. Ephrem expresses all the Truths of our lives if we are willing to acknowledge them. Each point is punctuated by a poklony, expressing our humility before God – body, soul and mind. The first Stanza recognizes that God is the Lord and Master and that we are caught up in the spirit of many ungodly spirits. After a profound poklony we ask God to grant us His spirit of Life. Finally, we acknowledge, God as Lord and King, and humbly ask for forgiveness and not to judge. Praying this prayer every day during the Great Fast is a great blessing. Pray it alone, Pray it with your family or your Catechism class. It is a healing part of the Lenten journey.

O Lord and Master of my life,

Keep from me the spirit of indifference and discouragement,

Lust of power and idle chatter

(Prostration)

Instead, grant me Your servant,

The spirit of wholeness of being, humble-mindedness, patience and love.

(Prostration)

O Lord and King,

Grant me the grace to be aware of my sins and not to judge my neighbor

For you are blessed now and forever and forever.

(Prostration)

Then with a simple bow, the following is repeated four times

O God be merciful to me a sinner

O God cleanse me of my sins and have mercy on me.

I have sinned without number, forgive me O Lord.

Repeat the entire St. Ephrem Prayer and do one Prostration.