

THE ORTHODOX CHURCH OF SAINT ELIZABETH THE NEW-MARTYR

Volume XXI

Number 24

10 / 23 February 2020
SUNDAY OF THE LAST JUDGEMENT:
MEATFARE SUNDAY (*Tone 3*)



SCRIPTURE READINGS Week of 23 February

Su	Meatfare Sunday: The Sunday of the Last Judgement	
	<i>3rd Resurrectional Matins Gospel: Mark §71 (16:9-20)</i>	
	1 Cor. §140 (8:8-9:2)	Matt. §106 (25:31-46)
36TH WEEK after PENTECOST (Cheesefare Week)		
M	3 John §76 (1:1-14)	Luke §96 (19:29-40; 22:7-39)
Tu	Jude §77 (1-10)	Luke §109 (22:39-42, 45b-23:1)
W	<i>6th Hour: Joel 2:12-26</i>	
	<i>Vespers: Joel 3:12-21</i>	
Th	Jude §78 ((1:11-25)	Luke §110 (23:2-34, 44-56)
F	<i>6th Hour: Zachariah 8:7-17</i>	
	<i>Vespers: Zachariah 8:19-23</i>	
Sa	Cheesefare Saturday: Commemoration of Holy Ascetics	
	Rom. §115 (14:19-23;16:25-27)	Matt. §16 (6:1-13)
	Gal. §213 (5:22-6:2)	Matt. §43 (11:27-30)
Su	Cheesefare Sunday: The Sunday of Forgiveness	
	<i>4th Resurrectional Matins Gospel: Luke §112 (24:1-12)</i>	
	Rom. §112 (13:11b-14:4)	Matt. §17 (6:14-21)

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES THIS WEEK

MEATFARE SUNDAY: Last Judgment (*Tone 3*)

Saturday, 22 February (9 February, o.s.)

6:00 PM Vigil Service;
Confessions

Sunday, 23 February (10 February, o.s.)

9:10 AM Third and Sixth Hours
9:30 AM Divine Liturgy;
Trapeza (coffee hour)

CHEESEFARE SUNDAY (*Tone 4*)

Saturday, 29 February (16 February, o.s.)

6:00 PM Vigil Service;
Confessions

Sunday, 1 March (17 February, o.s.)

9:10 AM Third and Sixth Hours
9:30 AM Divine Liturgy
11:30 AM Forgiveness Vespers;
Trapeza (coffee hour)

FASTING DAYS THIS WEEK

The third pre-lenten week of the Triodion, the week beginning with the Monday after Meatfare Sunday and ending with Cheesefare Sunday, is called the 'Week of Cheesefare.' During this week meat is forbidden, but eggs, cheese and other dairy products may be eaten on all days, including Wednesday and Friday.

THIS WEEK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today is the last Sunday of our special collection for the Holy Trinity Seminary in Jordanville, New York, will be taken at St Elizabeth's during the Sundays of February. Our donations will help educate the future clergy of our Church. If you have given to this worthy cause, may God bless you. If not, please consider Please giving today.

Many thanks to the servant of God who provided *kolyva* (sweetened boiled wheat) for the Memorial Services for Meatfare Soul Saturday.

The Prayer of St Ephraim the Syrian is said in the church services and in private prayer on Wednesday and Friday of this Cheesefare Week, as well as on the weekdays of Great Lent. It is a striking characteristic of Lenten services. It is said usually with three prostrations to the ground, twelve bows, and a final prostration:

O Lord and Master of my life, a spirit of idleness, despondency, lust of power, and idle talking give me not. *Prostration.*

But rather a spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love bestow on me Thy servant. *Prostration.*

Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own failings, and not to condemn my brother; for blessed art Thou unto the ages of ages. Amen. *Prostration.*

O God, cleanse me a sinner. *Twelve times with a reverence (bow from the waist) at each.*

Then once more: O Lord and Master of my life...(the entire prayer) with a single prostration at the end.

Next Sunday is Forgiveness Sunday. Forgiveness Vespers will be immediately after the Divine Liturgy. Please plan to remain in church for this beautiful service, the first liturgical service of Great Lent. This Vespers service is called Forgiveness Vespers because there is a rite of mutual forgiveness at the conclusion of the service. This is our opportunity to ask each other's forgiveness for any offence that we may have committed knowingly or unknowingly over the past year, and so to begin Great Lent with a clean slate. The service is not very long, and it is very beautiful.

The Meaning of the Prayer of St Ephraim the Syrian

Archpriest Alexander Men (+1990) |

Every day of Great Lent, with the exception of Saturdays and Sundays, the prayer 'O Lord and Master of my life' is read. According to tradition, this prayer was written in Syria in the fourth century by the ascetic Mar Afrem or, as we have grown accustomed to calling him, Ephraim the Syrian. He was a monk, poet, and theologian, one of the most eminent sons of the Syrian Church, who entered world literature as a remarkable writer.

The words of the prayer, which were quite accurately transmitted by Pushkin [1], sound as follows when translated from the Syrian: 'O Lord and Master of my life,' that is: Ruler of my life, Who gave me life, Who is the center and focal point of my life. 'Give me not a spirit of idleness,' that is, laziness, which is, according to the old adage, the mother of all vices. Laziness seems like an innocent thing, but it engenders much that is dark and black.

'Despondency.' Christianity is a joyful doctrine; joyful, too, is he who is despondent – for it will leave him. St Seraphim of Sarov, the great Russian saint of the nineteenth century, said: 'We have no ways to be despondent, for Christ has saved everyone.'

'Ambition.' This means love of authority. Everyone has it; do not think that the cult of personality exists only in politics: it can also be present in the family or in any small community. Everyone has in himself the seeds of the aspiration to crush the will of others, to strangle and subdue it.

'Idle talking.' I exempt children: they have the right to chatter, but only until the age of fifteen or sixteen. When children chatter they are learning to communicate and are practicing their language; but when these 'children' are already twenty, or sometimes older than forty – this means they are being pitiless towards their own lives. Let us consider (and let us be honest with ourselves): how much longer do we have to live? Not much longer at all. Therefore, I repeat, we should value life and love the gift that God has given us, remembering that we will carry into eternity only that which we have in our hearts. Idle talk and blathering are frightful words, for they involve killing time.

Further on the prayer says: 'a spirit of chastity... patience, and love bestow upon me Thy servant.' Chastity is purity of relations with the world and with people, wholeness of soul, without duality, and without the passions gaining possession over you.

'Humble-mindedness.' This means the wisdom of the healthy person. Humility here, in the given context, means knowing

where you stand against the backdrop of eternity. Do not inflate yourself like the frog in Krylov's fable– it burst [2]. There is no need to exaggerate, but one should know one's worth. The wisdom of modesty is extraordinary and beautiful. The wisdom of modesty is not abasement beyond pride, but healthiness of soul. Here is an example for you. When someone begins to imagine himself as something that he is not, he is only a few steps from megalomania. Megalomania is a pathological state of pride. One person announces that he is the chairman of the Council of Ministers or Napoleon, and he is placed in a psychiatric hospital; another makes no such pronouncement, for which reason he is not in the hospital, but in his soul he thinks he is superior to everyone else.

'Patience, and love.' What is patience? I will put it briefly so that you will remember. Patience is not the state of cattle, which tolerate everything. It is not humiliation – not at all. It is not a compromise with evil – under no circumstances. Patience is the ability to maintain equanimity of spirit in circumstances that impede such equanimity. Patience is the ability to achieve one's goals when encountering various obstacles along the way. Patience is the ability to maintain a joyful spirit even when there is an excess of grief. Patience is a victory and an overcoming; patience is a form of courage. This is what real patience is.

Finally, love. Love is the utmost happiness of man; it is the ability of our souls to be open, immanent (as the philosophers say), inwardly open to the other person. When you are riding the escalatory in the subway, test yourself to see if you are able to love or not. When you look at the people riding on the other side and you find it repulsive to look at their faces, it means that all the pores of your soul are clogged and that your feeling of love is in an embryonic state.

But the power of Christ's grace is capable of rebuilding a person in such a way that he sees people in an entirely different manner; so that his first reaction will be benevolence; so that he will immediately see the beautiful in both women and men, in as inspired manner, even where no one else notices it; so that when seeing a suffering face he will feel compassion; so that he will be open. Such a person is always happy, because he is united with people and lives lovingly.

At the end of the prayer it says: 'Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my failings and not condemn my brother.' You understand this. The greatest cure from condemnation is the ability to criticize oneself. We are extremely careful – I would say observant and even psychologically sophisticated – when we are considering the sins of our neighbors or the sins of other people. Here we display maximum knowledge of all moral laws in all their subtleties. Here we act like strict judges, although we have no right to do so, since we ourselves are guilty of the very things of which we condemn others.

You ask me: perhaps this is appeasement and compromise with evil? Under no circumstances. Never. We must call evil by its name. But we must have compassion for the person who falls into this sin.

This is the essence of this prayer read daily with prostrations during Great Lent.

From the lecture 'Great Lent,' delivered on 1 April 1 1989. Translated from Russian.

Translator's notes :[1] The poem is 'Desert Fathers and Immaculate Women,' written in 1836. [2] The fable is 'The

Frog and the Ox,' which originated with Aesop and was adapted by Krylov (among several others fabulists).