St. Michael Antiochian Orthodox Church of the San Fernando Valley a Parish of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America 16643 Vanowen Street; Van Nuys, California; 91406 stmichaelvannuys.org

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The Sunday of Forgiveness (Cheese Fare)

Porphyrios, Bishop of Gaza; Great-martyr Photeini the Samaritan Woman and those with her

Sunday, February 26, 2023

Tone 4; Eothinon 4

Apolytikion of the Resurrection (Tone 4)

From the heights Thou didst descend, O compassionate One, and Thou didst submit to the three-day burial, that Thou might deliver us from passion; Thou art our life and our Resurrection, O Lord, glory to Thee.

Apolytikion of our Patron the Archangel Michael (Tone 4)

O ye foremost of the heavenly hosts we beseech thee, though we are unworthy, pray that we may be encompassed with a shadow of Thy unearthly glory, preserving us who kneel and cry endlessly: deliver us from oppression since ye are the prince of the Highest Power.

Kontakion for the Sunday of the Last Judgment (Tone 1)

O Thou Who guidest to wisdom, and givest understanding and intelligence, the Instructor of the ignorant, and Helper of the poor, strengthen my heart and grant it understanding, O Master. Give me word, O Word of the Father; for behold, I shall not refrain my lips from crying to Thee, O merciful One, have mercy upon me who am fallen.

Daily Readings

THE EPISTLE (for the Sunday of Forgiveness)

Sing praises to our God, sing praises. Sing praises to our King, sing praises. Clap your hands, all ye nations.

The Reading from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans (13: 11-14; 4)

Brethren, salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed; the night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us conduct ourselves becomingly as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires. As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not for disputes over opinions. One believes he may eat anything, while the weak man eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who abstains, and let not him who abstains pass judgment on him who eats; for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Master is able to make him stand.

THE GOSPEL (for the Sunday of Forgiveness)

The Reading of the Holy Gospel is according to St. Matthew (6:14-21)

The Lord said to His Disciples: If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father Who is in secret; and your Father Who sees in secret will reward you. Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

The Synaxarion – February 26

On February 26 in the Holy Orthodox Church, we commemorate our Righteous Father Porphyrios, bishop of Gaza; Great-martyr Photeini the Samaritan Woman and those with her.

On this day, we make remembrance of the exile of the first-fashioned, Adam, from the Paradise of delight.

Verses

Let the world mourn bitterly along with ages past; As, by sweet eating, it hath fallen along with those who had fallen. It is the Sunday of Forgiveness, known also as Cheese Fare Sunday. Today's lesson from the Holy Gospel teaches us about forgiveness and fasting, and how both are crucial to our own return to Paradise. The divine Fathers also set the anniversary of the exile of Adam from the Paradise of bliss on this day, at the entrance of Great Lent, to show us by deed as well as word how great is the benefit that accrues to man from fasting and repenting; and, on the contrary, how great the harm that comes from destructive gluttony and from disobedience to the divine commandments. The sin of gluttony resulted in Adam and Eve's banishment from Paradise, because they disobeyed God by eating from the tree which He had forbidden them. The Church reminds us of this event to encourage us to return to that ancient glory and primeval happiness by means of fasting and obedience to God and His commandments.

By Thine ineffable compassion, O Christ our God, make us worthy of the delight of Paradise and have mercy on us, as Thou art alone the Lover of mankind. Amen.

NOTE

When standing in line for Holy Communion please avoid from socializing. We approach the chalice to receive the Body and Blood of Christ with reverence and silence. Thank you for your understanding.

OFFERINGS

Holy Bread is being offered this morning by Sean O'Dea and family, asking for our merciful God to embrace the Turley family with His Grace.

Holy Bread is also being offered by Mae Tortolano with joy for His Eminence, Metropolitan SABA Esper, welcoming him to his assignment to carry on the vital responsibilities of leadership in North America. May God grant him good health and guide him always. Prayers are offered for Cristina Maria Tortolano on the happy occasion of her birthday (2/28). May God keep her well and safe in His infinite grace as she continues to brighten the lives of many with her deeds of kindness and caring. Respectfully beseeching God's love and blessings by her grateful mother and the Tortolano family.

Special Offerings and requests for prayer are being made . . .

by Sharon Katerelos for Samia Habib's full recovery from her recent surgery; that our Metropolitan SABA be blessed of God to lead us with wisdom, integrity and grace; also for the health, safety and well being of Father Timothy.

for the response of the newly-departed Father Dorotheus (+21 February, 2023) of Tucson, Arizona, by the Milkie family. Memory eternal.

by Tanya Milkie for the repose of the newly-departed Presbytera Kay Efstathiu (+9 February, 2023). Memory eternal

for the good health of the newborn child, Seamus, by Rachel Grundler.

A Note Regarding Holy Communion

Since we understand Communion to mean that we have all things in common, sharing an identical Faith, *only* those who are members of the Orthodox Church and who have prepared themselves through prayer, fasting and recent Confession may participate in Holy Communion. (We invite all, however, to partake of the blessed bread which is distributed at the dismissal.) Please see the Pastor for inquiries on how to become a member.

LITURGICAL CALENDAR

[Note: Today is the last and final day for consuming all meat, fish and dairy products. Tomorrow ("Clean Monday") is the beginning of the Great Fast.]

Prayers of Forgiveness will be said at the end of today's Liturgy

Weekday Lenten Services

Monday, February 27th (the First day of Great Lent) – <u>Great Compline</u> with the Canon of St. Andrew of Crete, 6:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 1st – <u>Liturgy of Pre-sanctified Gifts</u>, 6 p.m. [followed by a light Lenten Meal]

Friday, March 3rd – <u>The Akathist Hymn</u>, 1st stasis ("Madeyeh"), 6:30 p.m.

The 1st Sunday of Great Lent ("The Sunday of Orthodoxy")

<u>Great Vespers</u> - Saturday, March 4th, 5 p.m.

Sunday, March 5th – <u>Orthros</u>, 8:45 a.m., <u>Divine Liturgy</u>, 10 a.m.

Letter From Metropolitan SABA

View the letter from Metropolitan SABA here in English and Arabic, go to the Archdiocese website with the following link and click on to the "Statement in English" and the Arabic links: <u>https://antiochian.org/</u> regulararticle/1527

Understanding the "Rule" of the Great Fast

There are three parts of the fast:

1. **The pre-lenten season** includes the week of Cheese Fare (February 20-26), when all meats are obtained from, with the exception of eggs, dairy, fish, wine and oil, that may be consumed any day of the week. The last day of "Cheese Fare" is today, Sunday, February 26.

2. "Clean Monday" begins the great Fast (February 27) when all meat and dairy products are removed from our diet. "Meat" products pertains to all animals with a backbone. Note: The forty (40) days includes the five weekdays (Monday through Friday). Saturday and Sundays are not part of Great Lent per se. These are days when the Divine Liturgy is served: Saturdays for the departed, and Sunday, celebrating Christ's Resurrection. Both Saturdays and Sundays, however, are still considered a part of Great Lent; thus making the count of the days of fasting greater than 40. [In some communities, the fast is relaxed (moderately) on the weekends, i.e., allowing for dairy and/or fish. However this is not the rule.] Because the Divine Liturgy is not served on the weekdays, the Vesperal Liturgy of the Pre-sanctified Gifts are served in the evenings, Monday-Friday. Wednesdays are the designated days in most parishes when the Presanctified Liturgy is served. In the Russian Church, the weekday Pre-sanctified Liturgy is served on Wednesdays and Fridays. In the Byzantine Churches (Greek and Antiochian), Friday evenings are dedicated to the Service of the Akathist/ Madeyeh (Service of Intercessory Prayer) dedicated to the Protection of the Allholy Mother of God, the Theotokos-having its relevance to anticipating the Feast of the Holy Annunciation-that takes place during Great Lent (March 25th). If there is a "Feast Day" of recognition and importance to a community on a weekday of Lent, the Pre-sanctified Liturgy is served on that day. The Pre-

sanctified Liturgy uses a second "lamb" (from a holy loaf of bread) that is consecrated during the Sunday Divine Liturgy of that particular week. It is put aside, and dried in a special container for the Liturgy of Pre-sanctified Liturgy of that week. The character and tone of the Pre-sanctified Liturgy is solemn and penitential, unlike the brighter celebration of the Liturgy on the weekends. Each of the five Sundays of Great Lent are dedicated to a particular commemoration: 1) The "Sunday of Orthodoxy" (the First Sunday of Lent) and the commemoration of the restoration of Icons in the year 787 AD, following the iconoclastic (the destruction of icons) era, 2) St. Gregory Palamas (the Second Sunday of Lent), 3) The Veneration of the Holy Cross (the Third Sunday of Lent), 4) The commemoration of St. John Climacus of Mount Sinai (the Fourth Sunday of Lent), and 5) The commemoration of St. Mary of Egypt (the Fifth Sunday of Lent). Two days (during the Fast) are special Feasts that allow for fish, oil and wine to be consumed: a) The Feast of the Annunciation (March 25), and Palm Sunday (this year on April 9 [Western Easter]). In some communities, i.e., in a Seminary, a special prescription for fasting is provided in order to provide for physical strength. For example, allowing fish, oil and wine on the second and fourth weekdays of the fast. This however, is a local rule and not a universal practice. The Church's Canon Law does not impose the fast upon people who require a specific diet for reasons of health, i.e., pregnant mothers; the elderly who are required to have more protein in their diet; persons that work jobs of hard labor. Parents should also use good judgment with children, however, it is important that a family establish a private rule of fasting. It is very important to understand that fasting does not stand by itself as a spiritual discipline. It should be accompanied with regular prayer and almsgiving (good works). Consideration should also be made to one's activities that can be distracting to one's focus upon prayer, confession, and the the spiritual life. In preparation for any Liturgy abstinence from food and drink is the norm. For example, breakfast is not consumed on Sunday mornings, following a late light dinner on Saturday evening. For a Pre-Sanctified Liturgy, an early brunch or lunch is the norm before abstaining to receive Holy Communion for the Vesperal Liturgy of the Pre-sanctified Gifts.

3. The fast of Great and Holy Week (this year: April 10-14) stands outside of the forty days of Great Lent and is observed with the same rule as the forty days (above). Great and Holy Friday (April 14) is a day of strict fasting - commemorating the Death of Christ. On Holy Friday, "dry eating is allowed;" the consumption of fruit, nuts, juice; or anything that is uncooked. This is the only day of the year when there a Divine Liturgy is not celebrated (i.e., Presanctified Liturgy).

The other "seasons" of fasting include: The Fast of the Dormition ("falling asleep"/death) of the Virgin Mary: August 1-15, concluding on the Commemoration of the Dormition (August 15); the Fast of the Apostles: usually appearing in June (this year: June 24-28) concluding with the Feast of the Apostles Peter and Paul; and the Fast of the Holy Nativity: beginning on November 15 and concluding with the Feast of the Holy Nativity (December 25). There are also specific days of "strict fasting" ("dry eating") on the Commemoration of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist (August 29), and The Elevation of the Holy Cross (September 14).

Let us begin the fast with joy. Let us prepare ourselves for spiritual efforts. Let us purify our souls and cleanse our flesh. Let us abstain from passion as we abstain from food and pursue the virtues of the Spirit, which if we continue to long for, we shall be worthy to behold the most solemn Passion of Christ our God, and rejoice in spirit at His Holy Resurrection! [fourth stichera of Forgiveness Sunday Vespers]

ANNOUNCEMENTS

2022 Year-end Contribution Statements Now Available

Please note: There is no requirement at all to provide donor contribution receipts. However, the donors to non-profit organizations and churches need them if they are eligible to claim them on their taxes. Therefore, there is no date requirement. It is customary to try to get those out by the end of January, but certainly early enough for those who can itemize to provide to their tax preparer. [Keith Clark Hoyos, CTC] Your annual contribution may be provided to you electronically or by hard copy.

Note to Coffee Hour hosts: coffee and paper goods will be provided each week. Holy Bread Offering List Coffee Hour Hosts Calendar

Feb 26 - open (Cheese Fare Sunday) Noah's Bagels and cream cheese Mar 08 - Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts and Lenten Meal Mar 05 - open ("Sunday of Orthodoxy")

Please contact Fr. Timothy (818/219-3761; <u>frtimothy@stmichaelvannuys.org</u>) to sign-up to offer Holy Bread or host the coffee hour.



Wednesday Evening Lenten Meal

We have a host for the after-Liturgy Lenten meal for this Wednesday, March 1st and on Wednesday April 29. It is the sole purpose for the meal, following the Pre-sanctified Liturgy, to provide a simple and uncomplicated offering of food and not a full dinner. The Lenten meal is for renewed strength for those who have fasted in preparation for Holy Communion at the evening Liturgy and is not a fundraiser, though charitable offerings are always welcome. The meal should be modest and not require accumulating leftovers. This will also reduce the need for time consuming clean-up. The Wednesday evening Liturgies will now begin at 6 p.m. and not 6:30. This will avoid eating late, and allow enough time for travel home, especially when children get up early for school in the morning and many begin another workday. Contact Subdeacon Richard Ajalat [rajalat@stmichaelvannuys.org] should you be interested in reserving the following dates: March 8, 15, and April 5. Note: The Presanctified Liturgy is the Liturgy for all of the forty-day weekdays of Great The festal Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom is celebrated on the lent. Saturday (for the departed) and St. Basil the Great on Sunday (for the Resurrection), when wine and oil are permitted. In vigilant communities, like monasteries, the Pre-sanctified Liturgy and Lenten meal is the sole sustenance for the faithful during Great Lent. It is also important to keep in mind that our Lenten discipline is the practice that includes: fasting, prayer and good works—all three.

Zoom Meeting Virtual Bible Studies Will Resume in April

<u>Our Weekly Bible Study will resume after Pascha</u>. The link for the last recorded link and Study Guide of our concluding chapters of the Book of Genesis is also available by request by contacting Father Timothy at: <u>frtimothy@stmichaelvannuys.org</u>

Bookstore Orders Available on Parish Website

You may place an order through our parish website or e-mail Bobbi Monsue (Manager) for special orders at: <u>bobbi monsue@att.net</u>. Now is the time to place your order for your Holy Week Service Book and other gifts for Holy Pascha (Easter).

Pastoral Sermon The Sunday of Forgiveness February 26, 2023

Today's Gospel lesson clearly implies that forgiveness is tied to our forgiveness of others. In other words, just as we are forgiven, we also understand that God's forgiveness has been granted to all sinners. Forgiving those who sin against us is therefore expected of us though it may not be easy. Forgiving others, does not mean that we are without feelings, nor does it mean that Christians are "doormats" to others. We forgive others with the understanding that we are all sinners and vulnerable to weaknesses. The Lord's words uses the conditional "if" - *If you forgive men their trespasses*... and *if you do not forgive*... However, from God's standpoint: Forgiveness is a fact. We have all been forgiven.

It would probably be helpful for us to think if it in this way: God's forgiveness for you and me is of no consequence unless we personally know God's love for us, accept His forgiveness; are willing to forgive ourselves and are also willing to forgive others. God's forgiveness for you and me is of no consequence unless we partner with Him by desiring it for others, to the extent that we also make it a practice to forgive them.

We heard it clearly demonstrated in the Parable of the Prodigal Son two Sundays ago: We understood from the lesson that such a love and great mercy is something we know and experience because we have a conscience. Our struggle today is that we live in a time when many live their lives without much or any kind of conscience. Just about anything seems possible without facing any consequences. If you can make it happen there is very little stopping you from doing so! There are fewer boundaries today than we have ever known. Or, one could say, there are ways that you and I can more easily get out of things, especially if we have the means to do so.

However, last week, we were made aware that God's love - that is freely and impartially given is also a "tough love." It is not without ultimately facing "a day of judgment" (a day of reckoning) when you and I have to be accountable for our deeds and actions; taking responsibility for ourselves.

In summary: The lessons of the "Pre-season of Great Lent," beginning with the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee, the Sunday of the Prodigal Son, and the Sunday of the Last Judgment all call our attention to our actions and our willingness to make the right choices: a) willingness to choose humility (as did the Publican), b) willingness to act upon a good conscience in facing the truth honestly (as did the Prodigal Son), c) a willingness to serve others ("the least of our brethren") and so discover Christ in our brother, and d) a willingness to forgive others as God Himself forgave us. That is surely a lot! And if we dare to even do one of these four: choosing humility (the starting place of all virtue), return home to our Heavenly Father, practice the good deeds of serving others, or initiating the forgiveness of someone, we will aim to make Great Lent a meaningful personal experience and not just an annual exercise or ritual.

Rather than going through the "rite of forgiveness" as a mere ritual, let's take this day seriously, let us examine our consciences, let us choose to behave in a way that is becoming of being Christian believers. Let us not take lightly the church's practice (Christ's commandment) of forgiving others.

We can do the same about our practice of fasting. What do we find in the instruction of today's epistle lesson? ... When you fast... do not look dismal, like the hypocrites ... that their fasting may be seen by men. The point is: Great Lent is not a time for "wearing our religion on our sleeve."

Today's lesson concludes: *Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth...* Anyone's treasure is something they cherish, protect, defend, or consider very important. It is of a personal interest and has a personal value. It is what matters to you and me. Our Lord's words are very simple and clear: Find out where one's treasure is and there you will know what really matters to them. But for us is it all about spending our treasure on what we consider we rightly deserve? Is it about making the most of what we think that we've rightly earned? Or is it recognizing that God is the source of all things and we are only stewards of what He has mercifully provided us?

In his letter to the faithful, Patriarch JOHN X wrote these words: "Lent is a means to surrender (the hardness of the body) to God's abundant mercies. Through fasting, our compulsive and impulsive acts are extricated from the soul, so we may experience the warmth of love. Lent is the queen of virtues inasmuch as we purify our souls and wash them with pure waters of repentance, so we may bring peace and

love to others. Love is the summit of all treasures. Fasting is a true expression of love, and the best tool that enables us to remove the passions of animosity and pride, and sharpen the soul with charity and giving, and wash it with repentance and humility, so that the light of the resurrection of Christ may transfigure in it.

So as Patriarch JOHN suggests: think about fasting in terms of "being in love." Being in love involves doing many things in ways that puts aside our physical appetite in order to prepare for being with one's beloved. Our focus and attention is fixed upon the one we love. The result is: our devotion is made evident by the actions of many sacrifices. "Giving something up" becomes a very natural thing. In fact those things that are put aside are seen as inconsequential to the goal of being with the one we love. Insofar as Great Lent is concerned, the goal is: Christ and His Kingdom.

EOTHINON 4 الايوثينا4	TONE 4 اللحن4
SUNDAY OF FORGIVENESS (CHEESE FARE) PORPHYRIOS, BISHOP OF GAZA; GREAT-MARTYR PHOTEINI THE SAMARITAN WOMAN AND THOSE WITH HER	
طروباريَّة القيامة باللحنِ الرابِع	
رْزَ بالقيامَةِ البَهِجَ، وطَرَحْنَ القَضاءَ الجَدِّيَّ،	
نَ المَوْتُ وقامَ المَسيحُ الإلهُ، ومَنَحَ العالَمَ	
	الرَّحْمَةَ العُظْمى.
طروبارية رؤساء الملائكة باللحن الرابع أيّها المتقدّمونَ على الأجناد السماويين، نتوسّلُ إليكم نحن غيرَ المستحقّين، حتّى أَنّكم بطلباتِكم تكتنوفوننا بطلِّ أجنحةِ مجدِكم غير الهيولي، حافظينَ إيّانا نحنُ الجاثين والصارخينَ بغيرِ فتور، أنقذونا منَ الشدائدَ، بما أنّكم رؤساءُ مراتبِ القوّاتِ العلوية.	
قنداق مرفع الجبن على اللحن السادس أيها الهادي إلى الحكمة, وواهب الفهم والفطنة, ومثقف الجهال, ومجير المساكين, شدد قلبي وامنحه فهما أيها السيد, وأعطني كلاما, يا كلمة الآب. فها أنا لن أمسك شفتي عن الصراخ إليك: يا رحيم, إرحمني أنا الواقع.	

الرسالة

رتلوا لإليهنا رتلوا, يا جميعَ الأممِ صفقوا بالأيادي فصلٌ من رسالة القديس بولسَ الرسولِ الى أهل رومية يا اخوةُ, إنَّ خلاصَنا الآن أقربُ إلينا مما كان يوم آمنا. قد تناهى الليلُ واقتربَ النهار. فلنطرحُ عنا أعمالَ الظلام ونلبسُ أسلحةَ النور. لنسلكنّ سلوكاً كريماً كما في وضح النهار: لا عربدةَ ولا سكرَ, ولا فجورَ ولا عهرَ, ولا خصامَ ولا حسدَ. بل البسوا الربّ يسوعَ المسيح, ولا تنشغلوا بالجسدِ لإشباع شهواتِه. تقبلوا ضعيفَ الإيمان بغير مجادلة في الآراء. فَمِن الناس من يرى أن يَأكلَ كلّ شيءٍ في حين أن الضعيفَ لا يأكلُ إلا البقول. فعلى من يأكلُ من كلّ شيءٍ ان لا يحتقرَ من لا يأكلُ مِثله و على من لا يأكلُ من كلّ شيءٍ ان لا يتبتُ أو يسقطُ, لانّ اللهَ قادرً على أن يُتَبِتَّه

الإنجيل

فصلٌ شريفٌ من بشارةِ القديسِ متى قال الربّ: إن غفرتم للناس زلاتهم يغفر لكم أبوكم السماوي, وإن لم تغفروا للناس زلاتهم, لا يغفر لكم أبوكم السماوي زلاتكم. ومتى صمتم فلا تكونوا عابسين مثل المرائين. فإنهم يُكلّحون وجو ههم ليظهروا للناس أنهم صائمون. الحقَّ أقول لكم: إنهم قد أخذوا أجرَ هم. أما أنت, فمتى صمت, فادهنْ رأسك واغسلُ وجهك حتى لا تظهر للناس أنك صائم, بل لأبيك الذي في الخُفية. وأبوك الذي في الخُفية هو يكافئك علانية. ولا تَكَنِزوا لكم كُنوزاً على الأرض، حَيثُ يُفسِدُ السُّوسُ والصَّدَا، ويَنقُبُ والعُتَ، ولا يَنقُبُ السَّارِقونَ فيَسرِقون. فحَيثُ يكونُ كنزُكَ يكونُ قابُكَ



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