

SAINTS PETER AND PAUL ORTHODOX CHURCH

A Parish of the Orthodox Church in America
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Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory to God for All Things!

February 26	Sunday of Cheesefare	Divine Liturgy, Forgiveness Vespers	9:30 am
February 27	Monday	Great Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete	6:00 pm
February 28	Tuesday	Great Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete	6:00 pm
February 29	Wednesday	Great Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete	6:00 pm
March 1	Thursday	Great Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete	6:00 pm
March 2	Friday	Divine Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts	6:00 pm
March 3	Saturday	Great Vespers	4:00 pm
March 4	Sunday of the Triumph of Orthodoxy	Divine Liturgy	9:30 am

Saints of the Day: Saint Porphyrius, Bishop of Gaza (420). New Hieromartyr Priest Peter (1930). New Hieromartyr Priest Sergius (1933). Virgin-martyr Anna (1937). New Hieromartyrs Bishop John of Rylsk and Priest John (1938). Venerable Monk Sebastian of Poshekhonye (1542). Martyrs Sebastian and Christodoulos (66). New Martyr John Calphas ("the Apprentice") at Constantinople (1575). Saint Photina, the Samaritan Woman, and her sisters Anatola, Phota, Photis, Paraseva, and Cyriaca; her sons Photinus and Joses; and Sebastian the Duke, Victor, and Christodulus — all martyred under Nero (66). Martyr Theoclitus, martyred with Saint Photina.

Please remember in your prayers: Michael, Nettie, Maria, Michael, Mother Raphaela, John, Hilda, James, Ada, Priest Sergius, Louellen, Nancy, Rea, Archpriest Jason, Susan, Daniel, Aaron, Mark, Jennifer, Nina, Nadine, Michael, Anna, Gregory, Jim, Marianna, Mykola, Helen, Isaiah, Archpriest Vincent, Albert, Kevin, Robert, Robert, Andrew, David, Warren, Archimandrites Alexander, Athanasy, Isidore, Nectarios, Pachomy.

God Grant Many Years! Prayers for the health of Archpriest Jason Kappanadze, Archpriest Daniel Geeza, Dr John Kurap, Archpriest Mark Shinn, Dr David Albrecht, Priest Senan Taylor, Dr Magdy Ghaly, cousin Greg Udics were offered today at Liturgy and Moleben at the request of Father John Udics.

Memory Eternal. Prayers for the repose of Mary Mezick, John Hubiak and Andrew Homyk were offered at Liturgy and Litiya today at the request of "Memory Eternal Requiem Service Fund."

Homily on Cheesefare Sunday

Today is called "Forgiveness Sunday." It received this name from the pious Orthodox Christian custom at Vespers of asking each other's forgiveness for discourtesy and disrespect. We do so, since in the forthcoming fast we will approach the sacrament of Penance and ask the Lord to forgive our sins, which forgiveness will be granted us only if we ourselves forgive each other. "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matt. 6. 14, 15)

Yet it is said to be extremely difficult to forgive discourtesy and to forget disrespect. Perhaps our selfish nature finds it truly difficult to forgive disrespect, even though in the words of the Holy Fathers it is easier to forgive than to seek revenge. (Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk after Saint John Chrysostom) Yet everything in us that is good is not accomplished easily, but with difficulty, compulsion and effort. "The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." (Matt. 11. 12) For this reason we should not be discouraged at the difficulty of this pious act, but should rather seek the means to its fulfillment. The Holy Church offers many means towards this end, and of them we will dwell on the one which most corresponds to the forthcoming season of repentance.

"Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own transgressions and not to judge my brother." The source of forgiving our neighbors, of not judging them, is included in seeing (acknowledging) our sins. "Imagine," says a great pastor, who knows the heart of man, Saint John of Kronstadt, "picture the multitude of your sins and imagine how tolerant of them is the Master of your life, while you are unwilling to forgive your neighbor even the smallest offense. Moan and bewail your foolishness, and that obstruction within you will vanish like smoke, you will think more clearly, your heart will grow calm, and through this you will learn goodness, as if not you yourself had heard the reproaches and indignities, but some other person entirely, or a shadow of yourself." (Lessons on a Life of Grace, p. 149) He who admits his sinfulness, who through experience knows the weakness of human nature and its inclination toward evil, will forgive his neighbor the more swiftly, dismissing transgressions and refraining from a haughty judgment of others' sins. Let us remember that even the scribes and Pharisees who brought the woman caught in adultery to Christ were forced to depart, when their conscience spoke out, accusing them of their own sins. (John 8. 9)

Unfortunately, brethren, we do not like to acknowledge our transgressions. It would seem natural and easy for a person to know his own self, his own soul and his shortcomings. This, however, is actually not so. We are ready to attend to anything but a deeper understanding of ourselves, an investigation of our sins. We examine

various things with curiosity, we attentively study friends and strangers, but when faced with solitude without extraneous preoccupation even for a short while, we immediately become bored and attempt to seek amusement. For example, do we spend much time examining our own conscience even before confession? Perhaps a few minutes, and once a year at that. Casting a cursory glance at our soul, correcting some of its more glaring faults, we immediately cover it over with the veil of oblivion until next year, until our next uncomfortable exercise in boredom.

Yet we love to observe the sins of others. Not considering the beam in our own eye, we take notice of the mote in our brother's eye. (Matt. 7. 3) Speaking idly to our neighbor's detriment, mocking and criticizing him are not even often considered sins but rather an innocent and amusing pastime. As if our own sins were so few! As if we had been appointed to judge others! "There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy" ? God. (James 4. 12) "Who art thou to judge another's servant? It is before his own master that he stands or falls." (Rom. 14. 4) "Thou hast no excuse, O man, whoever thou art who judgest. For wherein thou judgest another, thou dost condemn thyself. For thou who judgest dost the same things thyself." (Rom. 2. 1) "Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith; put yourselves to the test." (2 Cor. 13. 5) The pious ascetics provide a good example of this. They turned their minds to themselves, meditated on their own sins and avoided judging their neighbors at all costs.

One pious starets, noticing that his brother had committed a sin, sighed and said, "Woe is me! As he sinned today, so will I tomorrow." And the following is a story about another ascetic, Abba Moisei. A monk committed a sin. The brethren, who had assembled to decide his case, sent for Abba Moisei, but the humble starets refused to attend the council. When the rector sent for him a second time, he appeared, but in quite a striking manner. He had taken an old basket, filled it with sand and was carrying it on his back. "What does this mean?" asked the monks, catching sight of him. "See how many sins I bear behind me?" answered Moisei, pointing to the heap of sand. "I don't see them, yet I have come to pass judgment upon another."

So therefore, brethren, following the example of the ascetics, upon observing others' sins, we should consider our own sins, regard our own transgressions and not judge our brother. And should we hold anything against him, let us pardon and forgive him, that our merciful Lord may forgive us also.

Saint Tikhon (Bellavin) Then Bishop of Alaska and the Aleutian Islands Later - Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia, 1901.

Lenten Homily by Father John Parker

Your pantries are full; empty them to the hungry.
The belly enslaves us, let no one be dominated thereby.
Enter all of you into the Great Fast;
Stripped of heavenly wealth by sin, all draw near to God's rich loving-kindness!
Let no one despair in his sinfulness,
For the Bridegroom comes at midnight.
Weep all of you for your iniquities,
And draw near to the life-giving Cross of our Lord.
Let no one put confidence in the flesh,
For the Devil has deceived us all thereby, and therewith enslaves us to sin.
By turning from God, we are made captives.
We have called good evil and evil good, and put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.
And Isaiah, foretelling this, did cry:
Woe to those who put darkness for light, and light for darkness!
We are embittered, for we are banned from Eden.
We are embittered, but it is we who have mocked God.
We are embittered, for now we shall surely die.
We are embittered, for we have succumbed to the serpent.
We are embittered, for we are fettered in chains.
We partook of a fruit, and met the deceiver.
We were entrusted with paradise, but we chose Hell.
Our eyes were opened to see the nakedness of sin.
Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver us!
O Lord, make haste to help us!
This is the acceptable time, let us repent!
This is the day of salvation, let us crucify the passions!
The end is at hand and destruction hangs over us!
The end draws nigh, let us come again to our senses!
The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, what first-fruit shall we offer?
Let us delay not, lest we remain dead in the grave, sold under sin!
For God desires not the death of the sinner, but that he should turn from his wickedness and live!
So, let us choose life, and live, for the mercy of God endures forever!
To Him be glory and dominion
Unto ages of ages. Amen.

FOR YOUR CALENDARS: TODAY Cheesefare Breakfast at Coffee Hour
March 9 Perohi filling making, 9 am
March 10 Pinching perohi, after Liturgy (10:30)
March 24 Great and Grand Pre-Pascha Church Cleaning 11 am
March 25 After Liturgy, Lenten breakfast