



## Forgiveness Sunday / Commemoration of the exile of Adam from Paradise (Cheesefare Sunday)

13 / 26 February

*The Sunday of Forgiveness is the last Sunday prior to the commencement of Great Lent. During the pre-Lenten period, the services of the Church include hymns from the Triodion, a liturgical book that contains the services from the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee, the tenth before Pascha, through Great and Holy Saturday. On the Sunday of Forgiveness focus is placed on the exile of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, and event that shows us how far we have fallen in sin and separated ourselves from God. At the onset of Great Lent and a period of intense fasting, this Sunday reminds us of our need for God's forgiveness and guides our hearts, minds, and spiritual efforts on returning to Him in repentance.*

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**Resurrection Tropar, Tone 4:** When the women disciples of the Lord / learned from the Angel the joyous message of Thy Resurrection / they cast away the ancestral curse / and elatedly told the Apostles / death is overcome / Christ God is risen / granting the world great mercy.

**Resurrection Kondak, Tone 4:** My Saviour and Redeemer / as God rose from the tomb and delivered the earth-born from their chains / He has shattered the gates of hell, / and as Master, / He has risen on the third day.

**Kondak to Cheese-fare Sunday, Tone 6:** O Thou guide unto wisdom, bestower of prudence, instructor of the foolish and defender of the poor: Establish and grant understanding unto my heart, O Master. Grant me speech, O Word of the Father; for behold, I shall not keep my lips from crying unto Thee: O Merciful One, have mercy on me who have fallen.

### Matins Gospel IV

**Epistle: St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans 13: 11 — 14: 4**

11. And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. 12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. 13 Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in licentiousness and lewdness, not in strife and envy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil its lusts.

**Romans 14:** 1 Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. 2 For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. 3 Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. 4 Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

### WHO ARE YOU TO JUDGE ANOTHER'S SERVANT?

Why do we usurp God's right to judge? ...It is for God alone to judge, to justify or to condemn. He knows the state of each one of us and our capacities, our deviations and our gifts, our constitution, and our preparedness ...according to the knowledge that He alone has ...And how do you know what tears he has shed about it before God? You may well know about the sin, but you do not know about the repentance.

*St. Dorotheos of Gaza. Discourse on Refusal to Judge our Neighbour. B#45, pp. 133,135.*

### The Gospel According To St. Matthew 6: 14 -21

14 The Lord said: if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. 16 Moreover, when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily, I say unto you, They have their reward. 17 But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face, 18 That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father, which is in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. 19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: 20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

## FORGIVENESS SUNDAY

This is the very beginning of Great Lent. For whatever we begin in life, we always compose some kind of plan of action, a program of what we have to accomplish and in what order. But here we don't have to do this; today's Gospel gives us this program. Earlier, the Holy Church was more often teaching us, but now she is requiring actions from us. Just let us examine the present Gospel attentively, and we will see how simple, how accessible for each of us, and at the same time, how comprehensive these rules are.

“For 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” (Mt. 6:14-15). Therefore, what is the real purpose of Great Lent? Here it is: so that our Heavenly Father will forgive us our sins. And how do we achieve this? Forgive people their sins. Let us start here with this. This is the very first thing.

Secondly, “moreover, when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance; for they disfigure their faces that they may appear unto men to fast.... But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret” (Mt. 6:16-18). And so let us fast, but not for the sake of people, but before God, and not despondently, but in spiritual happiness.

And thirdly, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth. . .but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven” (Mt. 6:19-20). This determines all our activities, gives direction to our whole life.

And finally, the last thing: “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Mt. 6:21). Here is the purpose of our life! That our heart be in God, filled with God, so that God will become our treasure. But to learn this is possible only in the Church. And this is so important for us that it is worth the labour, and the fasting, and standing longer in church, and praying more at home. For only then will we be able to cry out with joy: “Christ is Risen!” and to answer those greeting us: “In Truth He is Risen!”

### THE RITE OF FORGIVENESS

Brothers and sisters! What the Holy Church asks us to perform right now is no longer a thought or a feeling, but an action, a deed. Thoughts and feelings have been cultivated in us for the past weeks. In fact this is the way it always happens: thought gives birth to feeling, and feeling gives birth to action. And this action is of special importance. Listen: “If ye forgive not men...neither will your [Heavenly] Father forgive you” (Mt. 6:15). This means that our fasting and going to church and prostrations, in fact all our devotions, will be in vain.

That's how important this first step is. But it is not easy. To do it in words only, just for the sake of decency, for the sake of formality, might not be difficult. But what is the good of that? However, really to make this step, to recognise that we are worse than others, worse than everyone, truly guilty before everyone (and after all, this is how it is: each of us is guilty before everyone, in everything, and for everything), to come to this realisation is very, very difficult. And to consider the guilt of another before us as nothing, as if it did not exist, and maybe was even provoked by us—this is still more difficult. Even in the Lives of the

Saints we read examples of how great strivers and confessors were not able to do this, and thereby ruined everything. And even more for us sinners is the special help of God needed to forgive and to ask forgiveness sincerely, from our whole heart, to draw out of it our self-love, our self-justifying “I.” But we have to do this, the Lord requires it of us, the Lord is waiting. Without this effort within ourselves we cannot begin Lent. So let us ask for forgiveness and forgive from our whole heart. And here, as the first one, I ask you: Forgive me!

*The One Thing Needful - Archbishop Andrei.*

### Saints of the Week

**13 / 26 February — Our Holy Father Martinian** - The life of this saint is wonderful beyond measure and is worth reading in full. What did he not endure to fulfil the Law of God? At the age of eighteen, he went off into a mountain in Cappadocia called the Ark and there spent 25 years in fasting, vigils and prayer, and struggling with manifold temptations. When a woman came to tempt him and he saw that he would fall into sin with her, he leapt barefoot into the fire and stood in it until the pain brought forth tears from his eyes and he had killed all lust within himself. When other temptations arose, he fled to a lonely rock in the sea and lived there. When, though, in a shipwreck, a woman swam to the rock, he leapt into the sea intending to drown himself. But a dolphin took him upon its back and brought him, by God's providence, to the shore. He then decided to make nowhere his permanent home but to travel incessantly. Thus he passed through 164 towns in two years, exhorting and advising the people. He finally arrived in Athens, where he died in 422. Ss Zoa and Photinia; Our; Our Holy Father Simeon, the Outpourer of Myrrh; St. Modomnoc, bishop of Ossory (6th c.)

**14 / 27 February — St. Cyril, Equal-to-the-Apostles, Teacher of the Slavs** - brother of Methodius, originally from Salonica of eminent and wealthy parents, Leo and Maria. When the Khazarite king, Kagan, sought preachers of the Christian faith from the Emperor Michael, the Emperor commanded that these two brothers be found and sent to the Khazars. They converted Kagan and baptised him together with a great number of nobles and an even greater number of the people. After some time

they compiled a Slavic alphabet of 38 letters and began to translate the service books from Greek to Slavonic. At the invitation of Prince Rastislav they went to Moravia, where, with great devotion, they spread and confirmed the Faith. They went to Rome at the invitation of the Pope and Cyril fell ill and died there in 869. Our Holy Father Auxentius; Our Holy Father Isaac the Recluse of the Kiev Caves.

**15 / 28 February — Apostle Onesimus of the Seventy (ca 109)** - he was a slave of Philemon, a rich and distinguished citizen of Colossae in Phrygia. He offended his master in some way and fled to Rome, where he heard the Gospel from the Apostle Paul and was baptised. By this time, Paul had brought Philemon also to the true Faith, and he reconciled the two of them, Philemon and Onesimus, master and slave, writing a special epistle to Philemon—one of the most moving writings to be found in the New Testament: 'I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds . . . Perhaps he departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever, not now as a servant, but above a servant; a brother beloved.' Deeply moved by this letter, Philemon received Onesimus as a brother indeed and gave him his freedom. Onesimus was later made bishop and received the see of Ephesus after the death of the Apostle Timothy. This is recorded in the epistles of Ignatius the God-Bearer. At the time of the persecution under Trajan, Onesimus, by then an old man, was arrested and taken to Rome. There he testified before the judge Tertylus, was imprisoned and finally slain. A wealthy woman took his body, placed it in a silver coffin and buried it, in the year 109; Our Holy Father Eusebius; St. Oswy, king of Northumbria (670)

**16 February / 1 March — TWELVE HOLY MARTYRS WHO SUFFERED DURING THE REIGN OF EMPEROR DIOCLETIAN** - Pamphilus, the first of the martyrs, was a presbyter of the church at Caesarea in Palestine. He was a learned and devout man who corrected the text of the New Testament from the errors of the various copiers. He alone, recopied this salvific book and gave it to those who desired it. The second was the Deacon Valentine, old in years and grey in wisdom. He was an excellent authority of Holy Scripture and knew them completely by heart. The third was Paul, an honourable and distinguished man who, during a previous persecution, was cast into the fire for Christ. Besides them, there were five brothers, according to the flesh and spirit, who were born in Egypt and were returning to their homeland after being forced to work in the mines of Cilicia. At the gates of Caesarea they declared that they were Christians for which they were brought to court. To the question: "What are your names?" They responded: "The pagan names which our mother gave to us, we discarded and we call ourselves: Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Samuel and Daniel." To the question: "Where are you from?" They responded: "From Jerusalem on High." All of them were beheaded and with them a young man Porphyrius who sought the bodies of the martyrs in order to bury them. Porphyrius they burned alive as well as Seleucus, formerly an officer who had approached and kissed the martyrs before the sword fell on their heads. Also the aged Theodulus, a servant of a Roman judge, who, during the funeral kissed one of the martyrs. Finally Julian, who revered and praised the lifeless bodies of the martyrs. And so they gave little for much, the inexpensive for the precious and mortality for immortality and took up habitation with the Lord in the year 308 A.D. The Holy Venerable Martyr Roman – a simple and illiterate peasant from Carpenesio. Learning of the heroism and glory of the martyrs of Christ, the young Roman desired martyrdom for himself. He went to Thessalonica where he began to praise the Faith of Christ on the streets and referred Islam as a fable. The Turks tortured him horribly and then sold him to a galley captain. Christians ransomed him from the captain and sent him to the Holy Mountain [Athos] where he was tonsured a monk by the illustrious Elder Acacius. But Roman further desired martyrdom for Christ. With the blessing of the Elder Acacius, Roman traveled to Constantinople pretending insanity and began to lead a dog along the Turkish streets. To the question: "What are you doing?" Roman responded that he is feeding the dog as Christians feed the Turks. The Turks threw him into a dry well, where he remained without bread for forty days. They then removed him from the well and beheaded him. A light emanated from his body for three days. An Englishman removed his body and took it to England. A certain monk dipped a towel in the blood of the martyr. This towel is preserved, even today, in the Dochiariu Monastery [Mt. Athos]. This glorious soldier of Christ suffered in the year 1694 A.D.

**17 February / 2 March — St. Theodore the Tyro** - 'Tyro' means 'Recruit'. No sooner had St Theodore entered the Marmarite regiment of the army in the town of Amasea than a persecution of Christians broke out under the Emperors Maximian and Maximinus. Theodore did not attempt to conceal that he was a Christian, and was brought to trial and imprisoned in a prison that was then locked and sealed. The wicked judge intended him to die of hunger, but the Lord Christ Himself appeared to Theodore in the prison and encouraged His martyr with these words: 'Fear not, Theodore; I am with thee. Take no more earthly food and drink, for thou shalt be in the other life, eternal and unending, with Me in heaven.' Then a multitude of angels appeared in the prison, and the whole place shone with light. The warders on duty saw the angels in white apparel and were filled with fear. Then St Theodore was taken out, tortured and condemned to death. He was thrown into fire, and gave his soul to the most high God. He suffered in 306. Our Holy Fathers Theodosius the Bulgarian and Romanus; St Mariamna (Maria); **St. Finan, bishop of Lindisfarne** - Irish by birth, St. Finan of Lindisfarne became a monk at Iona and upheld the Celtic traditions against the encroachment of Roman usage. Finan baptised Penda, ruler of the Middle Angles, and Sigebert, ruler of Essex. Elected bishop of Lindisfarne in 651, Finan sent missionaries to Mercia and to Essex. He also debated Ronan, an Englishman, about the correct way to calculate the date of Easter. On the Holy Island, he built a wooden cathedral, the roof of which was thatched with seagrass. (A later abbot removed the thatching and covered the building with lead). Finan died in 661, and St. Cuthbert succeeded him as abbot.

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**February / 3 March — The "Holy Night" of Russian Monasticism.** The 'Holy Night', so called by the people, was on the night of the 17-18 February, 1932. It is a radiant yet terrible date, the Passion Friday of Russian Monasticism - ignored by all and almost unknown to the whole world - when all of Russian monasticism in a single night disappeared in to the concentration camps. It was all done in the dead of night and with the full knowledge of Metropolitan Alexis (later appointed Patriarch Alexis I of Moscow under the Communists) - about which there is sufficient evidence. In Leningrad there were arrested: 40 monks of the St Alexander Nevsky Lavra; 12 monks of the Kiev metochion (the other monks had all been arrested

in 1930); 10 monks from the Valaam metochion; 90 nuns of the Novodevichi Convent; 16 nuns of Abbess Taisia's Leushinsky metochion; 12 monks from St Theodore's Cathedral; 8 monks from the "Kinovia" of the St Alexander Nevsky Lavra's "Big Okhotko"; a hundred or so monastics from various other Leningrad churches. In all - 318 people. That same night all the monks and brethren of the St Macarius the Roman Monastery were arrested and brought to Leningrad as vicious criminals whose very presence was a threat to society; they were treated as deadly insects whose presence must be stamped out. The wave of arrests, like thunder, rolled over the Russian land, striking chiefly the monastic population which so recently had been the glorious guardian of the nation's morals and values. It also struck many of the white (parish) clergy and laymen who, in one way or another, were close in spirit to monasticism. For example, the flaming sermons of the parish priest Father Alexander Medvedsky were the cause of his arrest. All were sent to the Kazakhstan region from where almost no one ever returned.

**Papa-Nicholas Planas** - was born on the island of Naxos, the only son of a well-to-do family. He moved to Athens with his mother and sister at the age of 14 following the death of his father. He married at the age of 17, but his wife died giving birth to their first child. Soon afterwards, in 1879, he was ordained a deacon, and five years later, a priest. For fifty years without a break he celebrated liturgy daily from eight in the morning till three in the afternoon. His joy and his life was to celebrate Liturgies, Vigils, Vespers, Canons, Blessings of the Waters, Holy Unction, and Memorial Services. Many times he would say with simplicity, "I will chant unto the Lord for as long as I have my being". He was a great faster, eating only once a day, in the evenings. He would commemorate names for hours on end - sometimes 2000 at a time. First deceased patriarchs, metropolitans, priests, deacons, monastics, and the people of Naxos & Athens. He would tie the lists of names into a big bundle and carry them close to his heart. He was patient & long-suffering, enduring all manner of trials and insults. He quietly observed the Old Calendar and the ways of True Orthodox Christianity. He had no attachment to earthly things, and passed his whole life without acquiring anything. There were many miraculous occurrences during his life, as those close to him have testified, and there are many reports of healings through his prayers and contact with his relics after his repose. He reposed in February 1932 at the age of 81, following a short illness. He shines forth as one of the great saints of the 20th Century. Holy Papa-Nicholas, pray for us!

Tropar of Papa-Nicholas Planas, Tone 5: Let us praise our protector, the godly Nicholas; as one endowed with blest virtue, he shone forth as a true priest of the Most High God, and was his fervent worshipper. For, by his holy life on earth, he hath left us most sublime, divine and unailing teachings of long suffering, meekness, patience, unfeigned humility and true God-like love.

Kondak of Papa-Nicholas Planas, Tone 3: Humble of spirit and pure of heart, illustrious in life and dispassionate of a truth, wast thou, O wise one. Thou didst illumine all by thy virtues and dost grant grace unto them that draw nigh unto thee; and by thine intercessions, thou dost heal them that call upon thee, O Father Nicholas. St Leo the First, Pope of Rome; St Flavian;

**St. Colman, bishop of Lindisfarne** - An Irish bishop of Lindisfarne, England, a disciple of St. Columba. He was born in Connaught, Ireland. At the Synod of Whitby Colman defended the Celtic ecclesiastical practices against St. Wilfrid and St. Agilbert.

## A Homily for the Beginning of Lent

As the Lenten season begins, Fr. Tom Hopko reads a [brief sermon penned by Fr. John Parker](#) of Holy Ascension Orthodox Church in Mt. Pleasant, SC. This sermon was written in the style and tradition of St. John Chrysostom's well known and loved Paschal Homily.

In the Orthodox Church, there are some churches, particularly I know Russian churches that I was raised in, at the end of the Great Vespers service on Forgiveness Sunday night that formally begins, commences, the Great Lenten season, the beginning of Great Lent. There is a custom that, while the people are asking and giving forgiveness to each other—each person asks forgiveness of every other person and receives forgiveness from the other person—so that the Lenten season can begin in peace... And of course forgiveness is foundational: God forgives us. He commands us to forgive one another as he has forgiven us. Every day we pray several times, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us" or "Forgive our debts, loose our debts, as we loose our debtors." This is in the Lord's prayer. And then even on Pascha night, on the celebration of the Resurrection of Christ, one of the central Paschal hymns says, "Let us say, brothers, even to those who hate us, and in the Resurrection forgive all things. Forgive all things in the Resurrection."

So the Forgiveness Sunday marks the beginning of Great Lent, but at that service of forgiveness, when Lent begins, as I just mentioned, there is a custom to sing the Paschal hymns, to actually sing the Paschal canon, sing the Paschal verses, sing the Paschal troparion, "Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life," to sing that at the beginning of Great Lent. Actually, it's interesting: it's not done in our churches, but it's interesting that from the middle of Lent to the end, from the Sunday of the Cross to the end, the Paschal canon odes are actually sung already during the Lenten season to inspire us, encourage us, exhort us to carry on to the end in our Lenten effort.

Now this year a friend of mine, Fr. John Parker, who's the pastor of the Church of the Ascension of Christ, Holy Ascension Church in Charleston, South Carolina, that Fr. Parker sent me a very creative homily that he wrote for Forgiveness Sunday, for the beginning of Great Lent, that is patterned after the Paschal homily of St. John Chrysostom that is read on Pascha night, at the Divine Liturgy on holy Pascha. It is the custom in the Orthodox Church in recent centuries that at the Divine Liturgy, the holy eucharistic service on Easter, on the feast of the Resurrection of Christ, the holy Pascha, that the bishop or the priest doesn't give his own homily, but reads the homily of St. John Chrysostom, the Paschal homily. Well, Fr. John Parker took this

Paschal homily of St. John Chrysostom, and he wrote a homily for the beginning of Great Lent, that when we start off this season of fasting, moving toward the holy Pascha, he made a homily patterned exactly after the Paschal homily of St. John Chrysostom to be used at the beginning.

So I thought I would share this with those who listen to Ancient Faith Radio. It is really very inspiring and very moving, very instructive, and so what I will do now: I will read the homily of St. John Chrysostom that is read on Pascha, the Paschal homily of St. John Chrysostom. First I will read that, and then when I finish I will read the homily for the beginning of Great Lent that Fr. John Parker wrote that patterns St. Chrysostom's homily for Pascha.

### **The Paschal Homily of St. John Chrysostom**

If anyone be devout and loves of God,  
Let him enjoy this fair and radiant triumphal feast.  
If anyone be a wise servant,  
Let him, rejoicing, enter into the joy of his Lord.  
If any have labored long in fasting,  
Let him now receive his recompense.

If any has worked from the very first hour,  
Let him today receive his just reward.  
If any have come at the third hour,  
Let him with thankfulness keep the feast.  
If any have arrived at the sixth hour,  
Let him have no misgivings; because he shall in nowise be deprived thereof.  
If any have delayed until the ninth hour,  
Let him draw near, fearing nothing.  
If any have waited and tarried even until the eleventh hour,  
Let him also be not alarmed at his tardiness;

For the Lord, who is jealous of his honor, will accept the last even as the first;  
He gives rest unto him who comes at the eleventh hour, even as unto him who has worked from the first hour.  
And he shows mercy upon the last,  
And cares for the first;  
And to the one he gives,  
And upon the other he bestows gifts.  
And he both accepts the deeds,  
And welcomes the intention,  
And honors the acts and praises the offering.

Wherefore, enter ye all into the joy of your Lord;  
And receive your reward, both the first, and likewise the second.

You rich and poor together, hold high festival.  
You sober and you heedless, honor the day.  
Rejoice today, both you who have fasted and you who have disregarded the fast.  
The table is fully laden; feast ye all sumptuously.  
The calf is fatted; let no one go hungry away.  
Enjoy ye all the feast of faith:  
Receive ye all the riches of loving-kindness.  
Let no one bewail his poverty,  
For the universal kingdom has been revealed.  
Let no one weep for his iniquities,  
For pardon has shown forth from the grave.  
Let no one fear death,  
For the Savior's death has set us free.  
He that was held prisoner of it has destroyed it.

By descending into Sheol, He made Sheol captive.  
He embittered it when it tasted of His flesh.  
And Isaiah, foretelling this, did cry:  
Hades, said he, was embittered, when it encountered You in the lower regions.

Hades was embittered, for it was abolished.  
It was embittered, for it was mocked.

It was embittered, for it was slain.  
It was embittered, for it was overthrown.  
It was embittered, for it was fettered in chains.  
Hades took a body, and met God face to face.  
It took earth, [and] encountered Heaven. It took that which was seen, and fell upon the unseen.

O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?  
Christ is risen, and you are overthrown.  
Christ is risen, and the demons are fallen.  
Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice.  
Christ is risen, and life reigns.  
Christ is risen, and not one dead remains in the grave.  
For Christ, being risen from the dead, is become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.  
To Him be glory and dominion unto ages of ages. Amen.

And so Fr. John Parker, knowing this wonderful Paschal homily of St. John Chrysostom, he wrote one following it, in its pattern, in its style, to be proclaimed at the beginning of the Great Lenten season. Let us now listen to what Fr. John has written.

If anyone be devout and love God,  
Let him commence this radiant fast with joy!  
If anyone be a wise servant,  
Let him, rejoicing, enter now into the school of repentance.

We who have wallowed long in sin,  
Let us now begin our return.  
If anyone has strayed from the first hour,  
Let him today repent with zeal.  
If anyone has sinned from the third hour,  
Let him with gratitude embrace the fast.  
If anyone has fled God from the sixth hour,  
Let him have no misgivings about his prompt return;  
Because he shall in nowise be turned away therefrom.  
If anyone has indulged the flesh since the ninth hour,  
Let him draw near, fearing God alone and trusting in His mercy.  
And if anyone has turned away only at the eleventh hour,  
Let him also not hesitate to turn back with haste.

For the Lord, who is longsuffering and full of compassion and mercy, will accept the last even as the first.  
He restores him who repents at the first hour,  
As He does him who turns back at the eleventh.  
And He shows mercy upon the last,  
And He cares for the first;  
And to the one He gives,  
And upon the other He bestows gifts.  
And He both accepts the confession,  
And welcomes the intention,  
And honors the contrite heart and rejoices in the return.

Wherefore, enter all of you into the holiness of your Lord;  
Offer your repentance,  
Both the last, and likewise the first.  
You rich and poor together, repent, for today we stand outside the closed gates of paradise.  
You sober and you heedless, prostrate yourselves before your King!  
Return to the Lord today, both you who have sinned with knowledge and you who have done so in ignorance.

Your pantries are full; empty them to the hungry.  
The belly enslaves us, let no one be dominated by it.  
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 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, for 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 we 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 near; 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.

Thank you, Fr. John, for your beautiful words to begin the Great Lenten season. A blessed, peaceful, fruitful Lenten fast to you all.

*The text above is taken from a transcript of an Ancient Faith broadcast by Fr Thomas Hopko, of blessed memory, on February 13, 2010 and can be heard at this link [https://www.ancientfaith.com/podcasts/hopko/a\\_homily\\_for\\_the\\_beginning\\_of\\_lent](https://www.ancientfaith.com/podcasts/hopko/a_homily_for_the_beginning_of_lent)*

Available on the net at <http://www.saintjonah.org/bltn/> or at <http://www.roq.org.au/bulletins.html> where you can subscribe to the email list.