

REGRETS: USTAV NOT AVAILABLE

FEBRUARY 26 CHEESEFARE SUNDAY/ НЕДІЛЯ СИРОПУСНА



The Fourth Sunday of the Triodion Period: Sunday of Forgiveness (Cheesefare Sunday)

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 (Easter), 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, an 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.

The Sunday of Forgiveness is also known as Cheesefare Sunday. This is the last day that dairy products can be eaten before the Lenten fast. The full fast begins the following day on Clean Monday, the first day of Great Lent. On the evening of the Sunday of Forgiveness the Church conducts the first service of Great Lent, the Vespers of Forgiveness, a service that directs us further on the path of repentance and helps us to acknowledge our need for forgiveness from God and to seek forgiveness from our brothers and sisters in Christ. This is the first time that the Lenten prayer of St. Ephraim accompanied by prostrations is read. At the end of the service all the faithful approach the priest and one another asking for mutual forgiveness.

The first day of Lent, Clean Monday, signifies the beginning of a period of cleansing and purification of sins through repentance.

<http://lent.goarch.org/forgiveness/learn/>

EPISTLE

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 armor of light. ¹³ Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to *fulfill its* lusts.

¹⁴ 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.

GOSPEL

Matthew 6: 14-21

¹⁶ "Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. ¹⁷ But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

¹⁹ "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Questions on Forgiveness Sunday http://www.orthodox.net/questions/forgiveness_sunday_1.html

Q: Why Is Forgiveness Sunday so-called?

A: St Tikhon answers this question quite well:

"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)" (From a sermon by St Patriarch Tikhon, when he was Bishop of Alaska and the Aleutian Islands. 1901)

Q: What event is commemorated on Forgiveness Sunday?

A: On the last Sunday before Great Lent begins, we remember the expulsion of Adam and Eve from paradise.

Adam was banished from Paradise through disobedience / and cast out from delight, / beguiled by the words of a woman. / Naked he sat outside the garden, lamenting 'Woe is me!' / Therefore let us all make haste to accept the season of the Fast / and hearken to the teaching of the Gospel, / that we may gain Christ's mercy // and receive once more a dwelling-place in Paradise.
(Sticheron from Lord I have cried, 6th tone, Forgiveness Sunday)

Q: The last weekend before Great Lent is the last time we do several things. Can you think of three things that are not done again until after Great Lent (or even well after Pascha)?

A: Forgiveness Sunday is the last day in which we eat milk, cheese, eggs and other dairy products until Pascha.

It is also the last Sunday we will serve St. John Chrysostom's liturgy until Palm Sunday (which, by the way, is not considered to be in Great Lent). During the holy fast, St Basil's liturgy is served on Sundays.

The matins service for this weekend is the last time the theologically rich and compunctionate singing of "By the Waters of Babylon" psalm until next year. It is only sung in church the three Sundays that precede Great Lent.

Q: Fasting is discussed in the services on Forgiveness Sunday, and all the days of Great Lent. What *most important* kind of fasting is stressed over and over?

A: The services of the church and the fathers stress over and over that our physical fast from food is useless if we do not also strive to "fast" from our iniquities. Fasting from food is an important aid to the help purify the soul, and to gain in virtue.

The season of the virtues now has come / and the Judge is at the door. / Let us not hold back with darkened face, / but let us keep the Fast, / offering tears, contrition and almsgiving; / and let us cry: / 'Our sins are more in number than the sand of the sea; / but, Deliverer of all, forgive each one of us, // that we may receive an incorruptible crown.' (Sessional Hymns after the 1st Psalter Reading)

TRADITIONS

Masnytsia (Масниця) also known as **Butter Week**, **Crepe week**, or **Cheesefare Week**) is an Eastern Slavic religious and folk holiday, celebrated during the last week before Great Lent, that is, the eighth week before Eastern Orthodox Pascha (Easter).

According to archeological evidence from 2nd century A.D. Masnytsia may be the oldest surviving Slavic holiday. Masnytsia has its origins in the pagan tradition. In Slavic mythology, Masnytsia is a sun-festival, personified by the ancient god Volos, and a celebration of the imminent end of the winter

During the week of Masnytsia meat is already forbidden to Orthodox Christians, and it is the last week during which eggs, milk, cheese and other dairy products are permitted, leading to its name of "Cheese-fare week" or "Crepe week". The most characteristic food of Masnytsia is thin pancakes or crepes, made from the rich foods still allowed by the Orthodox tradition that week: butter, eggs and milk.

Since Lent excludes parties, secular music, dancing and other distractions from spiritual life, Masnytsia represents the last chance to take part in social activities that are not appropriate during the more prayerful, sober and introspective Lenten season.

In some regions, each day of Masnytsia had its traditional activity. Monday may be the welcoming of "Lady Maslenitsa". The community builds the Masnytsia effigy out of straw, decorated with pieces of rags, and fixed to a pole formerly known as Kostroma. It is paraded around and the first pancakes may be made and offered to the poor. On Tuesday, young men might search for a fiancée to marry after Lent. On Wednesday sons-in-law may visit their mother-in-law who has prepared pancakes and invited other guests for a party. Thursday may be devoted to outdoor activities. People may take off work and spend the day sledding, ice skating, snowball fights and with sleigh rides. On Friday sons-in-law may invite their mothers-in-law for dinner. Saturday may be a gathering of a young wife with her sisters-in-law to work on a good relationship.

As the culmination of the celebration people gather to "strip Lady Masnytsia of her finery" and burn her in a bonfire. Left-over pancakes may also be thrown into the fire and Lady Masnytsia's ashes are buried in the snow to "fertilize the crops". <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslenitsa>

