



PARISH BULLETIN

HOLY ARCHANGHEL MICHAEL'S ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

No. **51** / 26 February 2017



Forgiveness Sunday or the Expulsion of Adam from the Paradise of Bliss

Kontakion, tone 6:

O Lord, Who art the guide to wisdom, the bestower of prudence, the instructor of the thoughtless, and the protector of the poor, strengthen and enlighten my heart.

Give me the gift of expression, O Thou Who art the Word of the Father;

for behold I will not prevent my lips from crying to Thee:

O Merciful Lord, have mercy on me who have fallen.

Forgiveness Sunday , but whose other liturgical name must also be remembered: the *Expulsion of Adam from the Paradise of Bliss*. This name summarizes indeed the entire preparation for Lent. By now we know that man was created for paradise, for knowledge of God and communion with Him. Man's sin has deprived him of that blessed life and his existence on earth is exile. Christ, the Savior of the world, opens the door of paradise to everyone who follows Him, and the Church, by revealing to us the beauty of Kingdom, makes our life a pilgrimage toward our heavenly fatherland. Thus, at the beginning of Lent, we are like Adam:

Adam was expelled from paradise through food:

Sitting, therefore, in front of it he cried:
Woe to me...

One commandment of God have I transgressed,

Depriving myself of all that is good;

Paradise holy! Planted for me,

And now because of Eve closed to me:

Pray to thy Creator and mine

*That I may be filled again ny thy blossom.
Then answered the Savior to him:
I wish not my creation to perish;
I desie it to be saved and to know the Truth:
For I will not turn away him who comes to
Me..."*

Lent is the liberation of our enslavement to sin, from the prison of „this world“. And the Gospel lesson of this last Sunday (Matt. 6:14-21) sets the conditions for that *liberation*. The first one is *fasting* – the refusal to accept the desires and urges of our fallen nature as normal, the effort to free ourselves from the dictatorship of flesh and matter over the spirit. To be effective, however, our fast must not be hypocritical, a showing off. We must appear not unto men to fast but to our Father who is in secret. The second condition is *forgiveness* – If you forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. The triumph of sin, the main sign of its rule over the world, is division, opposition, separation, hatred. Therefore, the first break through this fortress of sin is forgiveness: the return to unity, solidarity, love. To forgive is to put between me and my „enemy“ the radiant forgiveness of God Himself. To forgive is to reject the hopeless „dead-ends“ of human relations and to refer them to Christ. Forgiveness is truly a „breakthrough“ of Kingdom into this sinful and fallen world.

Source: <http://lent.goarch.org/judgement/learn/>;
(<http://holycrossoca.org/orthodoxy/lent/dlastjudg>)

Great Canon of St. Andrew

“Canon ..it can best be described as a penitential lamentation conveying to us the scope and depth of sin, shaking the soul with despair, repentance, and hope. With a unique art, St. Andrew interwove the great biblical themes – Adam and Eve, Paradise and Fall, the Patriarchs Noah and the Flood, David, the Promised Land , and the ultimately Christ and the Church – with confession of sin and repentance. The events of sacred history are revealed as events of my life, God’s acts in the past as acts aimed at me and my salvation, the tragedy of sin and betrayal as my personal tragedy.

The Canons begins on this deeply personal note:

*Where shall I begin to weep over the
cursed deeds of my life? What foundation
shall I lay, Christ, for this lamentation?*

One after another, my sins are revealed in their deep connection with the continuous drama of men’s relation to God; the story of man’s fall is my story:

*I have made mine the crime of Adam; I
know myself deprived of God, of the
eternal Kingdom and of bliss because of
my sins.....*

I have lost all divine gifts:

*I have defiled the vestment of my body,
obscured the image and likeness of God...*

*I have darkened the beauty of my soul; I
have torn my first vestment woven for me
by the Creator and I am naked....*

... repentance as regret coming from the ultimate depth of man’s consciousness; as the desire to return; as

surrender to God's love and mercy. This is why it is not enough to say: I have sinned. This confession becomes meaningful and efficient only if sin is understood and experienced in all its depth and sadness.

"...It is precisely the function and the purpose of the Great Canon to reveal sin to us and to lead us thus to repentance, and it reveals sin not by definitions and enumerations but by deep meditation on the great biblical story which is indeed the story of sin, repentance, and forgiveness...."

Lenten Prayer of St. Ephrem

O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of sloth, despair, lust of power, and idle talk. (one prostration)

But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to Thy servant. (one prostration)

Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own transgressions, and not to judge my brother, for blessed art Thou, unto ages of ages. Amen. (one prostration)

This prayer is read twice at the end of each lenten service Monday through Friday (not on Saturdays and Sundays for, as we shall see later, the services of these days do not follow the lenten pattern). At the first reading, a prostration follows each petition. Then we all bow twelve times saying: „O God, cleanse me a sinner." The entire prayer is repeated with one final prostration at the end...Here, however, their meaning is disclosed best of all. ..the Church does not separate the soul from

the body. The whole man has fallen away from God; the whole man is to be restored...Salvation and repentance then are not contempt for the body to its real function...Christian ascetism is a *fight*, not *against* but *for* the body. For this reason the whole man-soul and body – repents. The body participates in the prayer of the soul just as the soul prays through and in the body. Prostrations, the „*psycho-somatic*" sign of repentance and humility,...are thus the lenten rite *par excellence*.

Why does this short prayer occupy such an important position in the entire lenten worship? Because it enumerates in a unique way all the *negative* and *positive* elements of repentance and constitutes, so to speak, a „*check list*" for our individual lenten effort. This effort is aimed first at our liberation from some fundamental spiritual diseases which shape our life and make it virtually impossible for us even to start turning ourselves to God.

The basic disease is sloth. It is that strange laziness and passivity of our entire being which always pushes us „down" rather than "up" – which constantly convinces us that no change is possible and therefore desirable. It is in fact a deeply rooted cynicism which to every spiritual challenge responds „what for"? and makes our life one tremendous spiritual waste. It is the root of all sin because it poisons the spiritual energy at its very source.

The result of *sloth* is *faint-heartedness*. It is the state of despondency which all spiritual Fathers considered the greatest danger for the soul. Despondency is the impossibility for man to see anything good or positive... It is truly a demonic

power in us because the Devil is fundamentally a liar. He lies to man about God and about the world: he fills life with darkness and negation.

Source: *Great Lent* by Alexander Schmemmann



Liturgical Schedule

Sunday <i>February, 26</i>	6:00pm	Vespers
Monday <i>February, 27</i>	6:00pm	Great Canon of St. Andrew
Tuesday <i>February, 28</i>	6:00pm	Great Canon of St. Andrew
Wednesday <i>March, 1</i>	6:00pm 8:00pm	Presanctified Liturgy, Albanian Church Great Canon of St. Andrew
Thursday <i>March, 2</i>	6:00pm	Great Canon of St. Andrew
Friday <i>March, 3</i>		
Saturday <i>March, 4</i>	8.30am 5:00pm	Divine Liturgy and Memorial Service Vespers
Sunday <i>March, 5</i>	9:00am 10:00am	Matins Divine Liturgy

Announcements:

- This Sunday is called *also* ***Cheese-Fare Sunday***, it is the last day that dairy products and eggs can be eaten prior to the commencement of Great Lent.
- House blessing and **confession** upon request
- March 2, **Community meal**
- **Happy birthday** for all those born in March: Vick (1), Ruth Yanka (5), Destiny (8), Susan Brogan (10), Camelia (10), Nancy (26), Tom Andreea (13), Debby Yanka (13), Nick (14).

