

May we all take advantage  
of the wonderful opportunity  
for healing that the Church  
provides for us during



The Great Fast

# Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Cheesefare Sunday

March 17, 2013

Father Robert E Lucas, Pastor; Subdeacon Daniel J. Korba and Nikitas Tsokris, Cantors      Rectory 215-862-9227; Parish Center 732-780-3158

## We Are A Stewardship Parish Of Time, Talent and Treasure

The mission of our parish faith community is to teach the Gospel message in the rich tradition of the Orthodox Church; to enable people to reflect the image of Jesus Christ in every day activities of life; to offer spiritual formation through changing times; and to celebrate community among Orthodox believers in our Freehold area.

We of St. Paul the Apostle Parish dedicate ourselves to maintaining the sanctity of worship and spiritual enlightenment in a family environment that reaches and involves all ages and unifies all people.

We believe in the spirit of ecumenism in which we share our faith by word and example and extend our spiritual insights to all people.

We accept the responsibility of Christian Stewardship that through generous giving we may all experience a faith communion with Christ as the Center of our lives.

We dedicate ourselves to insuring the well-being of all people so that we may truly experience the message of Christ's salutary gospel.

We are a beacon on a hill with the eyes of many upon us; that beacon is the inspired Light of Christ which must shine brightly in our lives.

*It is not ourselves we preach but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts, that we in turn might make known the glory of God shining on the face of Christ. This treasure we possess in earthen vessels to make it clear that its surpassing power comes from God and not from us. We are afflicted in every way possible, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in us 2 Corinthians 4: 5 – 8.*

## GLAD TIDINGS

+++      **The Great Fast begins tomorrow. It is a day of strict fast which means no meat or dairy products are to be consumed. Please observe the fasting prescriptions of the Church during this entire period.**

+++      **On Monday evening, the first day of the Great Fast, we will have an Akathist Service to the Passion of our Saviour to set the tone for the penitential season. Please join us in prayer at 7: 30 PM.**

+++ Please keep the intentions of these members of our parish intercession community in your daily prayers: Anna, Ryan, Betty, Mary, Beth, Ann Helene, Debra and Michael.

+++ The sign-up sheet for both the Web Site and Bulletin sponsors is on the bulletin board in the kitchen. Please sign up as soon as possible. Do NOT make payment until your sign-up month has arrived. This will make it easier for Father to keep track of payments. Thanks in advance to all who support the parish in this way.

+++ We offer thanks to the Blessed Trinity for inspiring generosity in the souls of our faithful and the blessing of abundant grace in our midst with the offering received last Sunday: Tithe Offering, \$286.00; Candles, \$15.00; Holly Day, \$25.00; Self Sacrifice Great Fast Offering, \$25.00, for a total of \$351.00. We express our profound gratitude to the parishioner communicants who offer their God-given treasure and labored for the sake of the Lord and the good of our parish. God bless and reward you good and faithful souls! The attendance was 44 adults and 13 children last Sunday.

+++ As faithful believers, we intercede and associate ourselves in prayer with the following who have prayed and offered seven day lights for their intentions: Father Lucas, Pani Lucas, Eleni Pallas, Anna Zacharyczuk, Marilyn Korba, Eleanor Korba, Robert Gorbich, Michael George, Maria Garcia and Pani Buletza.

+++ We make a **PENNIES FROM HEAVEN** Canister available for our faithful to bring in pennies for our altar and its appointments. We are already in receipt of **\$1694.00** from this apostolate. Even your pennies can help and are a blessing to our parish.

+++ Please be certain to see a member of the Parish Council if you would like to help our parish by using **Shop Rite Food Coupons** available in \$20.00 denominations. We invite **ALL** to be caring and supportive and use Grocery Coupons for food shopping as we have gratefully realized \$5550.00 on this project to date!

+++ **The Clothing Drive is a permanent on-going project in our parish. Please bring any type of clothing and fabrics along with stuffed animals and shoes for the benefit of our parish. The bags can be left in the vestibule or on the front porch of the rectory. Please invite your friends and neighbors to assist us in disposing of unwanted clothing, shoes and fabrics.**

+++ **The Luncheon prior to the Great Fast is held today after the Divine Liturgy and will be followed by Forgiveness Vespers.**

+++ **Please pray the Lord our God grants us an enrichment of our spiritual lives for his glory.**

+++ **The next Pirohi Sale will be Saturday, April 13. Preparations will be made Thursday morning before at 7:00 AM. Please secure orders by preceding Wednesday.**

+++ May all glory, adoration and worship be accorded our God in the Holy Trinity by all the faithful of our parish with one mind, one soul and one heart each day of the week!



## The Old Country Priest says...

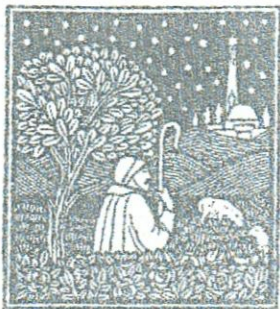
Our values develop and form our character and our character creates our destiny. When we are out of touch with our values, **We are blown about like autumn leaves without stability**, caught up in mindless routines and pursuits. But when we affirm our guiding values and live them, our lives are inspired by our deepest Orthodox beliefs.

*You know when I sit down and when I get up.*

*You know my thoughts before I think them.*

*You know where I go and where I lie down.*

*You know thoroughly everything I do.* PSALM 139:2-3



Perhaps the reason that God doesn't always give us the answer to the *whys* of our existence is that he knows we haven't got the capacity to understand the answer. In learning to depend on God, we must accept that we may not know all the answers, but we know *who* knows the answers.

*If anyone gives even a cup of cold water, he will certainly not lose his reward*  
Matthew 10: 42.

"What shall I do? I expect to pass through this world but once. Therefore any good work, kindness, or service I can render to any person or animal, let me do it now. Let me not neglect or delay to do it, for I will not pass this away again."

It's not the thing you do, dear,  
it's the thing you leave undone,  
that gives you the bitter heartache  
at the setting of the sun.  
The tender word unspoken,  
the letter you did not write,  
the flower you might have sent, dear,  
are your haunting ghosts at night.  
The stone you might have lifted,  
out of your brother's way,  
the bit of heartfelt counsel  
you were hurried too much to say;  
the loving touch of the hand, dear,  
the gentle and winsome tone,  
that you had not time or thought for,  
with troubles enough of your own.  
These little acts of kindness,  
so easily out of mind,  
these chances to be angels  
which even mortals find.  
They come in nights of silence,  
to take away the grief,  
when hope is faint and feeble,  
and a drought has stopped belief.  
For life is all too short, dear,  
and sorrow is all too great,  
to allow our slow compassion  
that tarries until too late,  
and it's not the thing you do, dear,  
it's the thing you leave undone,  
that gives you the bitter heartache  
at the setting of the sun.

Give what you have, for you never know, to someone else, it may be better than you can even dare to think.

## The Great Fast

For many it is not possible to go to church daily during the Great Fast. What then is our participation during this sacred time? How can we spiritually profit through the Great Fast? We may spiritually benefit from this holy time by doing the following:

**FASTING** helps the faithful believer exercise more self-control and helps to prepare for the sacramental encounter with Christ in the Holy Eucharist. It is because Adam and Eve failed to fast in the Garden of Eden that sin was introduced into the world. Now it is possible to overcome that separation which was a result of their missing the mark. Christ fasted and taught us to fast. Blessed fasting is done in secret, self imposed, without ostentation. (Matthew 6: 16; Romans 14).

*Let us fast with a fast pleasing to the Lord. This the true fast: the casting off of evil, the bridling of the tongue, the cutting off of anger, the cessation of lust, evil talking, lies and cursing. The stopping of these is the fast true and acceptable* Vespers, Monday of first Week of Great Fast.

**PRAYER** should be increased and deepened during this holy period. The simplest way to do this is to add the prayer of St. Ephrem the Syrian to our private morning and evening devotions. Set certain hours of the day for short prayer. This can take place while operating a vehicle of travel, in between chores at the office, as you walk or negotiate the elevator in your place of work. It is important to remember that we are in this precious time which ought to be spiritually focused on its final goal: closer enriched contact with our God.

**SPIRITUAL READING** should preoccupy us and we might develop an interest in the official prayer of the Church in daily Vespers and Matins. Thus we can progress spiritually into the wealth of worship of the Great Fast. Reading may begin with the book of Genesis as a reminder and incentive to repair for our individual selves the separation made by the first sin. In reading the Psalms, we see true repentance, a thirst for communion with God. Then again, we might borrow a religious book such as the *Lives of the Saints*, the history of the Church or one of many books on Orthodox spirituality which take us from our daily life into a higher level of interest and feed us with ideas and facts that are usually absent from our practical and efficient world.

**CHANGE OF LIFE STYLE** ought to obviate also to slow down in our scheduling so that more emphasis is placed on the spiritual needs of our body and soul. We must attempt to return quietness, silence, contemplation and meditation to our way of life. Cut down to a minimum radio, television and social gatherings and concentrate on a living daily relationship with God, His Blessed Mother and all the saints, particularly our patron saint. We do not lessen the amount of worldly things because they are necessarily bad, but rather because we choose to invest more time in the values of the soul. It is impossible to do this without a change in lifestyle. We must concentrate and discipline ourselves as we

evaluate our life in the light of faith commitment to Christ. This does require a real effort and special discipline.

### **Venerable Ephrem The Syrian**

St. Ephrem was born in Syria of poor parents during the reign of St. Constantine the Great. He spent his young life rather tempestuously, but all at once a change took place in his soul and he began to burn with love for the Lord Jesus. He was a disciple of St. James Nisibis (January 13). From the enormous grace of God, wisdom flowed from his tongue as a brook of honeyed prayer and praise and ceaseless tears flowed from his eyes. Industrious as a bee, St. Ephrem continually either wrote or orally taught the monks in the monastery and the people in the town of Edessa. He dedicated himself to prayer and contemplation. Numerous are his books and beautiful and compelling are his prayers. The most famous is his prayer recited during the honorable Great Fast season which reads:

**O Lord and Master of my life,  
keep from me the spirit of indifference and discouragement,  
lust of power and idle chatter.  
Instead, grant to me, Your servant,  
the spirit of wholeness of being, humble-mindedness,  
patience and love.  
O Lord and King,  
grant me the grace to be aware of my own sins and  
not judge my brother;  
for You are blessed now and ever and forever.  
Amen.**

When they wanted to elevate him to episcopal dignity by force, he pretended to be out of his mind and began to race through the city of Edessa dragging his garment behind him. Seeing this, the people left him in peace. Ephrem was a contemporary and friend of St. Basil the Great. He is considered mainly to be an Apostle of Repentance. Even today his works soften many hearts hardened by sin and separation from God and return them to the love of Christ. He died in extreme old age in the year 378.

## What Jesus Did NOT Do

(Jesus) when he was insulted, *didn't* revile in return” 1 Peter 2: 23.

Once a skeptic said that if Jesus really was the Son of God, His sufferings must have been easier to bear. This comment causes us to re-examine the gospel accounts. While reviewing the incredible things Jesus did and said to accomplish our great salvation, we note a goodly number of things Jesus *didn't* do that are equally vital to our salvation.

Jesus *didn't* demand His own will. “Still, let your will be done, not mine” Matthew 26: 39. He *didn't* call down legions of angels to rescue Him. “Do you not suppose I can call on my Father to provide at a moment's notice more than twelve legions of angels?” Matthew 26: 53. He *didn't* defend Himself or threaten the accusers. “Yet when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he made no reply... He did not answer him on a single count, much to the procurator's surprise” Matthew 27: 12, 14. He *didn't* save Himself. “The chief priests and the scribes also joined in and jeered: ‘He saved others, but he cannot save himself’” Mark 15: 31. He *didn't* come down from the cross. “Let the ‘Messiah,’ the ‘king of Israel’ come down from the cross here and now so that we can see it and believe in him”” Mark 15: 32. He *didn't* stop loving or saving sinners. “I assure you, this day you will be with me in paradise.” Luke 23: 43.

That fact that our Lord *could* have done these things intensified His agony and increased the temptation to use His power for His own advantage. But He *didn't*. Instead, He used His power for our benefit! “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness, but one who was tempted in every way that we are, yet never sinned. So let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and favor and to find help in time of need” Hebrews 4: 15, 16.

Our Lord suffered temptation just as we all do – except that He *didn't* sin. So He knows and understands and sympathizes with our weaknesses and shortcomings. Therefore, we can approach Him freely to obtain His help in time of need.

Whatever our need, the Lord wants us to come and make full use of this privilege of approach and subsequent affirmation. Though Christ was tempted in all ways, He *didn't* sin in word, deed or thought. Now we can approach Him for strengthening grace in time of need. Alleluia!



## Springtime Of The Soul

The season of the Great Fast is a time in our lives for new life to appear. It is a time for sowing so that one day, the Day of Lord, there will be a worthwhile harvest. The Great Fast is just long enough to prepare for the Paschal Event, the mystery that changed history and each human life. It is a worthwhile time investing ourselves in self-perfection because it is a time for instruction and learning. Faith comes by hearing which certainly includes worship, reading, study, and Godly-conversation. Faith needs to know, to ask questions, to reflect on the answers with seriousness.

In the early ages of the Church, the Great Fast was a time of preparation for baptism on the day of Resurrection. If we are already baptized, it is a time to think what that covenant should mean to us. Covenant is promise. Perhaps we were too young to promise at our baptism, so our sponsors or God parents made promises for us. Should we look into that covenant and decide to renew it for ourselves? The liturgical practice of the Church provides a baptismal review and renewal on the Vigil of the Resurrection. We can make the Great Fast a time of preparation for that renewal.

The Great Fast is a time for a second baptism, the painful baptism of penance. It is the time for interior purification. In the early centuries sinners were required to do public penance during this sacred season. In a solemn penitential service they received the mourner's garb on the first day and thereupon were excluded from community services until Holy and Great Thursday. Let us consider ourselves true penitents; let us submerge ourselves in God's grace so that purification streams through us during the Great Fast.

The Great Fast is a time for listening. The Word of God is given to us in abundance. The readings from Sacred Scripture speak of the great themes of faith, conversion, and turning back to a God Who loves us and is waiting for us. We must never forget that the main task of the liturgy is not to impart instruction as much as to bestow divine life. Certainly the services of the Great Fast give us advice on spiritual renewal, but the purpose of the readings is less instructional than a demonstration of the power of transforming grace. The readings, chosen from both the Old and New Testaments, typify the action of grace and make its possibility proximate. They are regarded as parables on the grace of redemption coming to the communicants of the Church from Christ's death on the Cross.

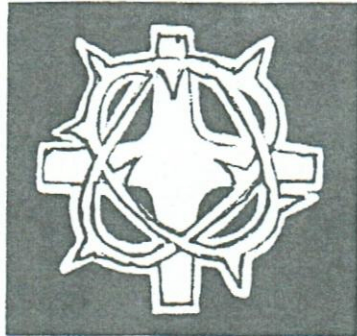
The Great Fast, then, is the time of salvation *par excellence* not only for penitents but for the faithful as well. Through regular participation in the worship of the Holy Trinity at the Divine Liturgy on Sundays and feast days, by our participation in the grace of the Pre Sanctified Liturgies, divine life within them should be enriched and perfected. By Great and

Holy Thursday, faithful believers should be free from all sin and cleansed from guilt so as to appear in full maturity and perfection in grace on Great and Holy Saturday, fully prepared, then, to participate in and celebrate the solemnity of Christ's Resurrection. And the soul should then be able to recognize that having God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit living within him, that he constantly carries heaven around within.

The sacramental Mystery of Reconciliation was instituted by Christ and restores the soul which has forfeited God's friendship and sonship by investing it again with grace, making it holy. The soul thus once more possesses God, its First Beginning and Last End. Or, if the soul is free from deadly sin, penance increases its grace, increases its measure of the possession of God.

If the person who avails himself frequently and realistically of the sacramental Mystery of Reconciliation does not advance in virtue, what is the reason? If we looked at the matter from God's perspective, we would see we have no idea of the malice of sin, even seemingly little sins. If we only had clear knowledge of the evil of sin which the saints were possessed of, we would rather suffer untold tortures than be guilty of even the least imperfection. The truth is we seek self, but true saints seek God.

What then is necessary? Simply to will an efficacious sorrow, a determined regret and a firm purpose of amendment. It is impossible for a soul who makes a constant and proper use of the sacramental Mystery of Reconciliation not to advance in perfection which is conforming oneself to the image of Christ. Initially what is required is to determinedly will it and then put it into practice. Willing it cannot rely simply on its own strength; it can effectively act only through the strengthening power of God's grace, poured out in great abundance on those who seek it in this sacramental Mystery.



# WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE

*O Guide to Wisdom, O Giver of understanding, O Instructor of the ignorant, and Helper of the poor: strengthen and enlighten my heart, O Master, Give the word to me, O Word of the Father, that I may not refrain from crying out to You: "O Merciful One, have mercy on me, a fallen one!" Troparion, Cheesfare Sunday.*


*Greed made us deserve our first nakedness; the bitterness of the fruit has brought disgrace, and we have become estranged from God. Let us now turn back in repentance; let us cleanse our senses, and may the Fast be our food. Let us strengthen our hearts with the hope of grace and not in the passing provisions of this life. For our food shall be the Lamb of God on the night of the glorious Resurrection. He is the Lamb Who offers Himself as a Victim for us, at the Mystical Supper in which the disciples take part, the Lamb Who dispels the darkness of the night, by the brightness of His holy Resurrection Vesper hymn, Cheesefare Sunday.*

*The doors of divine repentance open before us; let us enter with joy and purify our bodies. Let us fast from food as well as from our sinful desires, conducting ourselves as servants of Christ, Who calls the world to the kingdom of heaven. Let us offer this tithe of the whole year to the King of the universe, so that with love, we may contemplate His holy Resurrection Matins hymn, First day of the Great Fast.*

*O friends of God, behold the gate of repentance is beginning to open; come, let us hasten to pass through it before Christ closes it in our unworthiness. Behold the week of pruning has arrived, the announcement of Spring! It prepares us for the holy Fast by purifying our souls and bodies Matins Hymn, First day of the Great Fast.*

*Daniel the Prophet, a man greatly beloved, having seen the power of God, cried out: God is seated in judgment, and the books are opened. O my soul, if you fast, do not deceive your neighbor. If you abstain from food, do not judge others, lest you go to be burned like wax in a fire. But may Christ lead you freely to His heavenly kingdom Vesper Hymn, Cheesefare Sunday.*

## ANCESTRAL SIN

 In the Old Testament account of creation, God created mankind and established a place for him called Paradise. He also gave him a commandment regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil: "And the Lord God commanded Adam, saying, 'You may eat food from every tree in the garden; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you may not eat; for in whatever day you eat from it, you shall die by death'" (Gn 2:16, 17). In that Adam and Eve did not physically die the day they ate from the tree, the words "you shall die" indicate a spiritual death through separation from God.

Ancestral sin is the disobedience of Adam to God's command regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam willingly disobeyed this commandment and diverted himself, or fell, from God's path to perfection, thus separating himself from His Creator, the Source of life.

### ✧ WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE FALL? ✧

1 This Fall of Adam caused mankind to become subject to mortality. While this is often seen mainly as a punishment, or penalty, the emphasis concerning God's judgments on Adam and Eve at the Fall is best understood in terms of His mercy. So, for example, concerning man's mortality (Gn 3:19), St. Gregory the Theologian states, "Yet here too He provides a benefit—namely death, which cuts off sin, so that evil may not be everlasting. Thus His punishment is changed into a mercy."


2 We who are of Adam's race are not guilty because of Adam's sin, but because of our own sin. However, because all of mankind fell away from the grace of God through Adam's disobedience, man now has a propensity, a disposition, an inclination towards sin, because just as death entered the world through sin, now sin enters through fear of death.

3 Mankind's strong propensity to commit sin reveals that in the Fall, the image of God in man (Gn 1:26, 27) is also fallen. However, the ancient Fathers emphasize that the divine image in man has not been totally corrupted or obliterated. Human nature remains inherently good after the Fall; mankind is not totally depraved. People are still capable of doing good, although bondage to death and the influences of the devil can dull their perception of what is good and lead them into all kinds of evil.

4 Adam's Fall not only brought mortality and sin into the world, but also sweat, toil, hunger, thirst, weariness, sorrow, pain, suffering, sickness, tribulations, tragedy and tears.

5 Even after the Fall, the intellectual, desiring and incensive (forceful or driving) aspects of the soul are natural and therefore neutral. They can be used in a good way, or in a bad, harmful way. For instance, desire is very good when one directs it towards God. But when desire is out of control, one may use it in very inappropriate ways, such as becoming gluttonous or desiring another person's spouse. The classic analogy is that these powers of the soul are like iron, which can be made into a plow to help grow food, or into a sword to be used to kill someone.

Christ, by His Death and Resurrection, conquered the devil and death, freeing mankind from the fear of death (Heb 2:14-15) and making possible a more complete communion between God and man than was ever possible before. This communion allows people to become "partakers of the divine nature" (2Pt 1:4), to transcend death and, ultimately, all the consequences of the Fall.



## The Sundays of the Great Fast



Each of the Sundays of the Great Fast has its own special theme. The first Sunday is called the Feast of the Triumph of Orthodoxy. It is a historical feast commemorating the return of the icons to the churches in the year 843 after the heresy of iconoclasm was overcome. The spiritual theme of the day is first of all the victory of the True Faith. "This is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith" (1 Jn 5:4). Secondly, the icons of the saints bear witness that man, "created in the image and likeness of God" (Gen 1:26), becomes holy and godlike through the purification of himself as God's living image.

The Second Sunday of the Great Fast is the commemoration of St. Gregory Palamas. It was he (d.1359) who bore living witness that men can become divine through the grace of God in the Holy Spirit; and that even in this life, by prayer and fasting, human beings can become participants of the uncreated light of God's divine glory.

The Third Sunday of the Great Fast is that of the Veneration of the Cross. The cross stands in the midst of the church in the middle of the season of the Great Fast not merely to remind us of Christ's redemption and to keep before us the goal of heavenly effort, but also to be venerated as that reality by which man must live to be saved. "He who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10: 38). For in the Cross of Christ Crucified lies both "the power of God and the wisdom of God" for those being saved (1 Corinthians 1: 24).

The Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast is dedicated to St. John Climacus, the author of the work, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*. The abbot of St. Catherine Monastery on Mount Sinai in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, he stands as a witness to the violent effort needed for entrance into God's Kingdom (Matthew 10: 12 - 15). The spiritual struggle of the Christian life is real, 'not against flesh and blood, but against...the rulers of the present darkness...the hosts of wickedness in heavenly places' (Ephesians 6: 12). St. John encourages the faithful in their efforts for, according to the Lord, only "...he who endures to the end will be saved" (Matthew 24: 13).

The Fifth Sunday recalls the memory of St. Mary of Egypt, the repentant harlot. Mary tells us, first of all, that no amount of sin and wickedness can keep a person from God if he truly repents. Christ himself has come "to call sinners to repentance" and to save them from their sins (Luke 5: 32). In addition, St. Mary tells us that it is never too late in life - or during this sacred season - to repent. Christ will gladly receive all who come to Him even at the eleventh hour of their lives. But their coming must be in serious and sincere repentance.



## **He Leads**

*With skillful hands he led them Psalms 78: 72.*

When unsure of what course to take, totally submit your own judgment to that of the Holy Spirit, asking Him to shut every door except the right one. But meanwhile keep moving ahead and consider the absence of a direct indication from God to be the evidence of His will that you are on His path. And as you continue down the long road, you will find that He has gone before you, locking doors you otherwise would have been inclined to enter. You can be sure that somewhere beyond the locked doors, is one He has left unlocked. And when you open it and walk through, you will find yourself face to face with a turn in the river of opportunity, one that is broader and deeper than anything you ever dared to imagine, even in your wildest dreams. So set sail on it, because it flows to the open sea.

God often guides us through our circumstances, One moment our way may seem totally blocked, but then suddenly, some seemingly trivial incident occurs, appearing as nothing to others but speaking volumes to the keen eye of faith. And sometimes these events are repeated in various ways in response to our prayers. They certainly are not haphazard results of chance but are God opening up the way we should walk, by directing our circumstances. And they begin to multiply as we advance toward our goal, just as the lights of a city seem to increase as we speed toward it while traveling at night.

If we go to God for guidance, He will guide us. But do not expect Him to console you by showing you His list of purposes concerning you, when you have displayed distrust or even half trust in Him. What He will do, if you trust Him and go cheerfully ahead when He shows you the way, is to guide you still further and closer to paradise.

As moves my fragile boat across the storm-swept sea,  
Great waves beat over her side as north wind blows;  
Deep in the darkness hid, lie threatening rocks and reefs;  
But all of these, and more, my Pilot knows.

Sometimes when darkness falls, and every light gone out,  
I wonder to what port my frail ship goes;  
Although the night be long, and restless all my hours,  
My distant goal, I'm sure, my Pilot knows.

# Did You Know That ...

...spiritual growth sometimes comes from simply sitting and seeing the shambles of what we tried to accomplish, from what was seemingly God's work go to pot?

...the desire of your heart is itself your prayer and if it is constant, so is your prayer?

...a spiritual father in our daily living is as important as Christ was to the disciples?

...he who does not have God as his father and the Church as his mother cannot consider himself a brother to others?

...saintliness, the fullness of virtue, is as rare as it is beautiful?

...God equips us with remarkable capacities for doing extraordinary things under difficult circumstances?

...our stress response in time of crisis is far greater than we realize?

...courage in practice releases abilities within ourselves that lie dormant deep within?

...unbidden by courage, extraordinary human powers remain latent, unexercised, unknown?

...virtue should be imitated and not simply admired?

...every temptation is an occasion to trust God?

...love for Christ is only as real as our love for our neighbor?

...to love our friend is human, but to love our enemy and do him good is Christ-like?

...Jesus took my place on the cross to give me His place in heaven?

...if you worship God on Sunday, you will walk with Him on Monday?

...you are looking to be of service, just look around you?

# Cheesefare Sunday






## ✠ M A R Y ✠

“For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.”

(Lk 1:48)

 For two thousand years the Church has preserved the memory of the Virgin Mary as the prototype of all Christians—the model of what we are to become in Christ. Mary was truly pure and unconditionally obedient to God. The tradition of the Church holds that Mary remained a virgin all her life (see note on Mt 12:46–50). While lifelong celibacy is not a model for all Christians to follow, Mary’s spiritual purity, her wholehearted devotion to God, is certainly to be emulated.

Mary is also our model in that she was the first person to receive Jesus Christ. As Mary bore Christ in her womb physically, all Christians now have the privilege of bearing God within them spiritually. By God’s grace and mercy we are purified and empowered to become like Him.

The honor we give to Mary also signifies our view of who Jesus is. From early times the church has called her Mother of God (Gr. *Theotokos*, lit. “God-Bearer”), a title which implies that her Son is both fully man and fully God. As His Mother, Mary was the source of Jesus’ human nature; yet the One she bore in her womb was also the eternal God.

Therefore, because of her character and especially because of her role in God’s plan of salvation, Christians appropriately honor Mary as the first among the saints. The archangel Gabriel initiated this honor in his address to her: “Rejoice, highly favored *one*, the Lord *is* with you; blessed *are* you among women!” (Lk 1:28). This salutation clearly indicates that God Himself had chosen to honor Mary. Her favored status was confirmed when she went to visit her cousin Elizabeth, who was then six months pregnant with John the Baptist. Elizabeth greeted Mary with these words: “Blessed *are* you among women, and blessed *is* the fruit of your womb! But why *is* this *granted* to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” (Lk 1:42, 43). And Mary herself, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, predicted the honor that would be paid her throughout history: “For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed” (Lk 1:48).

In obedience to God’s clear intention, therefore, the Orthodox Church honors Mary in icons, hymns, and special feast days. We entreat her, as the human being who was most intimate with Christ on earth, to intercede with her Son on our behalf. We ask her, as the first believer and the Mother of the Church, for guidance and protection. We venerate her—but we do not worship her, for worship belongs to God alone.

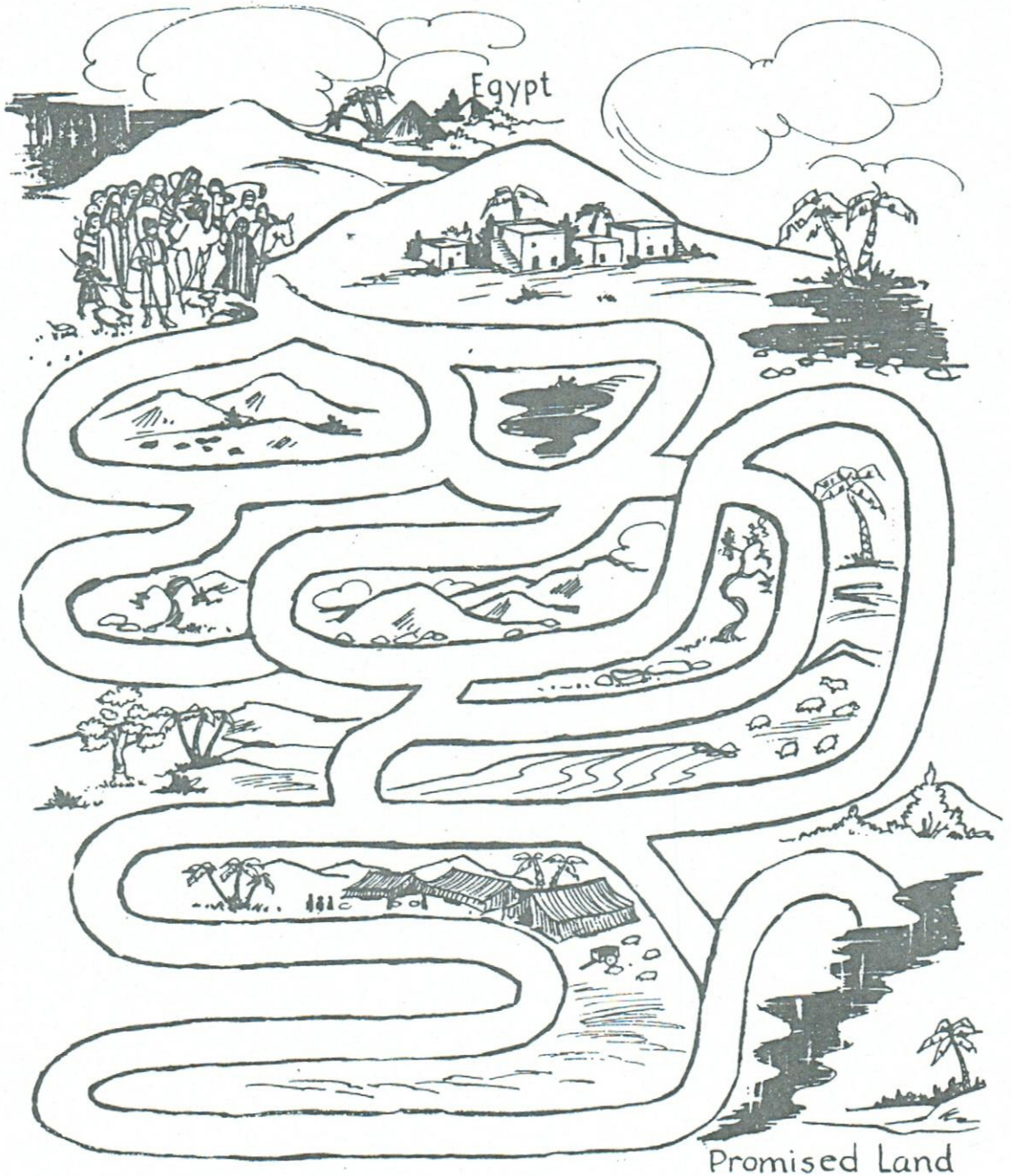
In Matins, Vespers, and all the services of the hours of prayer, we sing this hymn, which expresses Mary’s unique place in creation.

It is truly right to bless you, O Theotokos, ever-blessed and most pure, and the Mother of our God. More honorable than the cherubim and more glorious beyond compare than the seraphim, without defilement you gave birth to God the Word: True Theotokos, we magnify you.



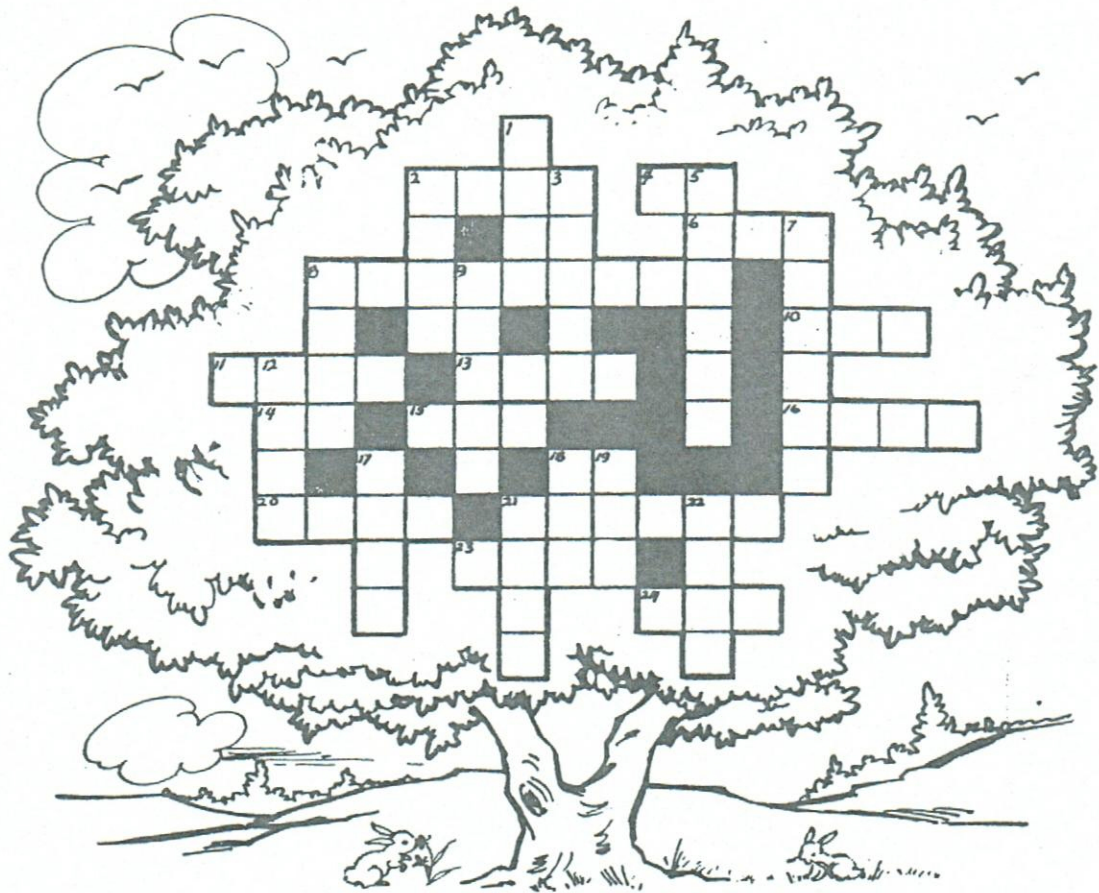
# THE PROMISED LAND

Help the children of Israel find their way through the wilderness to the promised land. Do not cross any lines.



# MAN'S FIRST HOME

Genesis 2:1-25



## Across:

2. It is not \_\_\_\_ for man to be alone (v. 18).
4. "Every plant \_\_\_\_ the field" (v. 5).
6. Woman was made out of this (v. 22).
8. "The tree of the \_\_\_\_\_ of good and evil" (v. 17).
10. "These \_\_\_\_ the generations" (v. 4).
11. Where God planted a garden (v. 8).
13. It watered the face of the ground (v. 6).
14. Moisture went \_\_\_\_ from the ground (v. 6).
15. God told Adam not to do this (v. 17).
16. "Not a man to \_\_\_\_ the ground" (v. 5).
20. Adam could eat every what? (v. 16).
21. God planted this in Eden (v. 8).
23. "This is now \_\_\_\_ of my bones" (v. 23).
24. "Thou shalt surely \_\_\_\_" (v. 17).

## Down:

1. Adam named every beast and \_\_\_\_ (v. 19).
2. Same as 2 across.
3. Man was to do this to the garden (v. 15).
5. Adam was told to eat this way (v. 16).
7. These were named by Adam (v. 19).
8. What else was Adam told to do to the garden? (v. 15).
9. She was made out of Adam's rib (v. 22).
12. God formed man of this (v. 7).
17. Adam fell into this kind of sleep (v. 21).
18. Woman was taken out of \_\_\_\_ (v. 23).
19. "These \_\_\_\_ the generations" (v. 4).
21. This is in the land of Havilah (v. 11).
22. "The tree of the knowledge of good and \_\_\_\_" (v. 17).

## OUR ANNUAL SPIRITUAL "CHECK-UP"

**M**edical authorities stress that it is important for all of us to have an annual physical examination – in fact, many companies require this of their employees. While this isn't anything that any of us truly enjoy, we cannot dispute the fact that our very lives may depend on this periodic check-up, which will allow us to see if we need to improve our health by making changes in the way we are living.

In like manner, the Church has long taught that we need a similar examination for our spiritual well-being every year. We refer to this "check-up" as the Great Fast. In this 40-day period, we will be called upon to pray more fervently and fast more severely. We will be implored to do good works and to receive the Body and Blood of Christ in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. We will be urged to cleanse our souls by confessing our sins. But most importantly, during Lent we will be asked to take an honest look at our lives and evaluate the condition of our heart and our soul. Just as it is unwise not to be truthful with our doctor, it is equally foolish for us to try to deceive the Great Physician – our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Are we in "good shape" spiritually? Are we showing complete and total love for God in all that we do? Do we really love our neighbor as we love ourselves? Are we harboring any hatred or hard feelings towards anyone? Are we willing to forgive those who may have wronged us as we have been instructed to do by Christ in today's Gospel lesson: "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses?" (Matt 6:14-15) Is it time for your check-up?

*Icon by Austin Kachek - Manville, NJ*

**The Orthodox Weekly Bulletin . . . . . Vestal, Cliffwood, New Jersey . . . . . Litho in U.S.A.**

# Penitential



# Psalms

## Penitential Psalms

*Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143 form an important group of seven which since the earliest centuries of the Church, probably already at the time of the early Fathers of the Church at the beginning of the fourth century, were known as Penitential Psalms.*

Although this descriptive term does not occur in God's revelation itself, it is justified by the sentiments of the sense of guilt and contrition for sin, combined with supplications for the mercy of our heavenly Father, which form the dominant note of these seven Psalms. The Psalmist's anguish of soul is here voiced in a vivid, highly colored figurative language, quite in keeping with the manner in which the Eastern soul expresses its pain and sorrow. The Psalmist seems at times to unite his own sorrow with the grief of his people, upon whom he begs divine mercy.

*But you, O Lord, abide forever and your name through all generations. You will arise and have mercy on Sion, for it is time to pity her, for the appointed time has come. For her stones are dear to your servants, and her dust moves them all to pity. And the nations shall revere your name, O Lord, and the kings of the earth your glory. When the Lord has rebuilt Sion and appeared in his glory; when he has regarded the prayer of the destitute, and not despised their prayer Psalms 102: 13 - 18.*

No other ancient people ever produced poetry so pure and moving in its consciousness of guilt and sorrow for sin, only because of its fundamentally religious basis. Christians can take over as their own all seven of the Penitential Psalms, but above all Psalm 51 and Psalm 130 are particularly appropriate for believers. Traditionally these are read, prayed and meditated upon during the Great Fast.



## Psalm 6

*For the end; in hymns, concerning the eighth; a psalm by David.*

O Lord, do not reprove me in your anger,  
nor discipline me in your wrath.

Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak;  
help me, O Lord, for my bones are troubled;  
and my soul is greatly troubled;  
but You, O Lord, how long?

Return, O Lord, and deliver my soul.

Save me because of your mercy.

For there is no remembrance of You in death;  
and in the place of the dead,  
who will give thanks to You?

I am weary with my groaning;  
every single night I dampen my bed;  
I will drench my couch with my tears.

My eye is troubled with anger;  
I grow old among my enemies.

Depart from me, all you workers of lawlessness;  
for the Lord heard the voice of my weeping;  
the Lord heard my supplication;  
the Lord received my prayer.

Let all my enemies be ashamed and greatly troubled;  
let them turn back and be suddenly ashamed.

Psalm 6 teaches the Church the spirit of humility faithful believers should have when they pray, "Lord, have mercy," for this petition is repeated again and again in the services of worship. This spirit of humility is characterized by (1) a request for mercy, rather than stern reproof and discipline because of our sins (v. 1); (2) a recognition of the weakness and frailty of our mortal nature (vv. 3, 4); (3) a request for deliverance and salvation (vv.5, 6); (4) a contrite spirit, characterized by tears and the need for help with respect to sinful passions (vv. 7, 8); and (5) a firm stand against the fallen angels and the Lord's needed help in this warfare (vv. 9 – 11). This Psalm is part of the Great Compline and verse 2 is a frequently repeated refrain in liturgical hymnography throughout the liturgical year.

## Psalm 32

*By David; concerning understanding.*

Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven,  
and whose sins are covered.

Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not take into account,  
and in whose mouth there is no deceit.

Because I kept silent, my bones grew old  
from my groaning all the day long;  
for day and night your hand was heavy upon me;  
I became miserable when the thorn pierced me.

I made known my sin,  
And I did not hide my transgression;  
I said, "I will confess my transgression to the Lord,"  
and You forgave the ungodliness of my sin.

For this cause everyone who is holy will pray to him  
in a well-fitted time;  
surely they will not draw near to him  
in a flood of many waters.



You are my refuge from the oppression  
of those who surround me;  
O my exceeding joy, redeem me from those who encircle me.  
“I will give you understanding and  
I will teach you in the way you should walk;  
I will fix my eyes on you.  
Do not be like the horse and the mule,  
which have no understanding;  
You squeeze their jaws with bit and bridle,  
lest they come near you.”  
Many are the scourges of the sinner,  
but for he who hopes in the Lord, mercy shall encircle him.  
Be glad in the Lord and rejoice greatly, righteous ones,  
and boast, all you upright in heart.

Psalm 32 is a prophecy concerning enlightenment (understanding, vv. 1, 8), which is fulfilled in the sacramental Mystery of Baptism. For this mystery is known as the sacramental Mystery of enlightenment, in which sins are forgiven (vv. 1, 5). And on the Day of Pentecost, St. Peter urged those listening to be “baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sin” (Acts of the Apostles 2: 38). Thus, the Creed also says, “I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sin.” Verses 1, 2 emphasize the blessings of baptism; vv. 3 - 7, the responsibility of the one baptized; and vv. 8 - 11, Christ’s response to the faithfulness of the one baptized. This explains why Psalm 32 is read when the newly baptized are brought up out of the water and clothed in white garments.



## Psalm 38

*A psalm by David; for remembrance concerning the Sabbath.*

Lord do not rebuke me in your wrath,  
nor chasten me in your anger.

For your arrows are fixed on me,  
and your hand rests on me;  
There is no healing in my flesh  
because of your wrath;

There is no peace in my bones because of my sins.

For my transgressions rise up over my head;  
like a heavy burden they are heavy on me.

My wounds grow foul and fester because of my folly.

I suffer misery and I am utterly bowed down;  
I go all the day long with a sad face.

For my loins are filled with mockeries  
and there is no healing in my flesh.

I am afflicted and greatly humbled;  
I roar because of the groaning of my heart.

O Lord, all my desire is before You,  
and my groaning is not hidden from You.

My heart is troubled, my strength fails me,  
and the light of my eyes, even this is not with me.

My friends and neighbors draw near  
and stand against me,  
and my near of kin stands far off;  
and those who seek my soul use violence;

and those who seek evil for me speak folly;  
and they meditate on deceit all the day long.

But I like a deaf man do not hear,  
and I am like a mute who does not open his mouth.

For in You, O Lord, I hope;  
You will hear, O Lord, my God.

For I said, "Let not my enemies rejoice over me.  
For when my foot was shaken, they boasted against me."

For I am ready for wounds  
and my pain is continually with me.  
For I will declare my transgression,  
and I will be anxious about my sin.

But my enemies live and are become stronger than I;  
and those who hate me unjustly are multiplied;  
Those who repaid me evil for good  
slandered me, because I pursue righteousness;  
and they threw away my love as though it were a stinking corpse.

Do not forsake me, O Lord;  
O my God, do not depart from me;  
give heed to help me,  
O Lord of my salvation.

Psalm 38 reveals the great love of Christ for mankind in his suffering on earth and death on the cross, especially v. 18: For I am ready for wounds and my pain is continually with me. And although He was "separate from sinners" (Hebrews 7: 26) and "knew no sin" (2 Corinthians 5: 21), yet out of his great compassion for sinners, He prays this prayer in a relative sense as though He were one of them. Thus, He takes the place of sinners as one of them and intercedes before the Father for their salvation in the midst of his sufferings and death on the cross.

## Psalm 50

*For the end a psalm by David.*

*When Nathan the prophet came to him at the time he sinned with Bathsheba.*

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your great mercy;  
and according to the abundance of your compassion,  
blot out my transgression.

Wash me thoroughly from my lawlessness  
and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my offense  
and my sin is always before me.

Against You only have I sinned  
and done evil in your sight;

that You may be justified in your sentence,  
and vindicated when you condemn.

Indeed, in guilt was I born  
and in sin my mother conceived me;

behold, You are pleased with sincerity of heart  
and in my inmost being You teach me wisdom.

You shall cleanse me with hyssop that I may be purified;  
wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

Let me hear the sounds of joy and gladness;  
the bones You have humbled shall rejoice.

Turn your face away from my sin and blot out my guilt.

A clean heart create for me O God,  
and a steadfast spirit renew within me.

Cast me not out of your presence, and  
take not your Holy Spirit from me.  
Give me back the joy of your salvation and  
a willing spirit sustain in me.  
I will teach transgressors your way  
and sinners shall return to You.  
Free me from blood guilt,  
O God, my saving God;  
then my tongue shall reveal your justice.  
O Lord, open my lips and my mouth  
shall proclaim your praise.  
For You are not pleased with sacrifices;  
should I offer a holocaust, You will not accept it.  
My sacrifice, O God, is a contrite spirit;  
a heart contrite and humbled, God, You will not spurn.  
Be bountiful O Lord, to Sion in your kindness  
by rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem;  
then shall You be pleased with due sacrifices,  
burnt offerings and holocausts;  
then shall they offer up bullocks on your altar.

Psalm 50 teaches the nature of genuine repentance, which is the reason it is used so often in services of the Church. It is the prescribed prayer taken silently by the priest as he incenses at the beginning of the Divine Liturgy and before the Great Entrance. Historically, King David committed the sins and transgressions of adultery and murder (vv. 1, 2; see also 2 Kings 11; 12). However, he obtained mercy from God because of his repentance. Yet many fall into sin but never come to repentance; therefore, no one can use David's sin as an excuse to sin. For sins and transgressions themselves do not draw down the mercy of God. Genuine repentance, however, does attract his mercy, for He sees it and responds accordingly (v. 3).

So genuine repentance is characterized by such things as confession to God (vv. 4 - 8); inward purity (vv. 12 - 16); and inward humility (vv. 17 - 21). This Psalm is taken in the daily service of Matins.

## Psalm 102

*A prayer of a poor man, when he was depressed  
and poured out his supplication before the Lord.*

Hear my prayer, O Lord,  
and let my cry come to You.  
Do not turn your face from me;  
in the day when I am afflicted, incline your ear to me;  
in the day when I call upon You, hear me quickly.  
For my days have vanished like smoke,  
and my bonds burned up like firewood,  
I was cut down like grass and my  
heart became withered,  
for I forgot to eat my bread.  
Because of the sound of my groaning,  
my bones cleaved to my flesh.  
I have become like a pelican in the desert;  
I have become like an owl in a ruined house;  
I kept watch, and have become  
like a sparrow alone on a housetop.  
My enemies reproached me all day long,  
and those who praised me swore against me.  
For I ate ashes like bread

and mixed my drink with weeping  
because of the wrath of your anger;  
for You lifted me up and broke me down.

My days were far spent like a shadow,  
and I am withered like grass.

But You, O Lord, remain forever,  
and your remembrance is from generation to generation.

When you rise up, You shall have  
compassion on Sion,

for it is time to have compassion on her because the time has come  
for your servants took pleasure in her stones,  
and they shall have compassion on her dust.

And the Gentiles shall fear the name of the Lord,  
and all the kings of the earth your glory;  
for the Lord shall build Sion,  
and He shall be seen in his glory.

He regarded the prayer of the humble  
and He shall not despise their supplication.

Let this be written for another generation,  
and the people who are created shall praise the Lord;  
for He looked down from the height of his holy place;  
the Lord looked down upon the earth from heaven,  
to hear the groaning of those bound,  
to set free the sons of the slain,  
to declare the Lord's name in Sion,  
and his praise in Jerusalem,  
when the peoples and the kingdoms  
are gathered together to serve the Lord.

He replied to him in the way of strength,  
“Declare to me the fewness of my days;  
take me not away in the midst of my days;  
your years are throughout all generations.  
In the beginning, O Lord, You founded the earth,  
and the heavens are the works of your hands.  
They shall perish but You shall remain,  
and all things shall grow old like a garment,  
and like a cloak You shall change them,  
and they shall be changed;  
but You are the same and your years shall not fail.  
The children of your servants shall dwell there,  
and their seed shall be led to prosperity forever.”

Psalm 102 is about a poor man, when he was depressed and poured out his supplication before the Lord (v. 1). This man is Jesus who became poor for our sake and interceded with the Father for our salvation (see 2 Corinthians 8: 9; Hebrews 5: 7). The Lord to whom He prays is the Father (v. 2), and vv. 3 – 12 describe Jesus’ extreme anguish for us (Matthew 26: 3 - 8). He also rose again for our salvation, for He is the Lord over death (when you rise up, v. 14). He is the creator of the world (vv. 26 – 28); (Hebrews 1:10 – 12 and He also created the Church (vv. 19, 23, 29), composed of Gentiles as well as Jews (v. 16). Verse 14 is remembered in the Divine Liturgy on Resurrection morning before the reading of the Holy Gospel.





## Psalm 130

Out of the depths I have cried to You O Lord;  
O Lord, hear my voice;  
Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication.  
If You, O Lord, should mark transgression,  
O Lord, who would stand?  
For there is forgiveness with You.  
Because of your law, O Lord, I waited for You.  
My soul waited for your word.  
My soul hopes in the Lord,  
from the morning watch until night;  
from the morning watch until night,  
let Israel hope in the Lord.  
For with the Lord there is mercy,  
and with him is abundant redemption;  
and He shall redeem Israel  
from all his transgressions.

In deep sorrow the psalmist cries to the Lord in spiritual misery (v. 1) begging pardon for his sins (v. 3); as he himself trusts in the mercy of the Lord (vv. 5, 6), so also should Israel wait in hope for the Lord's redemption (vv. 6 - 8). The thought of God's merciful forgiveness (v. 4) should lead one to seek his pardon and to fear offending him in the future (Romans 2: 4). The redemption of Israel (v. 7) from all their iniquities was achieved by Christ, the divine Redeemer (Luke 2: 38).

## Psalm 143

*A Psalm by David when his son persecuted him.*

O Lord, hear my prayer;  
give ear to my supplication in your truth;  
answer me in your righteousness;  
do not enter into judgment with your servant.  
For no one living shall become righteous in your sight.  
For the enemy persecuted my soul;  
he humbled my life to the ground;  
he caused me to dwell in dark places as  
one long dead,  
and my spirit was in anguish within me;  
my heart was troubled within me.  
I remembered the days of old,  
and I meditated on all your works;  
I meditated on the works of your hands.  
I spread out my hands to You;  
my soul thirsts for You like waterless land.  
Hear me speedily, O Lord;  
my spirit faints within me;  
turn not your face from me,  
lest I become like those who go down into the pit.  
Cause me to hear your mercy in the morning,  
for I hope in You;

make me know, O Lord, the way  
wherein I should walk,  
for I lift up my soul to You.  
Deliver me from my enemies, O Lord,  
for to You I flee for refuge.  
Teach me to do your will, for You are my God;  
your good Spirit shall guide me in the land of uprightness.  
For your name's sake, O Lord, give me life;  
In your righteousness You shall bring my  
soul out of affliction.  
In your mercy You shall destroy my enemies;  
You shall utterly destroy all who  
afflict my soul,  
for I am your servant.

Psalm 143 teaches God's righteousness (vv.1, 11) in contrast to man's futile efforts to attain righteousness based on the law (v.2). For the enemy (v. 3), who is the devil, overcomes my feeble efforts at righteousness (vv. 3 – 5). But with the gift of God's righteousness through faith, the Holy Spirit guides me in the land of righteousness (v. 10). King David knew God's righteousness through faith and so do all who walk by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. This Psalm is the last of six Psalms of matins. The other five are 3; 37; 62; 87; 102. Verse 10 is used in the Church at the feast of Pentecost, the Descent of the Holy Spirit.

