



*"In my wretchedness, O Lord, I have disobeyed Your commandment. Woe is me! I have been stripped of glory, filled with shame, and cast out from the joy of Paradise. I have been justly deprived of Your blessings. In Your mercy and compassion take pity on me."*

Matins for Cheesefare Sunday

## The Sunday of Cheesefare The Fifth Pre-Greatfast Sunday Father John Petro

*"The Lord my Creator took me as dust from the earth and formed me into a living creature, breathing into me the breath of life, and giving me a soul.... But Satan the deceiver enticed me by food, using the serpent as his instrument, and separated me from the glory of God, and by death delivered me to the earth. O Master, in Your compassion, call me back to You."*

Vespers for Cheesefare Sunday

Today we stand at the threshold of the Holy Great Fast, ready to enter with faith and joy. We also sit at the threshold of paradise with Adam and lament what we have lost. Today we again hear our story: the story of our creation at the hands of God; the story of life that is breathed into us by the very breath of God. This is our dignity; this is our nobility; this is why we are to respect life. For life is a gift from God.

Now Satan enters the scene and sets his snare. He tricks Adam and Eve into disobedience by promising them far greater things than what they already have. He promises them equality with God!

But this is the trick! This is the insidious part of the whole scheme! They already share a deep communion with God; however, by following Satan's deceitful design to gain something even greater, they lose what they already have. This is the deceptive guise of sin. It promises us something that seems so beneficial; but when we say yes to it, suddenly it tears off its mask and reveals its ugly face to us. Then in a moment, we know in the depths of our being that we have been duped. We have been tricked! We all know the queasy feeling in the pit of our stomach when we face this realization.

Then together with Adam, we sit and lament. We too by our sin have given up our God-woven robes; we have lost the delights of Paradise. We too now live not in communion but in brokenness.

The final elements necessary for repentance are presented today: *fasting* and *forgiveness*. We seek to regain our communion with God, and Christ is our Way. We come to join the New Adam and undo what we have done with the Old Adam. Adam failed to fast from the tree and thus lost Paradise; we therefore fast in order to regain it. But even more than fasting, even more than almsgiving and prayer, the Gospels give us another way to enter into communion with God. This is through forgiveness. As our holy father Saint John Chrysostom says: "Nothing makes us so like God as being ready to forgive the wicked and wrong-doers." Only when we have crossed this threshold are we ready to enter the Fast in the proper spirit and seek forgiveness from our heavenly Father.

**SCRIPTURE READINGS: Romans 13:11 - 14:4  
Matthew 6:14-21**