LENTEN PRAYER

of St. Ephraim the Syrian

"O Lord and Master of my life, give me not a spirit of sloth,
of despair, of ambition, or of vain talking.
But rather a spirit of purity, of humility, of patience,
and of love, bestow upon me Thy servant.
Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own faults,
and not judge my brother.
For Thou art blessed unto ages of ages. Amen."

Sunday, February 18, 2018 - Sunday of the Expulsion of Adam from Paradise
Sunday of Forgiveness

Please continue to pray for...

Subdeacon Joseph, Sophia, Robert, Ann, Daria, John, Evelyn, June, Nina, Joan, John, Alex, Alan, Luke, Kathryn, Stasia, Glenn, Veronica, Darlyne, Irene, Nancy, Dionysian, Elena, Jevon, Ivan and Joscean. And for...John, Jennifer, Nicholas, Isabel, Lee, Eva, Neil, Gina, Joey, Michael, Madelyn, Sofie, Katrina, Olena, Valeriy, Olga, Tatiana, Dimitri, Alexander and Maxim.

Announcements:

Sunday February 25th, (begininng at 4:30) Lenten Vespers for the Triumph of Orthodoxy will be held at St Dimitrie Romanian Orthodox Church
500 Sport Hill Rd
Easton CT 06612

This week we celebrate:

Nadia PenkoffLedbeck and Connor Kuziak on the occasion of their birthdays.

Our Parish Council Representatives are:

Susan Hayes - President
Greg Jankura - Member at Large
Vincent Melesko - Member at Large
Susan Egan - Treasurer
James Pepitone - Vice President
Glenn PenkoffLedbeck - Secretary

Schedule of Services for the Week

Monday, February 19, 2018
6:00p - Canon of St Andrew

Tuesday, February 20, 2018
8:30p - Lenten Matins
6:00p - Canon of St Andrew

Wednesday, February 21, 2018
4:00p - Soup Kitchen
4:30p - Open Doors: Confession
6:00p - Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

Thursday, February 22, 2018
8:30a - Lenten Matins
6:00p - Canon of St Andrew

Friday, February 23, 2018
6:00p - Canon of St Andrew

Saturday, February 24, 2018
5:30p - Great Vespers followed by Confession

Commemorations of the day...

Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise. St. Leo the Great, Pope of Rome (461). Ven Cosmas of Yakhromsk (1492). St. Agapitus the Confessor, Bishop of Synnada in Phrygia (4th c.). St. Flavian the Confessor, Patriarch of Constantinople (449-450).

Homily of St. Tikhon of Moscow on Forgiveness (Cheesefare) Sunday

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)

Yet it is said to be extremely difficult to forgive discourtesy and to forget disrespect. Perhaps our selfish nature finds it truly difficult to forgive disrespect, even though in the words of the Holy Fathers it is easier to forgive than to seek revenge. (St. Tikhon of Zadonsk after St. John Chrysostom) Yet everything in us that is good is not accomplished easily, but with difficulty, compulsion and effort. "The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."(Matt. 11. 12) For this reason we should not be discouraged at the difficulty of this pious act, but should rather seek the means to its fulfillment. The Holy Church offers many means towards this end, and of them we will dwell on the one which most corresponds to the forthcoming season of repentance.

"Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own transgressions and not to judge my brother." The source of forgiving our neighbors, of not judging them, is included in seeing (acknowledging) our sins. "Imagine," says a great pastor, who knows the heart of man, Father John of Kronstadt, "picture the multitude of your sins and imagine how tolerant of them is the Master of your life, while you are unwilling to forgive your neighbor even the smallest offense. Moan and bewail your foolishness, and that obstruction within you will vanish like smoke, you will think more clearly, your heart will grow calm, and through this you will learn goodness, as if not you yourself had heard the reproaches and indignities, but some other person entirely, or a shadow of yourself." (Lessons on a Life of Grace, p. 149) He who admits his sinfulness, who through experience knows the weakness of human nature and its inclination toward evil, will forgive his neighbor the more swiftly, dismissing transgressions and refraining from a haughty judgment of others' sins. Let us remember that even the scribes and Pharisees who brought the woman caught in adultery to Christ were forced to depart, when their conscience spoke out, accusing them of their own sins. (John 8. 9)

Unfortunately, brethren, we do not like to acknowledge our transgressions. It would seem natural and easy for a person to know his own self, his own soul and his shortcomings. This, however, is actually not so. We are ready to attend to anything but a deeper understanding of ourselves, an in vestigation of our sins. We examine various things with curiosity, we attentively study friends and strangers, but when faced with solitude without extraneous preoccupation even for a short while, we immediately become bored and attempt to seek amusement. For example, do we spend much time examining our own conscience even before confession? Perhaps a few minutes, and once a year at that. Casting a cursory glance at our soul, correcting some of its more glaring faults, we immediately cover it over with the veil of oblivion until next year, until our next uncomfortable exercise in boredom.

Yet we love to observe the sins of others. Not considering the beam in our own eye, we take notice of the mote in our brother's eye. (Matt. 7. 3) Speaking idly to our neighbor's detriment, mocking and criticizing him are not even often considered sins but rather an innocent and amusing pastime. As if our own sins were so few! As if we had been appointed to judge others! "There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy" ? God. (James 4. 12) "Who art thou to judge another's servant? It is before his own master that he stands or falls." (Rom. 14. 4) "Thou hast no excuse, O man, whoever thou art who judgest. For wherein thou judgest another, thou dost condemn thyself. For thou who judgest dost the same things thyself." (Rom. 2. 1) "Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith; put yourselves to the test." (2 Cor. 13. 5) The pious ascetics provide a good example of this. They turned their minds to themselves, meditated on their own sins and avoided judging their neighbors at all costs.

BEGINNING THE GREAT FAST

The doors of Great Lent open on the day after the **Sunday of Cheese-Fare**. The liturgical observance of this Sunday sets the pattern for the sacred time. Cheese-Fare is also referred to by many Christians as "Forgiveness Sunday." In some places, priests and congregations beg forgiveness from one another that they might begin the Fast at peace with everyone. Remember that God will not forgive us our sins unless we forgive those who have wronged us. This is clearly stressed in the Lord's Prayer.

Throughout our Lord's earthly ministry, He urged us to gather treasure for ourself in heaven rather than on earth. And it is clear from Church writings that there are 3 ways of doing this: through **PRAYER, FASTING** and **ALMSGIVING**.

Lent calls for more and better **PRAYER**. There is an increase in the number of church services and we should make every effort to attend these. There is a wealth of spirituality in the hymns and lessons of lenten worship. It pays us to dig at this precious ore.

The reason we **FAST** is to subjugate the flesh to the spirit, the lower nature to the higher. It is not an end in itself, but a training ground, so that the best in us may emerge as the controlling factor in our Christian lives. The specific regulations for fasting are issued by the Bishops of each Church. Of course, some want to go beyond these and adopt a stricter discipline for the Great Fast. This is commendable for those whose love of Christ enables it.

ALMSGIVING simply means charity, love, the help we give to those in need. It need not only be money – it can be food, clothing, work, service, prayer or concern. It is essentially an attitude we have towards others but one we must act upon.

Perhaps it is all best expressed in this verse from the Vespers: "Let us begin the season of fasting with rejoicing, giving ourselves to spiritual strife, purifying soul and body, fasting from passions as we fast from foods, faring on the virtues of the spirit, which, if we continue to long for, we shall be worthy to behold the most solemn Passion of Christ and the holy Passover, rejoicing with spiritual joy."

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We welcome all visitors to our Divine Liturgy and services. While Holy Communion may only be received by prepared Orthodox Christians, our non-Orthodox guests are welcome to participate in our prayers and hymns and to join us in venerating the Cross and and receiving blessed bread at the conclusion of the Liturgy. Please sign our guest card and join us for refreshments and fellowship after the services.

Feel free to ask questions before or after the services. Any member of our Council or Congregation are glad to assist you. Literature about the Orthodox faith and this parish can be found in the narthex (back of the Church).