



74th Year

February 22, 2026

Pamphlet #8 (3795)

THE SUNDAY GOSPEL (Matthew 6:14-21) **Fasting and forgiving transgressions**

The Lord said, "If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE SPIRITUAL STRUGGLE

The Church of God invites us once again to enter the arena of Holy and Great Lent, a period during which our spiritual struggle becomes more intense. Believers, therefore, make every effort and diligence to be re-catechized in the piety and faith of the Church, to trust God more deeply, to devote ourselves with greater consistency to fasting and prayer, to forgive our fellow men and to ask them to forgive us as well, and to surround them with our love and tenderness.

Thus, our Christian asceticism consists in becoming aware of God's love and offering that love to our fellow man; then in true fasting that is pleasing to God, which leads us to compunction and repentance; and finally, in freeing ourselves from greed for earthly treasures and turning toward the treasure of our heart, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The spiritual meaning of fasting

The fasting of Great Lent has as its model not only sacred biblical figures, such as the Prophet Moses who fasted for forty days on Mount Sinai, or the Prophet Elijah who likewise fasted in the desert of Horeb, but God Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, after His baptism and before beginning His public ministry, remained in the desert, fasting for forty days and nights. Fasting is an act of worship to God. It makes the believer's soul and body light and pure so that they may remain in unceasing communion with God. True fasting is essentially a spiritual asceticism, as Basil the Great aptly emphasizes: "Let us fast with a fast that is acceptable, pleasing to the Lord; true fasting is estrangement from evil, temperance of the tongue, abstaining from anger, separation from improper desires, slander, falsehood, and perjury. Restraining oneself from these is a true and acceptable fast." (On Fasting, 2.7)

In such a manner, fasting, when accompanied by prayer, liberates the human spirit from every domination of the flesh and material things. It becomes a personal worshipful attitude before God and an expression of obedience to the word of God and the tradition of the Church.

The Lord takes upon Himself the temptations of the faithful

It was mentioned above that the Lord remained for forty days and nights in the desert, praying and fasting. There, He faced three big demonic temptations. The devil asked Christ to transform the stones of the desert into bread. The Lord replied that man does not live by bread alone, but by the word and power of God. Then the devil asked Christ to fall down and worship him, promising to give Him the kingdoms of the world and their glory. The Lord told him that one must worship and serve God alone. Finally, the devil

challenged Christ to put Himself in danger, to demand a miracle, by throwing Himself down from the highest point of the Temple. Christ answered that a person is not allowed to put God's love to the test. And then, "after completing every temptation, the devil departed from Him until an opportune time." (Luke 4:1-13)

The Lord takes upon Himself the temptations of man and helps him confront and overcome them in a Godly manner, as the Apostle Paul says, "For because He Himself suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted" (Hebrews 2:18). That is, since Christ Himself endured and was tested, He is now able to help those who are being tested. Indeed, it goes without saying, that since the Lord assists us in our temptations, we must not surrender ourselves to despair or discouragement.

The desert of Lent

The faithful will go out together with the Lord into the Desert of Lent and will share in His temptations. The person of God confronts the first temptation through fasting, the second through unceasing worship of God, and the third through humility. May Christ grant that we, too, be revealed as victors in our struggle against the old self, and may He strengthen us in the asceticism of fasting, in continual worship of God, and in humility.

Archimandrite N. K.

February 22, 2026: Cheesefare Sunday

Commemoration of the expulsion of the first-created Adam
from Paradise.

The finding of the sacred relics of the holy martyrs at
the Church of Saint Eugenios († 395–423).

4th Tone – Eothinon: 4 – Epistle: Romans 13:11-14:4
– Gospel: Matthew 6:14-21

NEXT SUNDAY: March 1, 1st Sunday of Lent (of Orthodoxy)
Epistle: Hebrews 11:24-26,32-40 – Gospel: John 1:44-52

**TIMELY PUBLICATIONS (IN GREEK)
FOR THE BEGINNING OF GREAT LENT**

ΣΥΣΣΩΜΟΙ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ

ONE BODY WITH CHRIST: or on Devotion to the Eucharist, by Metropolitan Agathangelos of Phanarion. A Eucharistic study that responds to the challenges of our time and to discussions touching on the very nature of the God-established mystery of the Divine Eucharist. Part II includes a "Discourse of Edification and Salvation" by Saint John Chrysostom.

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AT THE THRESHOLD OF GREAT LENT: Liturgical and Compunctionate Texts, by Metropolitan Symeon Koutsas of Nea Smyrni. An excellent aid for the sacred period of Great Lent, the heart of the ecclesiastical year. Twelve texts addressing spiritual preparation, temperance, Christian asceticism, in the person of God, and the Prayer of Saint Ephraim the Syrian.

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THE CHURCH'S FASTING: Why, when, and how we fast, by Metropolitan Symeon Koutsas of Nea Smyrni. An engaging publication that helps us more fully grasp the true meaning and essential importance of fasting for the spiritual life, and to understand when and how we ought to fast.

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VOICE OF THE LORD, a weekly pamphlet of Orthodox faith and life of the "Apostolic Ministry of the Church of Greece". Iasiou 1, 115 21 Athens. Publisher – Director: Metropolitan of Phanariou, Agathangelos. Editorial office, tel. 210.7272.331. Processing, tel. 210.7272.388. Through the holy churches, it is distributed free of charge. From the Printing Office of the Apostolic Ministry.

The *VOICE OF THE LORD* worldwide via the Internet:

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