

Lenten Synaxarion

Expulsion of Adam from Paradise

*Let all the earth weep bitterly
with the fathers of our race,
for it is fallen with those who tasted
the sweet fruit of the tree.*

On this day we commemorate the fall of Adam the first-created from partaking of the fruit of Paradise, which our holy and divine Fathers have appointed for the Sunday before Great Lent in order to demonstrate the great healing effect of the fast upon human nature and the great harm of intemperance and disobedience. Setting aside the countless instances of these vices in the world, the Fathers have put forth a vivid example in first-created Adam, who suffered great harm in his total failure to fast and brought this harm upon our nature. He did not keep the first commandment of a beneficial fast which God had required of mankind, but yielding to the desires of his belly and of the serpent through Eve, he not only did not become godlike, but he gave rise to death, bringing perdition upon all our race. For the sake of Adam's intemperance the Lord fasted for forty days and was obedient. It was for this reason that the holy Apostles conceived this present forty-day fast, so that as Adam forfeited incorruption through his intemperance, we may regain it through abstinence. Also, as was stated earlier, it was the intent of the Holy Fathers through the Triodion to relate in a condensed form all of God's acts from the beginning to the end of the world. Since Adam's transgression and fall through the eating of the fruit of the tree is the principal cause of the state of mankind, the Fathers exhort us who are observing this commemoration to avoid Adam's sin and to shun intemperance in all things.

Now it was on the sixth day that Adam was created by the hand of God after His own image and through His life-giving breath. Receiving God's commandment, he lived in Paradise up until the sixth hour, when he disobeyed God's command and was driven out. And as he stretched out his hand at the sixth hour to touch the fruit, so the new Adam, Christ, at the sixth day and hour stretched out his hands upon the Cross, annulling the sentence of perdition brought about by the former Adam. For he was created in the midst of corruption and incorruption through providence with the freedom of choice. God could have made Adam sinless, yet His providence was to provide for reparation. For this cause He gave His commandment that Adam might partake of all in the garden, save the one tree. Does this not mean that Adam was meant to understand the essence of all created by the divine power, but was not to attempt to understand the essence of the Godhead; That is to say God commanded Adam to concern himself with all other elements and qualities, reasoning with his mind to the glory of God; for this is true nourishment. But he was not to search for the divine essence: God, who He is, where He is and how He brought all things into being out of nothingness. Yet to his own harm Adam, having no care for the other things, sought to examine God and to determine His essence; and since he was not perfect but still a simple child, he failed in his undertaking, when through Eve Satan planted in him the desire of becoming Godlike.

Some say that the tree of disobedience was a fig tree, and becoming aware of their nakedness, Adam and Eve used its leaves to cover themselves. For this reason Christ cursed the fig tree as the cause of that disobedience, attributing to it a sort of resemblance to sin. For having transgressed becoming clothed in mortal flesh and receiving the curse, Adam was driven from Paradise. And at God's command a flaming sword guarded its gates. Adam sat before the gates of Paradise and lamented the many blessings he had lost in his failure to observe a timely fast. And through him the entire race shared in that sentence, until our Creator, taking pity on our nature which because of Satan was perishing, was born of the Holy Virgin and lived an exceptional life, showing us the path away from the devil, that is abstinence and humility, and valiantly gaining the victory over the deceiver, returned us to our former state.

In their desire to lay all these events before us, the God-bearing fathers have begun with the Old Testament: the creation of the world, the fall of Adam through the eating of the fruit, which we commemorate today, and later on the words of Moses and the prophets and the poetry of David, which impart grace. Afterwards in order the events of the New Testament, of which the first is the Annunciation, which always occurs during Lent through God's ineffable providence, the raising of Lazarus, Palm Sunday, the reading of the sacred Gospels during Holy Week, and the profound texts of the holy and saving Passion of Christ. After this the Resurrection and the rest up to the descent of the Holy Spirit read in the book of Acts, how this event became a proclamation that assembled all the saints together, for in the book of Acts the Resurrection is confirmed through signs and wonders.

Since we have so suffered from Adam's failure to keep the fast, this event is commemorated today at the beginning of Great Lent, so that keeping in mind the enormous evil brought about by Adam's intemperance, we may make joyful haste to accept and keep the fast. And as Adam sinned in his desire to become godlike, we may thereby receive godliness through fasting, tears and humility until God visits us; for without these it is impossible to regain that which we have lost. It should be also noted that the holy forty-day fast is the tenth part of the entire year. Since out of indolence we are not willing to fast constantly or to rid ourselves of evil habits, the Apostles and divine Fathers have passed down the Fast to us as a sort of first offering of the harvest of our lives. And as we have acted inappropriately for the entire year, we may now cleanse our souls through fasting, contrition and humility. We should keep the Great Fast with the utmost care. For as there are four seasons in the year, so there are four fasts. Yet the divine Apostles have entrusted Lent to us as the greatest of the fasts, since it honors the Holy Passion of Christ, His fast and His glorification. Moses also fasted forty days before he received the Law, also Elijah, Daniel and all who found favor in God's sight. Adam illustrates for us the benefit of the fast as opposed to intemperance. For this reason Adam's banishment from Paradise was appointed by the Holy Fathers to be commemorated on this day.

*In Thine ineffable compassion, O Christ our God,
make us worthy of the nourishment of Paradise,
and have mercy on us, as Thou alone lovest mankind.
Amen.*