

St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Ann Arbor and St. Stephen Byzantine Parish, Allen Park together celebrate Sunday Vespers according to the Byzantine Rite at 7pm on the Sundays of Lent beginning Feb 14.

All are welcome to join us!

Sunday, February 14

Cheesefare Sunday/Sunday of Forgiveness



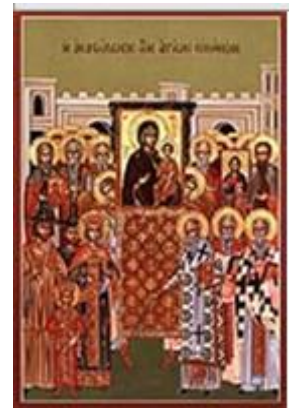
"On the eve of Great Lent, the day called Cheesefare Sunday and Forgiveness Sunday, we sing of Adam's exile from paradise. We identify ourselves with Adam, lamenting our loss of the beauty, dignity and delight of our original creation, mourning our corruption in sin. We also hear on this day the Lord's teaching about fasting and forgiveness, and we enter the season of the fast forgiving one another so that God will forgive us.

"If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses (Mt 6:14–18)."

Sunday, February 21

The Feast of the Triumph of Orthodoxy

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"* (1Jn 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.



Sunday, February 28

Commemoration of Saint Gregory Palamas



The Second Sunday of Lent is the commemoration of Saint Gregory Palamas. It was Saint Gregory (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.

Sunday, March 7

Sunday of the Veneration of the Cross

The Third Sunday of Lent is that of the Veneration of the Cross. The cross stands in the midst of the church in the middle of the Lenten season not merely to remind men of Christ's redemption and to keep before them the goal of their efforts, 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" (Mt 10.38). For in the Cross of Christ Crucified lies both "*the power of God and the wisdom of God*" for those being saved (1Cor 1.24).



Sunday, March 14 Sunday of Lent of Saint John of the Ladder (Climacus)



The Fourth Sunday of Lent is dedicated to Saint John of the Ladder (Climacus), the author of the work, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*. The abbot of Saint Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai (6th century) stands as a witness to the violent effort needed for entrance into God's Kingdom (Mt 10: 12). The spiritual struggle of the Christian life is a real one, "*not against flesh and blood, but against . . . the rulers of the present darkness . . . the hosts of wickedness in heavenly places . . .*" (Eph 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*" (Mt 24.13).

Sunday, March 21

Sunday of Saint Mary of Egypt

The Fifth Sunday recalls the memory of Saint 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 (Lk 5.32). In addition, Saint Mary tells us that it is never too late in life—or in Lent—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.



Sunday, March 28 Palm Sunday

"Palm Sunday or Flowery Sunday"



The feast of Christ's triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, Palm Sunday, is one of the twelve major feasts of the Church. The services of this Sunday follow directly from those of Lazarus Saturday. The church building continues to be vested in Resurrectional splendor, filled with hymns which continually repeat the Hosanna offered to Christ as the Messiah-King who comes in the name of God the Father for the salvation of the world."

<https://www.oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith/worship/the-church-year/sundays-of-lent>