

SERMON
Sunday of the Cheesefare (Mt. 6:14-21)
22 February 2026

As we enter the period of Holy and Great Lent tomorrow, our Church sets the necessary conditions for us to safely cross "*the great sea of fasting*," as the sacred hymnographer says. Of course, these guiding truths presented in the Gospel text, are universally valid in the life of the faithful and are not an occasional and temporal condition that applies only for a specific period of time.

The Lord's first commandment is forgiveness towards our brothers and sisters who, willingly or unintentionally, have harmed us in some way; they have slandered us, they have damaged us materially or spiritually, they have caused us problems in our family. Of course, forgiving our enemy is not an easy task, but it is the necessary condition for God to grant us forgiveness. To be callous and unyielding towards our brother, even if we are right, is an act that does not justify us in the eyes of God. On the contrary, it reveals that our heart is not receptive to God's love. Let us not forget, moreover, that in the Lord's Prayer this is what we ask of God: "*Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive our trespassers*" (Mt 12:12).

The second instruction of our Church has to do with the issue of fasting and, consequently, asceticism in general. Fasting may have some external signs, namely abstinence from certain foods, but its meaning is ultimately spiritual. For this reason, the Christian must also experience the state of fasting internally, without advertising and boasting about it. Hypocrisy is a grave spiritual disease that afflicts us Christians. By projecting our apparent virtue, we resemble the Pharisee that the Church spoke to us two Sundays ago. Therefore, we must practice the commandment to fast with discernment and attention, without outward

manifestations and without scandalising our brothers and sisters or seeking their praise.

The last point our Holy Church draws our attention to is the issue of the management of material goods. The Church does not reject matter, since the human person is a psychosomatic entity and the body has material needs. However, the Church does not speak of this, but of the obsessive, unhealthy attachment to wealth and material goods. The person who suffers from this lives only to accumulate treasures, but these material things cannot buy health, joy, love, and, above all, eternal life. We have all heard of rich people who lived and died unhappy because their hearts, instead of being turned to God and to heaven, remained attached to the earth and earthly goods, thus forfeiting an eternal perspective.

Our Holy Church, through the precepts of the Gospel supplies us with these spiritual provisions, or these "instructions to seafarers", as we would say, for the difficult but blessed stage of Great Lent, which resembles an Ocean, so that we can safely reach our destination, which is to celebrate the Resurrection. Forgiveness, a simple and unfeigned mindset, and the turning of our minds from the earthly to the heavenly are the principles that should govern our spiritual course at every moment of life, especially during this period of Holy Lent which is just beginning.

Happy and blessed Holy and Great Lent!