



## CHEESEFARE SUNDAY

February 17



Did you know what Cheesefare Sunday really teaches us?

Cheesefare Sunday is the last Sunday before Great Lent begins. It marks a gentle transition into the fasting season: we set aside dairy foods, while meat has already been given up the week before. The Church's focus is not just on food but more importantly on the heart.

The Gospel of the day speaks about Adam and Eve's exile from Paradise and gently teaches that separation from God does not begin with food, but with pride, disobedience, and broken relationships. For this reason, Cheesefare Sunday leads us into Forgiveness Vespers, where we humbly ask forgiveness from one another. Before we change our diet, we soften our hearts. Before we take up the struggle of fasting, we learn again how to forgive and how to love.

This same spirit is beautifully captured by Saint Ephraim of Katounakia. He once said: "If I pray one hundred prayers in the Athonite desert, and you in the world pray one prayer, we are equal."

With these words, Saint Ephraim amazingly reveals that God does not count prayers the way we do. He looks at sincerity, struggle, and humility. A single prayer whispered in a busy home, at work, or in moments of exhaustion can be just as precious as many prayers offered in monastic silence.

Cheesefare Sunday is an exceptional spiritual opportunity to begin Lent with honesty, forgiveness, and trust in God's mercy. Wherever we are, God meets us there. One humble prayer at a time.

Send us your questions at: [religioused@goarch.org](mailto:religioused@goarch.org)

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