

Forgiveness Sunday

Matthew 6:14-21

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. (KJV)

Peace for the heart, mind and soul are found in Jesus Christ. The Lord said: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (Jn. 14:27)

Peace comes to the heart, mind and soul when Jesus forgives our countless sins, known and unknown. Prayer, fasting, repentance and confession facilitate the forgiveness of sins.

Experiencing forgiveness from the Lord Jesus Christ is inseparable from our forgiving deep within our hearts all those against whom we harbor less than loving thoughts.

God is a good and loving God. God expects His followers to demonstrate love in daily life. The Epistle of St. John states: "This commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also." (1 Jn. 4:21)

Great Lent offers believers the opportunity to begin life anew in Jesus Christ. The sound practice of beginning Great Lent with forgiveness is well-established in God's Holy Church.

Believers around the world begin the journey to Pascha seeking forgiveness from God, seeking forgiveness from each other and being forgiving of each other. Practicing forgiveness is a way of bringing purity to the heart, mind and soul.

Practicing forgiveness prevents animosity from building within the heart, mind and soul. Animosity festers when forgiveness is not practiced. Animosity eats away at the believer and has corrosive effects on the heart, mind and soul.

Love diminishes when animosity exists within the believer. The believer is free to practice love when forgiveness prevails. Weight is lifted and joy becomes possible when love replaces animosity.

Husbands do well to be forgiving of their wives. Wives do well to be forgiving of their husbands. Families are strengthened when forgiveness is an everyday occurrence.

Relationships between sons and daughters, mothers and fathers reach their God-given potential when love, mercy and forgiveness characterize the relationships.

Hardness of heart and hard feelings towards others serve to impair relationships and cause them to deteriorate. Jesus showed the full extent of forgiveness when He hung upon the Cross.

When hanging on the Cross, Jesus said: “Father, **forgive** them; for they know not what they do.” (Lk.23:34) Jesus’ example of forgiving His persecutors merits a place deep in the hearts and minds of believers.

The Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen demonstrated forgiveness deep in his heart when he was being stoned for his confession of faith. Stephen said: “With a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” (Acts 7:60)

With God’s help during this Great Lent, believers can learn to be more forgiving. Benefitting from God’s love, mercy and forgiveness, believers can become more forgiving in personal relationships.

The intent and ideal of Great Lent is to become more Christ-like. The present Gospel speaks about the value of laying up treasures in heaven where moth and rust do not consume and thieves do not break in and steal.

Our relationship with God and the persons in our daily lives are to be greatly treasured. We show how greatly we treasure the relationship with God and with the persons in daily life in the way we practice forgiveness.

If we say we are followers of Christ, we should practice forgiveness as Christ taught, forgave and forgives. Jesus told Peter to forgive his brother: “Until seventy times seven.” (Mt.18:22)

We are blessed in God’s Holy Church to begin anew in Jesus Christ. The Church offers the opportunity for renewal in the journey to Pascha. Each believer determines the extent he or she will invest and participate in the journey.

Believers will reap the joy of renewal to the extent of the investment being made. Increased prayer, fasting and almsgiving are integral to the journey. Each person is free to join the journey to Pascha.

At times the journey will be arduous if taken seriously. The Cross is central to the life in Christ as the Cross preceded and was necessary for the Resurrection. In the journey to Pascha believers need to die to sin and rise with Christ.

The Church wisely has Great Lent each year. Wise believers join together in Christ from around the world and through the centuries in the journey to Pascha. No greater joy exists than to experience that Christ is Risen!

Forgiveness Sunday. March 1/14, 2021. Venerable Martyr Nun-Eudoxia (Cheese-Fare) Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic