

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)

Great Lent is at the door. Tomorrow is the first day. The Church has been preparing believers for the coming days and the journey to Pascha. The time to get serious about Great Lent has arrived.

The Church wants all believers to have a good and desirable beginning for the Lenten journey. Forgiving each other and seeking forgiveness from God frees the believer to earnestly begin the journey.

Battling sin requires great concentration and focused desire for the Lord God. The current Gospel advises believers to lay up treasures in heaven where moth and rust do not corrupt and where thieves cannot break in and steal.

Laying up treasures in heaven in an investment in the Kingdom of God and a preparation for eternal life. Exercising forgiveness in daily relationships is a step toward laying up treasures in heaven.

Forgiveness in daily relationships is necessary for love to be alive in relationships. Husbands and wives regularly need to be forgiving of each other if the marriage is to be strong and healthy.

Parents need to be forgiving of sons and daughters if healthy growth is to take place. Sons and daughters improve personal health by forgiving their parents. Forgiveness is essential in the workplace, the community and the parish church.

The Lord set the supreme example for forgiveness when He was crucified. Jesus said: “Father, **forgive** them; for they know not what they do.” (Lk. 23:34) Jesus’ willingness to forgive in the face of death is something always to remember.

The Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen set a similar example of forgiveness when he was being stoned to death. St. Stephen said “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” (Acts 7:60)

Learning to forgive from Jesus and St. Stephen will benefit believers now, during the course of Great Lent and throughout life. Forgiveness lifts a great weight from the believer and frees the believer to grow in Christ.

Living as Christ teaches and shows by example enables the believer to grow and mature in Christ. The hunger in the soul yearns for the peace experienced by forgiveness. Forgiveness energizes the believer in following Jesus Christ.

Great Lent is the opportunity set forth by the Church each year to grow in Christ. Repentance is encouraged. Increased fasting, prayer and almsgiving are prescribed and expected during Great Lent.

Participating in Great Lent is voluntary, encouraged and expected for all believers. Each believer is at a different level of growth in Christ. The investment made in Great Lent will determine the joy experienced at Pascha.

Great Lent is a time for personal honesty with the self and with God. Now and throughout Great Lent personal sinfulness is to be assessed, rejected and replaced with repentance.

God's help and teachings are necessary in personal assessment and repentance. God's goodness, love and mercy enable new beginnings in Jesus Christ. Great Lent is a time for newness in Christ.

Let us welcome the arrival of Great Lent with vigor and enthusiasm. May we keep in mind the Light of Christ and the joy of the Resurrection throughout the journey. The effort put into prayer, fasting and almsgiving is to be highly valued.

Attending Lenten services and being attentive to the content of the services nourishes the soul. The present Gospel describes keeping the Lenten effort private between the believer and God.

The content of today's Gospel is to be seriously considered in the days ahead. If a great investment is made in prayer, fasting and almsgiving, expect to be challenged and tempted. When feeling tired, take time to rest, and begin anew.

The Cross of Christ will give strength to each believer. Remember Jesus Christ on the Cross and His suffering as Great Lent proceeds. Remaining hopeful throughout the journey is essential.

God's Holy Church welcomes believers during Great Lent. Each service provides nourishment for the soul. Focused prayer and fasting will draw the believer closer to Jesus Christ.

Almsgiving and charitable acts are best done discreetly, quietly known to God. God sees charitable giving done discretely and knows the motivation of the giver. The Church offers numerous opportunities for charitable giving.

Each day of life is a blessing from God. Each moment of time only comes once. The time of life is to be cherished and used wisely. Seek to glorify God in the days ahead and be forgiving in daily relationships.

Cheesefare Sunday. Venerable Timothy. St. Eustathius, Archbishop of Antioch. February 21/March 6, 2022. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic