

## 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)

We have come to Forgiveness Sunday in God's Holy Church. The beginning of Great Lent is at hand. Now is the time to seek forgiveness from God and from each other. Now is the time for complete forgiveness.

Forgiveness has a primary place in the Christian life. Healthy relationships depend on believers forgiving each other. Husbands and wives in healthy marriages will forgive readily.

Parents are expected to love and forgive their sons and daughters. Our forgiveness in daily personal relationships affects the forgiveness we hope to receive from God. The Lord's Prayer is very clear on this.

The Church provides Confession for the believer to repent of sinful behavior and to seek God's forgiveness. The relationships we have in daily life depend upon our willingness to forgive in order for the relationships to blossom and mature.

If we are to grow in Jesus Christ throughout life, we learn to repent and seek forgiveness in order to begin anew. Forgiveness in personal relationships enables the relationships to be renewed and strengthened.

When we are recipients of hurtful actions in word or deed, we need to practice the mercy, goodness and example of Jesus Christ to be forgiving. Too often we have been hurtful to Christ in the ways we have thought, spoken or acted.

Great Lent is a time for new beginnings in Christ. We are to focus on care of the soul in Great Lent. The Gospel encourages believers to lay up treasures in heaven where moth and rust do not consume and thieves cannot steal. (Mt.6:20)

The opportunity to make a joyful new beginning exists at this time in God's Holy Church. Believers are strongly encouraged to sharpen their focus on the life and relationship with Jesus Christ.

Increased fasting and prayer are expected. The Church offers specific Lenten services to strengthen and enrich the believer in the Lenten journey. When the believer falls down in sin, he or she is to repent and begin again anew in Christ.

Every believer is at a different state of growth in Christ. Each Great Lent is new for the believer. The life in Jesus Christ is the opportunity for continual renewal and growth.

Experiencing Jesus Christ is unlimited throughout life. The life in Christ extends beyond departure from earthly life. Entry into God's Kingdom and Eternal life are the goals established from the time of Holy Baptism.

Forgiveness from God is an act and expression of the deepest Divine love. Forgiveness frees the believer from the burden of sin that restricts growth in Christ. Jesus Christ forgives and sets the example for believers to be forgiving of others.

The life in Christ offers peace, love and joy. Living in Christ-pleasing ways is necessary to experience the peace, love and joy. Great Lent enables believers to consciously live anew in Christ.

Great Lent is an intense period to focus on Jesus Christ. The Church gathers abundant resources and applies them for the benefit of believers during Great Lent. The Lenten journey is well-structured and documented for the attentive believer.

As believers grow in Christ, awareness increases about the value and benefits of Great Lent. Serious believers welcome the arrival of Great Lent. Love for Christ increases in Great Lent as believers actively participate.

The relationship with Jesus Christ becomes stronger during Great Lent for the active participant. Great Lent is a time to invest heavily in the Kingdom of God. The Church offers instruction on how to make the soundest investments.

Holy Week and Pascha may seem a long way off at the beginning point of the Lenten journey. When treated seriously, a certain tiredness will be felt as the Lenten journey continues.

The Lord is ever-present to nourish the believer in the journey to Holy Week and Pascha. The Lord Jesus Christ established the example of endurance when He experienced arrest, trial, and suffering on the Cross.

Christian saints and martyrs through the centuries are witnesses to the value of following Christ. God's Holy Church draws from the rich history through the ages to maintain the period of Great Lent as part of the Liturgical year.

This is a time to look deep within the heart, mind and soul and seek forgiveness from God. Today is the day to consider the relationships in daily life and initiate forgiveness.

God's forgiveness verifies love for each person. Each person has the opportunity to demonstrate love for others in daily life through forgiveness. God's Holy Church is where to experience Christ's love and to practice love for others.

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Forgiveness Sunday. Cheesefare Sunday. Venerable Simeon the Myhrrgusher (Stephen Nemanja) February 12.26, 2023. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania.

Father Rodney Torbic